MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

Journal for Maltese Living Abroad

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Dr. Tonio Borg

Emma Cutajar

THE MALTESE-CANADIAN MUSEUM - TORONTO

29 May to 3 June 2023

MALTA 2023

GAMES OF THE SMALL STATES OF EUROPE

EVERY WEEK

WE WELCOME

NEW

SUBSCRIBERS

Maltese Community of New York

OPEN HOUSE

at the Maltese Center - New York

MEET AND GREET

The committee and members of the Maltese Center are honoured and grateful to welcome His Excellency George Vella and Mrs Vella together with the delegation to the Center.

SUNDAY
21 MAY 2023
7.00 pm

MALTESE CENTER NY

27 20 Hoyt Ave S,
Astoria, NY USA

The Maltese Canadian community welcomes the President of Malta

Main event:
Dinner
in honour of
the President of Malta,
First Lady & the Hon. Minster for Home Affairs

Venue: Malta Band Club
Tickets will be available for collection from the Consulate General of Malta, against a requested charitable donation of $50 towards the Malta Community Chest Fund (cash only).
Tickets are non-transferrable.
No gifts or tokens, however, donations to the Malta Community Chest Fund would be appreciated.

27 MAY 2023
6.30 pm

President George Vella and Mrs Vella to visit the United States and Canada in May 2023

I look forward with great anticipation to receive the Journal and I start reading it from cover to cover.
It's very refreshing because it is non political and free.

Gio Vassallo

PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

President George Vella and Mrs Vella leave Malta for a visit to the United States and Canada

President George Vella and Mrs Miriam Vella left Malta for a visit to the United States and Canada.

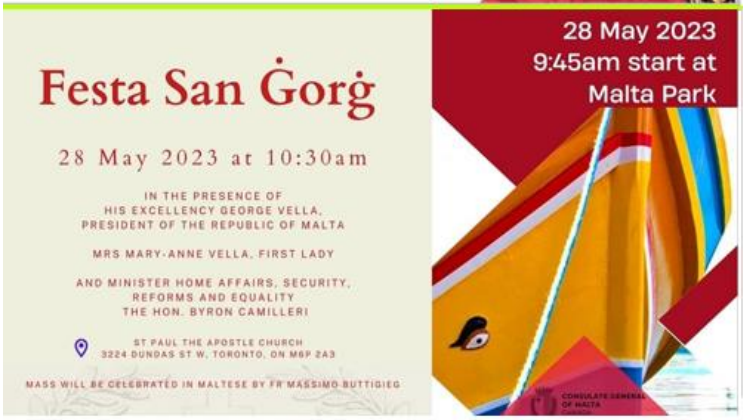
In New York, President Vella will be one of the main speakers in an open debate, organised by the Swiss Presidency of the United Nations Security Council, on the protection of people in armed conflicts entitled 'Ensuring the security and dignity of civilians in conflict: Addressing food insecurity and protecting essential services'.

The president will have several bilateral meetings, among others, with the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Csaba Kőrösi, and the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Miguel Ángel Moratinos. A number of other meetings are scheduled on the margins of President Vella's engagements at the United Nations Headquarters.

The engagements of the president, Mrs Vella, and the Maltese delegation also include meetings with Maltese communities in New York and Detroit in the United States and in Toronto Canada.

The delegation of the President of Malta in the United States and Canada includes the Minister for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms, and Equality, Byron Camilleri.

For the duration of President George Vella's engagements in the United States and Canada, Professor Frank Bezzina will serve as Acting President of Malta. President George Vella and Mrs Vella will return to Malta on Monday, May 29, 2023.



PRESIDENT OF MALTA VISITS CANDA AND THE UNITED STATES

You're cordially invited to participate in these events for the visit to Toronto by His Excellency George Vella , President of the Republic of Malta, and Mrs Mary-Anne Vella between 26-28 May 2023

Australia Hall zoning to be approved before traffic studies

Zoning request to set parameters of development around Australia Hall could be approved before traffic studies determine impact of project

by **James Debono**

Transport Malta will not be able to assess the traffic impact of a commercial development proposed around Australia Hall, before the Planning Authority approves new zoning for its floor area and building envelope

Transport Malta Will Not Be Able To Assess The Traffic Impact Of A Commercial Development Proposed Around Australia Hall, Before The Planning Authority Approves New Zoning For Its Floor Area And Building Envelope.

This Is Because These Studies Will Be Required At A Later Stage When Developers Submit A Planning Application, After Zoning Approval Which Would Then Commit The Site For Development.

The Zoning Application Will Set The Building Envelope, Site Coverage And Number Of Floors To Be Developed On A 3,870sq.M Area Around The Historical Australia Hall.

The Plans Are for Three "Mixed Use" Blocks Ranging Between Five And Six Floors, And The Restoration Of Australia Hall Itself. Some 2,400sq.M Of The Total 6,331sq.M Site Will Be Retained As Open Public Space.

The Development Is By AH Developments, Which Is Owned By The Fino Group. The Group Had Dropped Earlier Plans For A High-Rise Development In The Area.

In January, Transport Malta Informed The PA It Had No Objection To The Development Even While Adding That The Site Was In "A Traffic Sensitive Area". TM Warned That If The Studies Conducted Reveal Increased Traffic Generation That Would Have A "Deleterious Effect On The Road Network", TM Would Not View The Development Application Favourably.

Subsequently In April, TM Said It Was Not In A Position To Comment Further On This Application "In View Of The Fact that Transport Studies Have Not Been Requested For This Application."

Plans For A Revamp Of The Road Network, Including A Tunnel Passing Under A Natura 2000 Site Linking Pembroke And St George's Bay, Have Been Dormant Since 2020.

The Zoning Request for Australia Hall Exposes A Lacuna In The Planning Process, Which Often Sees The PA Setting The Planning Parameters That Create A Commitment For Development, In The Absence Of Traffic And Other Studies Normally Conducted When A More Detailed Planning Application Is Presented.

The Reason for This Is That Details On The Specifics Of The Development, Such As The Number Of Units And Retail Outlets, Are Only Known At That Later Stage.

In The Meantime, The Superintendence For Cultural Heritage Has Also Issued Its Go-Ahead For The Approval Of The Zoning Application, While Reserving Its Assessment Of The Project's Design To A Later Stage When A Full Planning Application Is Presented.

While The Proposed Layout Of The Project Is Deemed By The SCH To Be "Broadly Acceptable", Issues Related To The Design Of The Project And Mitigation Measures To Limit The Impact On Australia Hall Itself "Will Require Further Engagement At Full Application Stage".

The SCH Suggested That It Would Accept The Dismantling And Sensitive Relocation Of Protected Latrines, Located Towards The West Of The Australia Hall, to allow an Improved open space.

AUSTRALIA HALL ON ANZAC STREET, PEMBROKE.

The Editor and readers of the Maltese eNewsletter, the Journal for Maltese Living Abroad, have made several appeals to those who are concerned not only to preserve the iconic Australia Hall which is part of Malta's Anzac history for posterity but also to further consolidate the good relationship between the people of Malta and Australia in a very concrete manner.

Bishop Charles Gauci and St George Preca

On the feast of **St George Preca.**

I met him when I was a boy. He lived down my street in Malta. He died when I was ten years old. I saw his funeral pass in front of my house.

Everyone knew George as a living saint. This was for very good reasons. He lived, spoke and acted like a saint. As a young priest, he noticed that many people followed cultural Catholicism but were quite ignorant about their faith. He started doing something about it. He gathered a group of young adults around him and started forming them in their faith.

Eventually, the numbers grew and he developed a rule of life based on the *gospel*. This was the beginning of the Preca Community. It was 1907, a long time before *Vatican II.* It took convincing local authorities that lay people could teach about the faith.

They remained lay people but promised to live a consecrated life in ordinary life. They kept jobs and supported themselves but met every day to learn about their faith as well as teach others especially the young. Soon they formed into two branches of the community one for men and the other for women. The members committed themselves to the pursuit of holiness in a very down-to-earth way.

