



JOURNAL FOR MALTESE AROUND THE WORLD

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

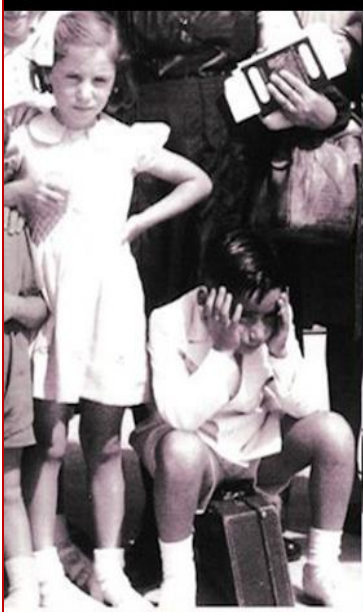


Editor: Frank Scicluna OAM MQR JP

maltesejournal@gmail.com



SAHHA MALTA



HISTORY OF MALTESE EMIGRATION

They left Malta and Gozo and their families and friends to seek a better future for themselves and their children. Now, many of them passed away and we remember their sorrow, tears and sacrifices to settle in far away countries like Australia, Canada, USA and UK. **THEY ARE OUR HEROES**

Victory Day

8th
SEPTEMBER

1565
1799
1945



HER
NANNA
JUST
TOLD
HER
SHE IS
MALTESE

IL-HAĠAR
HEART OF GOZO



VisitMalta

Proud Sponsor



<https://heritagemalta.mt/>

How to make
Maltese Cheese
-Gbejniet-



IL-VITORJA - 8 SEPTEMBER

Victory Day - 8 September)- is a public holiday celebrated in Malta on 8 September^[1] and recalls the end of three historical sieges made on the Maltese archipelago, namely: the Great Siege of Malta by the Ottoman Empire ending in 1565; the Siege of Valletta by the French Blockade ending in 1800; and, the Siege of Malta during the Second World War by the Axis forces ending in 1943.

This day also coincides with the commemoration of the birth of the Virgin Mary, better known as the Nativity of Mary, which is celebrated in the villages of Senglea, Naxxar and Mellieha in Malta, and Xagħra in Gozo. It is locally known as *il-Vitorja* (the Victory) and *il-Bambina* (the Baby).^[2] The traditional *regatta* featuring boat races in the Grand Harbour is held on Victory Day.

On 7 September 1565, the Sicilian fleet Gran Soccorso, reached the Maltese shores to provide assistance to the Maltese, therefore setting back the Turkish invasion. The next day, after more than three months of siege, the Ottomans, who were besieging the suburbs of Birgu and Isla, retired their forces and left that region of the island. It can be said that this date marked the last day of the Great Siege, which is considered one of the bloodiest in world history and the greatest siege in the history of Malta.

The surrender of French troops that had been occupying Malta to Emmanuele Vitale and Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana on 4 September 1800 is also a historical event related to the celebration taking place on this day. The siege of Malta in the Second World War concluded in November 1942. During this time, Malta experienced a total of 3,000 bombing raids over a period of two years in an effort to destroy Royal Air Force defences and the ports.^[4] For enduring this, King George VI of the United Kingdom awarded the George Cross to the entire island and the design of the George Cross was incorporated into the Maltese flag.

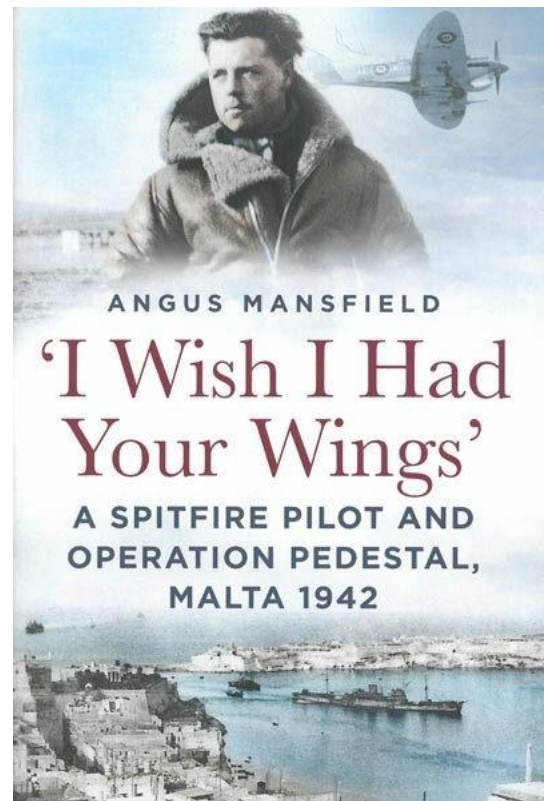
On 8 September 1943, Italy withdrew from the war and ended hostilities against the Allies and turned against its former German ally. The Italian Prime Minister, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, read the statement that "The Italian Government, recognizing the impossibility of continuing the unequal struggle against the overwhelming power of the enemy, and with the object of avoiding further and more grievous harm to the nation, has requested an armistice from General Eisenhower ... This request has been granted. The Italian forces will, therefore, cease all acts of hostility against the Anglo-American forces wherever they may be met..."^[6] U.S. Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower released the news of the unconditional surrender, "effective this instant", at the same time in a broadcast from Allied Headquarters in North Africa.^[7] The Italian fleet sailed to Malta to surrender.

The primary activity is a boat race organized by the Maltese Council for Sport (Maltese: *Kunsill Malti għall-Isport*), locally known as *regatta*, that takes place in the Grand Harbour, engaging the affiliated societies Cospicua, Vittoriosa, Birzebbuga, Marsa, Marsamxett, Kalkara and Isla. A number of boat races subdivided in two categories take place.

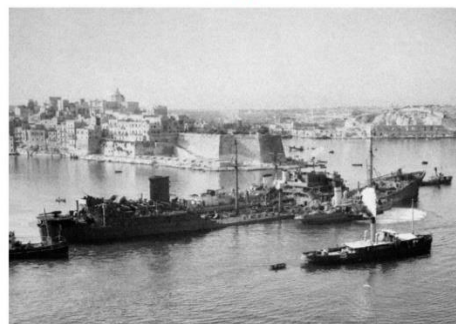
In Gozo, a commemorative ceremony is held in Independence Square in Rabat presided by the Minister for Gozo.^[3] The Armed Forces of Malta also involve themselves in a parade and finally place a wreath at the foot of the War Memorial dedicated to Christ the King of