Like **Mary McKillop**, George saw a need and did something about it.

I have personally benefited much from St George. As a teenager, I attended the Preca community branch in Adelaide, where I was grounded in faith formation. Eventually, I became one of the brothers before entering the seminary and training as a priest.

Faith formation has always remained important to me. It is certainly much needed in our times. I had the privilege of concelebrating mass with **Pope Benedict** at the canonisation of Faith George in Rome. It was the 3rd of June 2007.It was an outdoor ceremony in Saint Peter's Square. It rained and I could imagine him having a good laugh from Heaven at all the fuss. He was a very humble man with a good sense of humour.

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Malta Unveils Games of The Small States Of Europe Team Ready To Shine On Home Turf

By Ibrahim Gaddari

The Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC) has revealed the names of the athletes who will represent Team Malta in the XIX Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE) scheduled to begin on May 29th.

Comprising experienced medal winners and young debutants, Team Malta will showcase its talent on its home turf.

Charlene Attard, MOC Director of Sport, detailed the technical preparation and selection process conducted over the past few months to ensure that each athlete in Team Malta is in peak form.

Several athletes' outstanding performance in international competitions has reinforced the effectiveness of their preparations.

She stated, "Their preparation has been meticulous and well planned, and we look forward to seeing the results of their hard work in the coming weeks."

The roster includes renowned local athletes like Katryna Esposito (Judo), Elaine Genovese and Francesca Curmi (Tennis), and Matthew Galea Soler (Athletics), who have previously won medals in prestigious competitions like the Commonwealth Games, Mediterranean Games, and European Youth Olympic Festival.

Many former GSSE medalists also join the team, eager to increase their medal count on home soil.

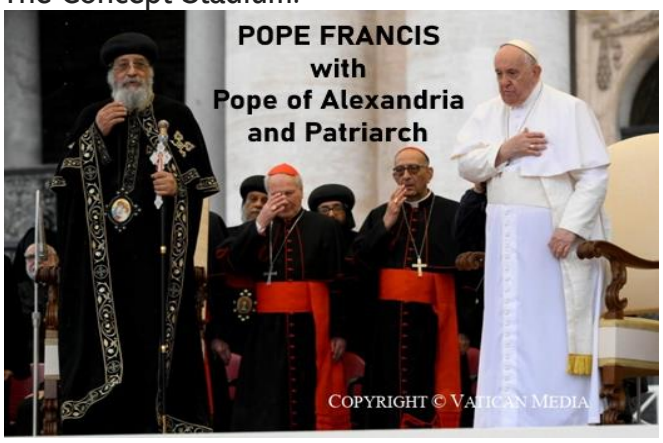
For the first time in Malta's history, a Team Captain will be appointed to inspire and lead the contingent, providing support when needed. The MOC has granted this honor to Eleanor Bezzina (Shooting), an Olympian with an impressive sports career, participating in her fifth GSSE.

As Chef de Mission for the GSSE, Paul Sultana praised the Local Organisation Committee's diligent planning and coordination, ensuring a smooth event despite the inevitable challenges that come with organizing such a significant event.

He emphasised that Malta is well-prepared to welcome over 1,000 athletes and officials in the coming weeks.

The MOC President urged the public to show their support by attending the week-long sporting bonanza held across various venues. He expressed gratitude to the Local Organising Committee, the Maltese Olympic Committee, and the sponsors for their unwavering commitment to delivering an outstanding event.

The XIX Games of the Small States of Europe are supported by various organizations, including SportMalta, NDSF, Welbee's Supermarket, National Lottery, MITA, General Soft Drinks, Visit Malta, European Olympic Committees, Go, Enemed, BOV, Transport Malta, Malta International Airport, and The Concept Stadium.



It is with great joy today that I greet His Holiness Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, and the distinguished delegation that is accompanying him.

His Holiness Tawadros accepted my invitation to come to Rome to celebrate with me the fiftieth anniversary of the historic meeting of Saint Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in 1973. It was the first meeting between a Bishop of Rome and a Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, which culminated in the signing of a memorable joint Christological declaration, on 10 May precisely. In memory of this event, His Holiness Tawadros came to visit me for the first time on 10 May ten years ago, a few months after his and my election, and proposed to celebrate the "Day of Coptic-Catholic friendship" every 10 May, which since then we have celebrated every year. We call each other on the telephone, we send greetings, and we remain good brothers, we haven't quarrelled! Dear friend and brother Tawadros, thank you for accepting my invitation on this dual anniversary, and I pray that the light of the Holy Spirit may illuminate your visit to Rome, the important meetings you will have here, and in particular our personal conversations. I thank you from my heart for your commitment to the growing friendship between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

Holiness, dear bishops, all of you, together with you I implore God Almighty, by the intercession of the Saints and Martyrs of the Coptic Church, that He may help us grow in communion, in a single and holy bond of faith, hope and Christian love. And speaking of martyrs of the Coptic Church, who are also ours, I want to recall the martyrs on the Libyan beach, who were martyred a few years ago. I ask all of you present to pray to God that He may bless Pope Tawadros' visit to Rome, and protect the entire Coptic Orthodox Church. May this visit hasten us to the blessed day when we will be one in Christ! Thank you

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER
If you have an interesting story to tell share it with others. Send it to us

Emma Cutajar to represent Malta in Commonwealth Song Contest

She is one of seven finalists in the contest

Singer and songwriter Emma Cutajar

Maltese singer and songwriter Emma Cutajar will be representing Malta as a finalist in the Commonwealth Song Contest with her song "I Miss You".

The Commonwealth Song Contest (CSC) is an international music event for the 2.5 billion people of the 56 Commonwealth nations and is administered by the UK Songwriting Contest.

The first CSC was held in 2018 during the Commonwealth Games and received thousands of song entries from artists and songwriters from Commonwealth nations.

To coincide with the coronation of King Charles III, the CSC announced the finalists and semi-finalists of the 2022/2023 contest. Cutajar,16, is one of the seven finalists. According to the UK Songwriting Contest, she was chosen from a "talented pool" of potential candidates.

Emma wrote the song when she was 14, as a tribute to her sister whom she never got the chance to meet because she passed away before she (Emma) was born. She first performed the song in 2020 during Malta's Got Talent, and in 2021 the song was released on Spotify and other streaming and online platforms. International public votes decide the winning country and songwriters.

Nina u Ninu – play and learn Maltese

I am writing to you as a link to the Maltese community in Australia to let you know about a novel Digital educational App product we have launched in Maltese for children aged 2 to 5 years.

We are confident this is of benefit to children and is of interest to educational institutions and parents. It will also contribute to the preservation of the Maltese language.

https://www.islandbebe.com/nina-u-ninu-game/

My team and I have created the first digital app for children that is entirely in Maltese. It includes educational and fun games in Maltese. The App is called Nina u Ninu.

It is a fact that children do spend time on screens today, on TV, tablets and mobile phones. We have however noticed that this screen-time is all in English. We therefore felt the need to use this screen time to expose young children to listening, learning and playing directly in the Maltese language.

Nina u Ninu. is the first App that gives children a fun way to learn by immersing themselves in the Maltese language. It is entirely locally created and developed and is 'voiced over' by Maltese persons giving an authentic Maltese feel. Big efforts and investment were made to give the app a top quality, 'International standard' look and feel.

Additional games on different themes will be launched periodically within the App

The Nina u Ninu. App is already available to download on the Google Play Store as well as the Apple App Store. It works on tablets and mobile phones. Both the Google Play Store and Apple App store have categorised the App as 'Educational' after thorough review.

We felt we should inform you of our exciting development that will be of interest for the Maltese community in Australia. Should you require any further information please feel free to contact me. With kind regards

Francesca Mifsud Founder & CEO | Island Bébé Website | Facebook | Instagram +35679381219

THE PARISH OF HORSLEY PARK NSW AND THE MALTESE CONNECTION

The name Horsley first appears on the map of the Western Suburbs of Sydney, in 1833. In 1806, Governor Philip Gidley King awarded a grant of land to Colonel George Johnston, for his part in quelling the Irish convict's rebellion of 1804. Johnston did not live on the grant, but his daughter, Blanche, and her husband Major George Weston, of the East India Army, decided to build their residence on the property. They built an Indian-styled homestead, which they named Horsley, after Weston's birthplace in Surrey, England. The Horsley Homestead, which still stands, gave its name to the town which grew up in the area.

The first school in Horsley Park was opened by John Morrissey, in 1931, to educate the children of people settling down in the area. Horsley Park was mainly inhabited by market gardeners. Italian and Maltese emigrants made a living looking after their crops. *(Details about the history of Horsley Park taken from George Vance: Fairfield – a history of the District, second edition, The Council of the City of Fairfield, NSW, 1991)*

In the early 1950's no Masses were celebrated at Horsley Park. The locals had to travel to Rooty Hill, Bossley Park or Liverpool parishes for Mass. Car pooling was not a new idea then. Friends and neighbours who had vehicles took with them those who had none.

From time to time a priest used to come to celebrate Mass in the tiny Community Hall (opposite the Post Office). Then in July 1952 a priest started to visit Horsley Park and celebrate Mass every two weeks and a month later Fr Marrow introduced weekly Mass.

Fr Camilleri and Fr Baron used to celebrate Mass in Maltese language once a month – this was very much appreciated by the Maltese migrants in the community.

Horsley Park became a Parish, dedicated to Our Lady of Victories, in 1960, with the arrival of Fr Ernest G. Paine as Parish Priest. At first all baptisms were celebrated in homes. The community started to work hard to raise funds to build a parish church – door to door knocking, asking for help, was a common event. Hand made doilies, fruits from the market garden, and other items were raffled. Fetes were also organised. A committee was formed to introduce the Planned Giving Envelope system. All meetings took place in the old shop – the centre of the village.

The hard work of the locals and their motivation generated a strong community spirit. Tony and Paula Cini donated some land on The Horsley Drive, on which the parish church was to be built. This motivated the community even further. Fr Paine's mother also donated a small brass crucifix for the altar. The new parish church was blessed and opened by Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, on November 26, 1961.

Fr Paine also started visiting the community at Kemps Creek. He celebrated Mass there in the Kemps Creek Community Hall (where Saturday night dancing was also held!). In 1975 Mr Hugo Perau donated three acres of land at 215 Western Road, Kemps Creek, to the Maltese Missionary Society of Saint Paul, who was then looking after the Horsley Park Parish. On this land a chapel was built dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Peace.

In 1965, the Parish was put under the pastoral care of the Paulist Missionaries, a community of priests and brothers, established in Malta in 1910, with the aim of going to mission lands and of helping Maltese emigrants. The first member of this congregation to become Parish Priest at Horsley Park was Fr Claude Borg MSSP.

The coming of Fr Borg brought a new motivation to the young parish community and a revival of the faith. Fr Claude recalls: "I was a young priest when I was in Horsley Park. I used to go out to visit families, Catholics or not. There is one remark I will never forget, said to me by an older Catholic: 'this is the first time a priest has come to visit us!' "

In 1963, the feast of Our Lady of Victories was organised for the first time. The first year a small statue of Our Lady was used for the procession. Later on the statue of Our Lady of Victories, which is used in St Mary's Cathedral for the Maltese feast, was brought over for the Horsley Park procession. In September of 1967 a new statue of Our Lady of Victories was ordered for Horsley Park Parish. The statue, bought from Pio Anastasi and Co. Ltd., Valletta Malta, cost Sterling Pound 539, 10 shillings (AU $1,159 approx). The Feast of Our Lady of Victories became a cultural event and many people from far and wide used to attend. In the first years, the procession with the statue of Our Lady of Victories

used to leave the church, turn left onto Wallgrove Road, left onto Redmayne Road and back along Walworth Road.

Fr Claude's encouragement and influence on the young people in the parish was great to see. Great numbers used to attend any functions that were organised. Sunday April 19, 1970 saw the opening of the Marion Peace Memorial Hall by Bishop Muldoon, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney. This was another sign of the hard work by the parish community to raise the necessary funds. The hall was named in memory of Fr Claude's sister who had died before the completion of the hall, and Fr Claude's mother, who died during World War II.

Fr Claude left the parish in 1971, followed by Fr Emanuel Adami (1971 0 74), Fr Charles Borg (1974 – 77), Fr Benedict Sant (1977 – 80) and Fr Phillip Gambin (1980 – 94). Fr Philip was the driving force behind the building of the Catholic Primary school and a new Parish Church.

Marion Primary School was officially opened by the Hon Ron J Murlock, Minister for Education, and blessed by Bishop David Cremin, on January 31, 1982. The school started in small classes and offices under the Marion Peace Memorial Hall. Sister Catherine O'Brien RSC was the founding principal and remained with the school til 1987. During this time, architect Mr Michael Milosovic prepared drawings and plans for the construction of a school. The first stage of the school building was opened by Dr Richard E. Klugman, Federal Member for Prospect, and blessed by Cardinal Clancy, Archbishop of Sydney, on Sunday November 2, 1986. The second stage was opened by the Hon. Janice Crosio, Federal Member for Prospect, and blessed by Cardinal Clancy on Sunday December 9, 1990.

By this time plans were being drawn up for a new and bigger church to be built on the hill, behind the old church building. Cardinal Clancy opened and dedicated the new church on Friday September 3, 1993.

The Good Friday commemorations in Horsley Park have been held since 1987 and follows in the Easter traditions of Malta and other Mediterranean countries. The procession includes several statues and many participants in costumes, recounting the crucifixion of Jesus.

Fr. Claude Borg mssp.

He was the Maltese community chaplain in the Diocese of Paramatta NSW. Missionary Society of St Paul priest, Fr Claude Borg died peacefully on Saturday 17th June 2017 at the Uniting Mulluana Residential Care, Blacktown. Fr Claude was aged 91 and in his 71st year of profession and 65th year of his missionary priesthood.

Born in Malta, Fr Claude began his journey with the Paulists in 1938. He made his first profession in 1945 and perpetual vows in 1948. He studied both at the Malta Seminary and University and was ordained in Malta on the 22nd December 1951.

Fr. Claude's first assignment was at the Oratory in Birkirkara for 4 years after which he was sent to our fledgling Australian mission in Melbourne in 1956. He was assigned as a Maltese Chaplain at Parkville. He was the first MSSP to be appointed Parish priest of Our Lady of Victories Parish, Horsley Park in 1965 where he cared for his people for 6 years before returning to Malta. In Malta he served the MSSP in different official roles and was available for supply in different places.

Fr. Claude returned to Australia in 1980 once again with the Parkville community for 3 years after which he became assistant priest at St Joseph's Parish, Rozelle in Sydney, then under MSSP care. In 1990, he joined the MSSP community at St Francis Assisi Chapel at the La Valette Maltese Centre, Blacktown as a chaplain for the Maltese in the western suburbs of Sydney especially in the Diocese of Parramatta.

While Fr. Claude entered aged care at St Dominic's Blacktown in 2003 and in 2016 in Uniting Mulluana Blacktown, he continued to be involved in caring for the Maltese and others till quite recently. Over the many years of ministry Fr Claude has also been involved with various groups in-particular due to his love of liturgy and music the formation of Maltese and other choirs both in Melbourne and Sydney.

In December 2016, Bishop Vincent Long OFM CONV on the occasion of Fr Claude's 65th Anniversary of Ordination to the priesthood said, "Thank you for your example of priestly dedication and fidelity. Your priesthood is a sign of hope and renewal of God's everlasting love to his people."

Close friend of Fr Claude, John Beale, commented that Fr Claude just got on with the job, "he was a friend to all, everyone adored him wherever he went. He was a very religious man, he had to get on with the Lord's work. He loved music and wherever he went he would create a choir."

Despite his deteriorating health over the past few years he remained as active as he could be and was a witness that we can embrace our journey of aging with vigor and trust in the Lord. He will be fondly remembered as an energetic, jovial and caring pastor by all who knew him and whose lives were touched by him.

MIGRANTS FROM MALTA AND GOZO WORKING IN SUGAR CANE FARMS IN MACKAY QUEENSLAND 1919.

The story of our brothers and sisters who emigrated to Australia at the beginning of the 20th century has long been forgotten. It is a story of courage and heroism, the like of which is very uncommon today. It is also the story of the suffering endured by our ancestors who left our island in order to make a living thousands of miles away in Australia, from where they planned to maintain their families financially.

It was on September 12, 1916 during the great war when 214 passengers left Malta and Gozo on a ship called "Gange". Their destination was Australia. On their arrival they became the unfortunate victims of local riots against immigration taking place at the time. The trade unions were determined to safeguard the jobs of those Australians who were engaged in fighting in the war, hence their opposition to immigration. in fighting in the war, hence their opposition to immigration. The emigrants arrived in Freemantle on October 21, after a terrifying experience as they met terrible storms on the way, so much so that the ship almost capsized. The rioters prevented them from leaving the ship and after two days waiting, the captain decided to sail towards Melbourne. There they had to undergo a language test, but instead of conducting the test in English, those in charge conducted it in the Dutch language, which meant of course that all of them failed!

This was a ploy to prevent the emigrants from disembarking. On November 5, the ship had to set sail again, this time to Sydney. By now, two months had passed since they left Malta. But even in Sydney they were not allowed to leave the ship. A military guard was assigned to the ship to prevent passengers from going ashore. However, about 44 passengers managed to escape by jumping into the sea and swam towards the shore. Most of them were caught and found themselves in a prison cell The authorities were at a loss as to what to do with the Maltese emigrants. Because the ship was registered in France, a decision was taken to send it to Noumea, New Caledonia, a French Colony. The Gange left Sydney Harbour on November 12 heading towards Noumea where at last the Maltese passengers were given accommodation. After lengthy negotiations, these emigrants found themselves on another ship, the St. Louis, on their way back to Sydney.

On their arrival they were transferred on to a very old ship which was anchored at the harbour, and there they waited for three months for another ship which would bring them back to Malta. After many complaints from various people, among whom was Fr William Bonnet, the emigrants were allowed to land ashore in Sydney. This was on March 13, 1917, six months after they had left Malta. In Sydney some of them soon found work with the Lyell Mining Company while others travelled further towards Queensland where they worked in the sugar cane plantations.

Mackay's historic Maltese meeting corner

/ By Tobi Loftus and Tegan Philpott

Carmel Baretta has been working with her fellow Maltese residents for years to get statues commemorating the community installed in the CBD. *(ABC Tropical North: Tegan Philpott)*

For years, the Rockman's Corner in the Mackay CBD was the meeting place for the region's Maltese community, where despite not being able to read or write they did deals to help fellow immigrants buy their own farms.

Former president of the Mackay Maltese Club and local historian Carmel Baretta said the meeting place / By Tobi Loftus and Tegan Philpott

Carmel Baretta has been working with her fellow Maltese residents for years to get statues commemorating the community installed in the CBD. *(ABC Tropical North: Tegan Philpott)*

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Former president of the Mackay Maltese Club and local historian Carmel Baretta said the meeting place on the corner of Wood and Victoria Street was also known as the Maltese Corner.

"Maltese men gathered there a number of times a week [from the mid-20th century] and the idea of it was they met there before the banks opened and they had discussions on who had what farm for sale, who wanted to buy a farm," Mrs Baretta said.

"Most of these men couldn't read or write, but they could calculate the daily interest rate in their head. Quick as a flick." The men would discuss the interest rates and help any community members who needed it through the banking system.

"They'd go to the bank manager and say my cousin here wants to buy a farm, can you lend him the money," she said. "If the manager ummed and ahhed they'd say we're taking out money out of here and are going to the other bank. "It was a bit of blackmail, but it worked.
"Once those older farmers became established, they would loan their money at a lower rate than what the bank would give." Some of the farmers ended up forming their own bank which over years transformed into the Pioneer Permanent Building Society.
The society was purchased by the Bank of Queensland in 2007. "The idea of it was to help migrants who came into Australia," Mrs Baretta said. "I was with my elder brother last weekend, and he used to go with dad to that corner. "He was telling me that all of these people say 'oh if it wasn't for your father or any of those other men, I would never have bought my farm'.
"As [the men] got older and didn't do that sort of thing anymore, they still met there anyway. It was a meeting place."

Immigration history to Australia

Maltese immigration to North Queensland dates back to the 1880s, but began to increase rapidly around 1944, when the Maltese were classified as 'white British subjects' under Australia's immigration policies at the time.
According to the Department of Home Affairs, most of the Maltese migrants who came to Australia were semi-skilled or unskilled workers and many were poorly educated.

Percy Zammit, Sam Bezzina and John Vassallo were three people regularly seen on Rockman's Corner, also known as the Maltese Corner. *(Supplied: Carmel Baretta)*
They emigrated to leave behind poor socio-economic conditions or in response to government schemes to decrease Malta's population.
While most emigrated to Victoria and New South Wales, a small number moved to Queensland and Mackay.
They would come to Mackay to work on the cane farms, but over time the Maltese families started to buy those farms.
Now, the city boasts one of the largest populations of Maltese immigrants and descendants outside of a capital city.

Honouring Maltese history

The Mackay Regional Council voted to allow Mrs Baretta and the Maltese community to place statues at Rockman's Corner. "It will be bronze statues of two men sitting side by side, with a man on the other side facing them," Mrs Baretta said. "There will be enough room on the seats for people to sit beside them and have their photo taken.
"These statues will be life size and identical to the people in our photographs."
The statues when built will replicate the scene seen in this photograph, except with just three of the men. *(Supplied: Carmel Baretta)*
Mackay Mayor Greg Williamson said he remembered passing by that corner when he was younger. "They were all just sitting there, these very wealthy men in terms of our cane farming community," he said. "Holding on to history, and heritage is critical for any community.
"It's that old story of how can you know where you're going to if you don't know where you've come from."
Mrs Baretta is also part of the Mackay Italian Association and is working with the council on a plan to commemorate a similar impact that community had on the city.

MALTESE IN TUNISIA

Image: Joseph Mangani collection

Despite being an archipelago in the middle of the Mediterranean, we often forget that Malta has a close and deep history with its neighbouring countries, especially those in North Africa.

On a research and collection trip to Tunisia, Magna Żmien founder and artistic director Andrew Alamango met with some Tunisian-Maltese who shared their memories, anecdotes, and stories of their once-thriving community.

The Maltese in Tunis were known as quality cotton producers, for driving *karozzini* (horse-driven carriage) and for Maltese *pastizzi*, which left their mark on Tunisian society even today. They were also particularly associated with being butchers, particularly of horse meat as well as pork. Many of these set up shop in the local market of downtown Tunis, Marché Central in Rue de Allemagne.

Joseph Mangani collection Joseph Mangani collection

Though the Maltese community disintegrated in Tunis after the 1950s, one can still find remnants of the past, harkening to the days of a rich Maltese presence in the country.

The Maltese particularly are still remembered with endearment, due to the proximity of language and the adaptation of the Maltese in Tunisian society and upon which it left its mark. The bond between the two countries is still strong today and anyone travelling to and from Tunisia is sure to come across the phrase "*Malta ħanina, ħobża u sardina.*"

Today they tell stories of how they lived harmoniously alongside other cultures carrying on their Maltese religious and cultural traditions, whilst integrating with the liberal and culturally diverse society in Tunisia which was open to the Mediterranean and its people.

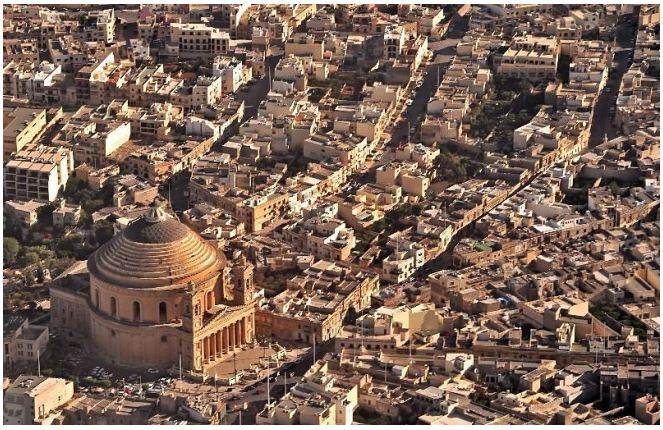
A particularly interesting photo is that of a portrait of the Temimi family, the grandmother of which was Antoinette Zammit from Ħamrun. Antoinette worked as a stewardess on the ferry-ship between Malta and Tunisia in the early 1930s and, on this same ship, she met and fell in love with Mohamed Taoufik Temimi whom she eventually married.

Hatem Temimi collection

Antoinette packed up her life in Malta, moved to Tunisia and started her life there living in La Fayette, where she raised her family. Antoinette is still remembered today as Nanna Ferida Temimi from Ħamrun and although there are only a few descendants of this once numerous community, they still retain a strong affection for their island of origin. Some have even obtained Maltese nationality.

Hatem Temimi collection

The Embassy of Malta in Tunis is also attempting to maintain these relationships, including publishing research on notable Tunisian-Maltese, including the discovery that the eminent Maltese architect Ġuże D'Amato, who designed the iconic Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Valletta, was born in and graduated as an architect in Tunisia.



Magical Mosta

Discover the magic of Mosta and explore the city of the famous Rotunda in your own unique way! This experience is available every Tuesday, between 10.30 and 15.30 hrs, and is designed to be enjoyed as an individual, a small team, or a larger group.

- **4 April 2023 - 26 December 2023**
- **From 10:30 am to 03:30 pm**
- **Mosta Rotunda, Mosta, Malta**

Welcome to the Mosta Dome experience! Guests are invited to arrive at their own pace between 10.30 and 15.30 hrs. The ticket includes three parts that can be enjoyed at your own leisure.

This experience is available **every Tuesday, between 10.30 and 15.30 hrs**, and is designed to be enjoyed as an individual, a small team, or a larger group.

Part A: The Rotunda of Mosta and Mosta World War II Shelter

Upon arrival at the Rotunda of Mosta, guests will be invited to explore the church's sacristies, where they can view a replica of the bomb and a collection of religious exhibits. Brochures about the church are provided in different languages, and a mobile phone app is available for download, which includes a 7-minute video about Mosta, the church, and its special events.

Guests can also visit the World War II Shelter, where two exhibitions are on display. One features photographs of Malta during World War II, while the other showcases tools used in different traditional Maltese jobs.

Part B: Walk through the old streets of Mosta and visit varied places of interest with exclusive access

Guests will be accompanied by one of our team members as they walk through the old streets of Mosta and visit various places of interest with exclusive access. A booklet explaining the significance of each place of interest is provided in different languages, and through the mobile phone app, guests can also listen to further information.

Part C: A typical full Maltese buffet meal served in "Dar Mustija," a characteristic Maltese house and garden

Dar Mustija is a typical townhouse built in 1800, located in the heart of Mosta. In 1974, it was donated to the Mosta Parish by the siblings Grezzju, Gużeppa, and Sunta and became a center for religious teaching and formation. Today, it serves as a place to welcome our guests for a treat of local food and drink. In the quaint garden, surrounded by orange trees, guests can enjoy a relaxed atmosphere while indulging in some Maltese delicacies.

A typical full Maltese buffet meal will be served, featuring:

• Maltese bread with Kunserva Maltese cheesecakes (pastizzi) Qassatat Timpana Maltese Tuna Ftira

• Bigilla and water biscuits Butter beans Olives Peppered goat cheese Types of Maltese sweets Water, wine or soft drink and Coffee or tea We hope you enjoy your Mosta Dome experience and create unforgettable memories.

Galea Pictures

Brothers From Malta

is now available to order exclusively
on Galea Pictures TV (our online channel)
https://galeapictures.vhx.tv

EXHIBITION OF TAPESTRIES

The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation is delighted to announce that The Set of Tapestries will be exhibited at St John's Co-Cathedral after an extensive restoration process that lasted 16 years at De Wit Laboratories in Belgium. The last time they were displayed was during Pope St John Paul II's visit to Malta. **5 May 2023 - 24 June 2023 According To Event Schedule St. John's Co-Cathedral, Triq San Gwann, Valletta,**

The set of tapestries was commissioned by Grand Master Ramon y Perellos upon his election in 1697. The set consists of 29 pieces depicting the Triumph of the Roman Catholic Church, scenes from the life of Christ and the twelve apostles. The majority of the tapestries were based on cartoons by the renowned artist Peter Paul Rubens and woven in Brussels by the weaver Judocus De Vos, their intricate design woven from wool and pure silk make them a true masterpiece of European art.

The restoration process was complex and very time consuming because over time their condition deteriorated causing several open seams and loss of the silk treads. The project was carried out by a team of experts at De Wit Royal Manufacturers in Belgium. The tapestries were carefully cleaned and repaired, and the original colours and designs were restored to their former glory. The restoration process was funded by the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, which is dedicated to preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of this unique UNESCO World Heritage site.

The tapestries, which will be hung in the Main Nave of the St John's Co-Cathedral, will be displayed between 5 May and 24 June 2023. This is a rare opportunity for visitors to see these magnificent tapestries and appreciate their beauty, historical and religious significance. The exhibition, which will attract art enthusiasts from all over the world, will undoubtedly be a highlight of the cultural calendar in Malta. We look forward to welcoming visitors to the St John's Co-Cathedral to experience this unique cultural event.

Miet Mro Sunny Galea

Kav. Joe M. Attard
-
Ritratt: Soċjetà Filarmonika La Stella

Meta l-minġel tal-mewt kiefer
jiġi jħabbat fuq il-bieb,
ma jġibx ħniena jew mogħdrija –
humiex għedewwa jew ħbieb!

Ħbar il-mewt ta' Sunny xterdet
ma' tar-Rabat l-erba' rjieħ
li l-Maestro issa parpar –
mar igawdi l-mistrieħ.

Ħalla jibku t-telfa tiegħu
lil martu u tliet ulied,
familjari, ġirien, qraba,
u l-għeżież nepputijiet.

Tal-Istilla u l-Għajnselmiżi
ġarrbu telfa kbira ferm;
lilhom mexxa w idderieġa
għalihom kien l-aqwa perm!

F'ħajtu ferraħ tant
semmiegħa
kien tassew klarinettista;
mhux linqas bil-mandolina
u fl-orkestra vjolinista!

Kien l-ewwel ghalliem tal-
mużika
fil-Liceo tal-Belt tagħna
f'idu l-pinna kienet bieżla –
fuq il-palk ġie li kien magħna.

F'jum il-festa ħelwa tiegħek
Sunny dlonk għalaq għajnejh
mela issa O Marija
għall-Genna aqbdu minn idejh

W inti Gorġi li tant ħabbek
tas-Sema berraħlu l-bieb –
biex hemmhekk malajr jingħaqad
ma' tant Qaddisin u ħbieb!.

WELCOME TO THE MALTESE-CANADIAN MUSEUM TORONTO CANADA

Niġel Klemenčič-Puglisevich
EMERGING PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGIST & MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL

The Maltese-Canadian Museum in Toronto is a living testament to the Maltese diaspora in Canada, and Maltese history and culture more broadly. As the name implies, the Museum houses displays that relate to immigration and the community that's made a home called Little Malta, in the Junction of Toronto. The large church hall that houses the Museum contains much more than just immigration stories, though—there are Roman lamps, ancient

coins, model buildings, traditional clothing (the *għonnella*), and much, much more. It's run by a group of volunteers and board members who are responsible for nearly every aspect of its operations and upkeep. Heading the Museum is curator Richard Cumbo, who has dedicated his life to preserving local Maltese heritage. The Museum is also a bit of a gathering place for the community in Toronto and hosts a variety of events and programs throughout the year, most of which are open to the public.

Something that's really exciting for me is that I'm beginning a project with the Museum and Western Libraries to map Maltese migrations to Turtle Island, focusing particularly on what-is-now Canada, using the collection of the Maltese-Canadian Museum. The immigration records on display are only a sample of what the Museum holds, and I want to help make these records more accessible in an effort to share the Maltese story more broadly. This is the first digital project the Museum is undertaking and it will also serve as a digital exhibition, bringing the Museum's outreach initiatives to a new audience and digitising some of the collection. The process of data collection for the project that will be platformed on ArcGIS is underway and will hopefully finish by mid-November. From there, the platform will be completed and then released to the public!

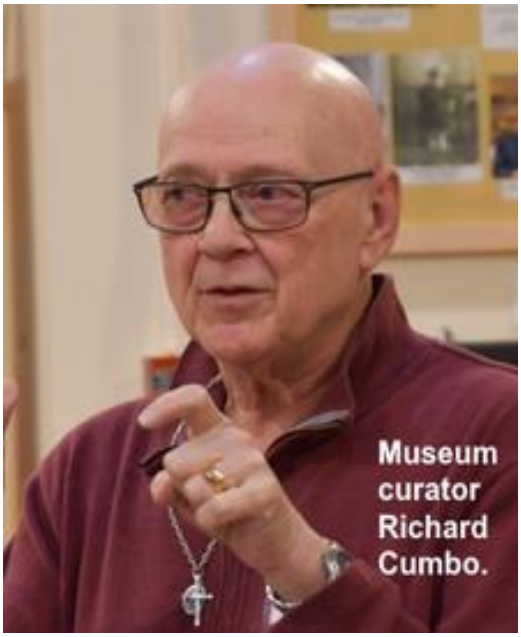
What particularly excites me about this project is the growth potential—it's starting with the collection of the Maltese-Canadian Museum, but it could easily incorporate private records, oral histories, government records, and add to a more fulsome picture of Maltese migration. I'm hoping to add my own family to the database and open it to submissions from other Maltese-Canadians. I'm going to try to programme it in a way that allows users to filter where the data comes from, ie. the Museum or private collections.

One challenge I'm faced with in conducting this project is effectively tackling the many issues of colonialism. Immigration to Canada has been part of the colonial project that is this country itself, and as a supporter of the Land Back movement, how do I exhibit immigration history and effectively discuss the colonial nature of Canada? To further complicate things, how do I manage that whilst also acknowledging that colonialism is the sole party responsible for Maltese emigration? I've grown up with my *nannu* telling me about how the Maltese were essentially kicked out of Malta because the British stopped investing in the economy and work was impossible to come by. As I grow older and more involved in the Maltese community, I hear this story repeated frequently.

When Malta was initially taken under British control in 1800, the Maltese relied heavily on imperial policy, which promised the creation of work following the construction of the Suez Canal that brought seemingly endless streams of traffic into the island's Grand Harbour. Malta's economy became reliant on British investment as opposed to the trends of Mediterranean trade, which gave the illusion of security. At the beginning of the 20th century, colonial forces declares that Malta had the highest population density on the planet and drastic action was needed. Thus, the British began encouraging emigration. The British naval base at the Malta Dockyard in the Grand Harbour was one of the biggest employers in Malta, and as the navy gradually pulled out after WWII, unemployment quickly began to rise.

This is when my own family began to feel the push to emigrate and seek work elsewhere. My great-grandfather, his siblings, my grandfather, and his siblings were all reliant on the Dockyard for work. That's where they did their apprenticeships and worked all their lives. What were they supposed to do with the Navy backing out? My grandfather considered opening his own garage, but instead was persuaded by his brother, the late Charles Puglisevich, to try working abroad. And, like many others both before and after them, they left for Canada.

The Micallef Family, after moving to the Toronto Junction from Rabat, Malta in 1923. Joseph & Josephine Micallef, and their 4 children Dolores, Angelo, Cecilia, and Carmella.
They attended St. Paul The Apostle Church in its early days, and many of the children later married there.
Photo donated by Carmella's grandson Trevor and a local historian and museum volunteer



The history of the Maltese Migrants to Canada is very rich, unique and beautiful. PRESERVE IT

Non-Maltese pupils majority in six State primary schools

Nearly 65% of pupils in Sliema, Gżira, Qawra and St Julian's are non-Maltese, with data showing divide between north's urban multiculturalism, and southern, rural villages

James Debono

Children who are not Maltese nationals are a majority in six State primary schools, and account for over one-third of the population in 11, according to data tabled in parliament.

Foreign pupils now account for over 20% of the population in 21 State primaries. The largest percentage of non-Maltese students is found in Sliema (66.5%), which hosts a large non-Maltese workforce, followed by neighbouring Gzira (65.8%), and then Qawra (65.3%), St Julian's (62.2), St Paul's Bay (59.9%) and Msida (53.3%).

The concentration is typical in the harbour area of towns that tend to house high-income foreign nationals, and in the northern towns of St Paul's Bay and Qawra where low-income foreigners seek out cheaper rental accommodation.

In Gozo the largest percentage of non-Maltese is found in Żebbuġ (45.3%), which also incorporates the locality of Marsalforn. In the south, the locality with the highest percentage of foreigners is Marsaskala where they account for 46.2% of students attending the two primary schools. But the only other locality in the south where foreigners account for more than one-fourth of the student population is Birzebbugia, where 28.3% are non-Maltese.

In the harbour area, the largest percentage of non-Maltese pupils is found in Ħamrun where they account for 26.6% of the population in two primary schools. Foreigners also account for just over a fifth of students in Marsa. In contrast foreigners account for only 4% of students in Bormla's primary school.

The statistics reveal a sharp division between urban northern localities and the southern villages, where non-Maltese pupils account for less than 10% in 30 primary schools, and less than 5% in 11 rural and southern localities.

The smallest percentage of non-Maltese students is found in Mtarfa (1.1%), Qrendi (1.7%), Bahrija (1.9%) and Dingli (2%). In Gozo the smallest percentage of foreigners is found in Kercem (2.7%).

This suggests that while many students are exposed to a multicultural reality in major urban centres, this is not the case in several smaller villages where most students are Maltese.

And populations in Sliema and Gzira are overtaking Qawra as the locality with the largest percentage of non-Maltese students. In Sliema the percentage of foreigners increased by 4.9 percentage points in a year, and by 6.3 points in Gzira and 6.6 in St Julian's. But the sharpest increase in foreigners was seen in the two primary schools in Marasaskala: 11.7 points in the new St Joachim school and 8.4 points in St Anne school. The locality is home to a growing foreign population, particularly Italians.

At the other end of the table, Siggiewi, whose percentage of foreign students increased from just 1.7% last year to 3%, lost the bottom spot to Mtarfa, which has only one non-Maltese student in its primary school.

Overall, the number of non-Maltese primary school children increased from 4,290 (19.1%) last year to 5,204 now (22.6% of total primary school children).

The statistics do not include students attending church and independent schools which also attract a significant percentage of students hailing from affluent Maltese families.

Turtle-dove spring hunt allowed again, Court rejects BirdLife Malta request for prohibitory injunction

This year, spring hunting for the Vulnerable European Turtle-dove (Gamiema) was allowed again despite a series of warnings received by the Maltese Government following the decision taken last year - on the eve of a general election - to reopen the season after the lifting of the moratorium that had been in place since 2017. Following the recommendation to halt hunting made in March 2022, the Government had also received a letter from European Commissioner for Environment Virginijus Sinkevicius addressed to Minister Clint Camilleri in May 2022, and was also awarded a formal EU warning on the hunting of Turtle-dove in February of this year.

All these were ignored, and following the opening of the spring hunting season for Common Quail on 10 April, seven days later (on 17 April), the season also opened for Turtle-dove. The legal notice was published soon after the Maltese Courts ruled against BirdLife Malta's plea for a warrant of prohibitory injunction to halt the Turtle-dove spring hunt. When it was filed in Court on 3 April, the injunction had been provisionally upheld, but in a ruling delivered following a hearing during which BirdLife Malta was not allowed to bring forward expert scientific witnesses and scientific data, Judge Giovanni Grixti rejected the warrant and revoked the initial decision, paving the way for the Government to open the season.

Up till 17 April, when Turtle-doves became legally huntable, a considerable number of Turtle-doves had already been illegally killed and during a press conference held on 13 April in front of the Office of the Prime Minister in Valletta, BirdLife Malta officials showcased a dead Turtle-dove found by a member of the public in Delimara, a notorious illegal hunting hotspot.

Following the Court's final decision, we expressed our disappointment at the outcome, and especially at the fact that the Court had relied solely on the Wild Birds Regulation Unit's reports, which conveniently use only the scientific data up till 2018, when the data up to 2021 shows further decline and that the species has never been in a worse position. Despite having data that shows the real status of the Turtle-dove, WBRU opted to select specific data sets with the aim to portray a situation that is different than reality, putting the political direction of its masters before the scientific facts from reputable institutions such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Despite the setback, BirdLife Malta remains committed to get Malta in line with the European Birds Directive and end spring hunting once and for all. Another court case initiated by BirdLife Malta against the 2022 spring hunting season is still ongoing.

There are several ways to prevent overdevelopment of an island. One way is to limit the number of buildings that can be built on the island. This can be done by setting up zoning laws that restrict the number of buildings that can be built in certain areas. Another way is to limit the amount of land that can be developed. This can be done by setting up conservation areas or protected lands that cannot be developed.

In addition, it is important to have a plan for sustainable development. This means that any development that does occur should be done in a way that is environmentally friendly and does not harm the natural beauty of the island. This can include using renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind power, and using materials that are sustainable and do not harm the environment.

It is also important to involve the local community in any decisions about development on the island. This can help ensure that any development is done in a way that benefits the community and does not harm their way of life.

Let me know what you think

Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival on May 20

First of three concerts to feature violin, violoncello and mezzo-soprano

The trio will perform at Bir Miftuħ on May 20. Photo: Shutterstock

The Bir Miftuh International Music Festival returns on Saturday May 20 with the first of three concerts to be held at the picturesque site. Violoncellist Julie Sévilla-Fraysee, violinist Anja Gerter and mezzo-soprano Clare Ghigo will perform works by J.S. Bach, Telemann, Handel, Cassado', Bacewicz, Dancla, Mozart and Haydn.

The concert begins at 7.30pm.

Tickets must be reserved and cost €25 each, including refreshments at the Church grounds.

The concert has been made possible by the Embassy of France, the Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. The festival resumes on June 10 with a cello and piano recital by the Karlsruhe Duo which begins at 7.30pm.

On June 16, the festival's final event will see the Cappella Sanctae Catharinae perform a choral recital. That event begins at 8pm.

Block bookings for the second and third concerts are €45 per person for two concerts, and €65 per person for three concerts. Bookings can be made by emailing reservations@dinlarthelwa.org

The medieval church of Santa Maria ta' Bir Miftuħ is located outside the Malta International Airport near the roundabout to Gudja.

A medieval gem: Bir Miftuh Chapel

Despite the ravages of time and war, Bir Miftuh is immaculately preserved today. Din l-Art Helwa is an NGO founded in 1965 to safeguard the historic, artistic and natural heritage of Malta. Here, Victor Rizzo, the treasurer of the organisation, kicks off a series about the key cultural heritage properties managed by the organisation in Malta, Gozo and Comino which are open to the public. This piece is about the ancient chapel of Bir Miftuh, which stands opposite Malta International Airport. Glance right as you exit MIA to catch a glimpse of it.

The Chapel of Santa Maria ta' Bir Miftuh is an outstanding example of medieval architecture. Built almost 600 years ago, it saw the arrival of the Knights, was desecrated by the Turks during the Great Siege of 1565 and suffered bomb damage in the Second World War. Located in Gudja, it is one of the best-preserved examples of a parish church of the 15th century. It was declared a parish in 1436 by Bishop Senatore de Mello and served as such until 1676 when the Parish Church of Gudja was built. It was never in the centre of a village but was had parish church status and served several villages.

The chapel is free standing and shows a growing confidence in the handling of stone structures. It is simple and austere in design, with fine pointed stone arches on which rest the long stone roof slabs. It has a plain rectangular plan and measures about 11 by 14 metres.

The chapel was originally larger and built in the shape of a cross. In the 16th century the rear end of the chapel was demolished and the stones were used in the construction of the present parish church of Gudja. An imposing belfry, a 16th century addition, perches proudly over the main doorway. No bells are in place.

Legend has it that these bells were hastily buried in the soil during the Great Siege of 1565. They are still waiting to be discovered.
The altar was brought from another chapel and dates from the 16th century. The altar painting is on wood and probably belongs to the second half of the same century and depicts the figure of God holding a Crucifix surrounded by angels at the top of the panel. The lower part shows a hilly landscape with the Virgin and Child on clouds flanked by St Peter and St Paul.
Over the centuries the chapel suffered from neglect and lack of use. It was close to total collapse until the Ecclesiastical Authorities gave the chapel to Din l-Art Helwa in Trust in 1970. Restoration started in 1973 and was generously sponsored by Malta International Airport, which continues to support it to this day.
During restoration, the remains of a fresco covering the wall facing the altar were discovered under thick layers of lime. The fresco depicts the Last Judgment and is divided into three tiers of figures. The upper tier shows the Apostles and Mary with the figure of Christ in the centre. The figures below this tier represent Mary, a hand holding a sword representing St Paul, St James and St Andrew, St Lawrence, St Benedict holding a church model, Peter the Martyr, and possibly St Catherine holding the palm of martyrdom. The figures above this tier show a kneeling saint representing St John the Baptist, four unknown female saints, St Ursula holding a pike-staff and St Barbara holding a model of a round tower.
The second tier shows the damned being led away to the fiery pits of hell by demons with horns, tails and webbed feet. On the left side one can make out the wing of an angel and the back of one of the faithful being drawn towards God and the Virgin Mary.
The lower tier probably depicts the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. On the north wall, in the first bay, there is a picture of a woman, in a costume fashionable in the 16th century, holding a lily in one hand and pointing to the main altar painting with the other.
The frescoes were expertly restored and regular inspections are carried out. Further restoration involved the repair of all walls and a leaking roof. The floor laid in 1942 was replaced with globigerina limestone flagstones, and the exterior areas adjacent to the walls were paved. In 2004, restoration of the churchyard at the back of the chapel was completed.
The Chapel is an ideal setting for the Bir Miftuh International Music Festival held regularly in the Summer by Din l-Art Helwa since 1997. It is open for visitors the first Sunday of the month from 9.30 till noon.

Lesser-Known Historical Sites in Malta

Malta is a history lover's paradise. This island has attracted a variety of ancient populations, each of whom left their mark on its stones. While some of these remains are quite known to the public and are visited regularly by tourists and locals, there are other sites which seem to lie low on travellers' radars. Yet these historical locations are still significant and are perfect to visit if you're in Malta for a longer period of time. Today, we delve into four lesser known sites to explore their unique features and the impact they left on the island.

Skorba Temple

The temple at Skorba is one of the smallest temple structures found in Malta. This ancient site is located in Zebbiegh, limits of Mgarr, amidst a sea of fields and rolling hills. The landscape here has not changed much from how it was at the time of the temple builders and gives us a better perspective of what the temple builders actually saw and experienced during their time. The earliest remains found in this structure date back to over 4000 B.C., meaning that this area had been inhabited very early on in our island's history. What remains of the temple are mostly upright stones known as megaliths, as well as foundation stones which show us how the temple might have looked like. The remains

found at this site were of unique importance to archaeologists, with the most recognisable being a terracotta figure of the mother goddess, which can now be found at the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta.
Visiting Hours: Monday to Sunday: 09.00 – 17.00hrs
Last admission at 16.30hrs Closed on 24, 25 & 31 December, 1 January & Good Friday
Due to the small size and fragility of these sites, only 15 visitors may be admitted at a time

Ta' Hagrat Temple

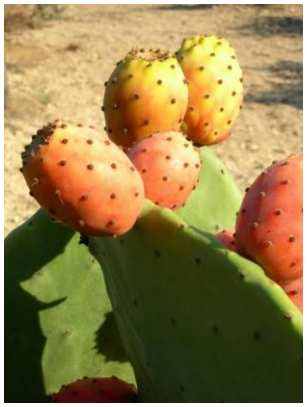
The temple at Ta' Hagrat can also be found in the same area as Skorba, in the small village of Mgarr. Ta' Hagrat is also on the smaller side, yet it is a beautifully preserved temple which still retains much of its original structure. This temple is easily recognisable due to its monumental doorway, which was reconstructed in 1937 using its original lintel. The doorway is instantly distinguishable as it includes a three-step entryway, a feature which is rarely seen in other temple sites. Both Ta' Hagrat and Skorba temples are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, due to their ancient age and historical significance. These temples are some of the lesser known among Malta's vast network of ancient sites; however, they are worth a visit to truly appreciate their beauty.
Visiting hours: Monday to Sunday: 09.00 – 17.00hrs
Last admission at 16.30hrs Closed on 24, 25 & 31 December, 1 January & Good Friday
Due to the small size and fragility of these sites, only 15 visitors may be admitted at a time

Ta' Bistra Catacombs

Ta' Bistra Catacombs, located in the town of Mosta, are the largest network of underground tombs outside of the Mdina/Rabat area found in Malta so far. These catacombs date back to the 4th Century AD, when Malta was slowly being converted to Christianity. Marvelously preserved, these catacombs are now one of the most accessible sites in Malta, with ramps allowing for wheelchair and pushchair access, as well as an interactive visitor's centre with audio-visual information about the tombs. While certainly not as known as the catacombs in Rabat, this newly refurbished heritage site shines a new light on life (and death) during the early stages of Christianity on the island.
Visiting hours: Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays between 09.00 and 17.00hrs
Last admission is at 16.30hrs Closed on 24, 25 & 31 December, 1 January & Good Friday

Maltese Liqueurs to Keep you Warm

Now that winter is at our doorstep and the temperatures are getting colder, people tend to turn to alcohol to bring some warmth to their face and hands. If you are in Malta, or planning to get here soon, you might want to stay away from your traditional whiskies and wines, and try something more unique. The following are Maltese liqueurs worth considering:



Bajtra Liqueur - The bajtra (pronounced 'baitra') is the prickly pear, a tree that thrives on the Maltese islands. Prickly pear trees were originally popular because farmers planted them to act as windbreakers and also to bar access from one field to another, serving as a deterrent to most wanderers. However, it also became popular due to the belief that it contains medicinal properties, with prickly pears being used to treat a vast array of ailments, ranging from insect stings to stomach aches. August is usually the harvest season of prickly pears, with locals eating the sweet, refreshing prickly pear fruit by the dozens.
It stands to reason that the abundant prickly pears were put to better use by forming a sweet-tasting liqueur, perfect for an aperitif or an after-dinner drink to round up the day. The Bajtra Liqueur is best served chilled, with no ice added to it.

Rummiena Liqueur - The Pomegranate tree (Rummiena) is also found in abundance on the Maltese islands. While it is not indigenous to the island, it was introduced centuries ago and thrived in this climate. Like the prickly pear, the pomegranate has also been considered to contain healing properties. A number of shrines dedicated to Il-Madonna tar-Rummiena (Our Lady of the Pomegranate) reveal another association with this crimson fruit: abundance.
The Maltese liqueur produced from local pomegranate provides all the sweet and tart flavours that make the crimson fruit so unique. Best served chilled, on the rocks, or as a base for any creative cocktails you can come up with. Sit down and get your cogs turning!

Ħarruba Liqueur - The carob tree (il-Ħarruba) has been an integral part of Maltese vegetation for centuries. Due to its ability to survive on little water and with no cultivation, it is quite a common tree in Malta. The fruit's beans and pods have had a variety of uses. During World War II, the beans formed part of the diet of the locals who were slowly starving to death due to a food shortage. Up until fairly recently, carob beans were crushed and boiled to produce a syrupy liquid, which was then used for sore throats and coughs. The carob pods are still used to this day to make carob sweets (karamelli), by mixing carob pods and honey until caramelised. These small brown squares of healthy goodness are usually available during Good Friday processions, as they are the only sweets allowed during Lent.
The Ħarruba liqueur is only another way of enjoying the sweet taste of carobs. This liqueur can be served chilled, on the rocks, or also neat, and it is best served after a meal, to close on a sweet note.

Limunċell - The Limunċell is the Maltese version of the popular Italian Limoncello, a liqueur made from local lemons. Its zesty taste is the perfect end to a meal.
If you would like to try something different, and make your own limuncell, drop by The Limestone Heritage, Park and Gardens in Siggiewi. One of their venues is a citrus garden, where guests are allowed to participate in making limuncell. First, the visitors are given a detailed demonstration. Then, fresh lemons are picked from the trees and the zest peeled off. This is then put into jars and immersed in alcohol, ready to be stored for two weeks. The peeled lemons are used to make refreshing lemonade and lemon sorbet, with lemonade and limuncell shots being served to guests during this activity.
All these bottles of liqueur cost less than €30, making it an affordable memento to carry back home with you. Moreover, the sturdy, cleverly designed packaging of most of these liqueurs make them ideal souvenirs for your loved ones back home or living abroad.

Feel the Magic of Opera Favourites –

Review by Cav. Uff. Dott. Tonio Portughese OMRI Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana
Published by admin

AN OUTSTANDING *FEEL THE MAGIC OF OPERA FAVOURITES*

This high level operatic Concert rewards Chorus Urbanus conducted by Dr Mro John Galea for a performance enriched by EXCELLENCE.

All aspects were fine tuned with our Malta Philharmonic Orchestra at its very best with distinct international standard ,disciplined, flexible and adaptable to various changes set by different selections for solo orchestra, choir and the exceptional guest singers of high professional quality: SOPRANO CLAUDIA SASSO AND TENOR LEONARDO CAPALBO.

Mro Galea is to be congratulated for his selection of arias, orchestral performances and credit to the Chorus Urbanus.The programme started with a bang: the.Overture from Giuseppe Verdi's *La forza del Destino*, perfectly performed and setting the appropriate stage for a high level concert. Soprano Sasso distinguished herself in the unique renditions of Offenbach's 'Les Oiseaux dans les charmille' and 'Casta Diva' from Bellini's *Norma*. Tenor Capalbo was at his best in 'Recondita Armonia' from Puccini's *Tosca* and 'Nessun Dorma' from *Turandot*.

They were both extraordinary performers in *La Traviata* 's 'Sempre Libera' leading to gran finale of the evergreen 'Brindisi'.

The Chorus Urbanus is to be congratulated for the rendition of Verdi's 'Va Pensiero' from *Nabucco*, 'O Signore.dal tetto natio' from *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* and 'Coro di Zingari' from *Il Trovatore*.

The audience that packed the Astra Theatre gave a very warm and enthusiastic applause reflecting its deep appreciation of a real experience of a memorable OPERA MAGIC. We will continue to cherish this wonderful opera excursus. My congratulations go to the Chorus Urbanus led by Dr Mro John Galea for such an outstanding performance.

TRULY, A UNIQUE BEL CANTO CONCERT hopefully to be emulated by other organisers and musical societies. [photo credits: Joe Attard and Teatru Astra]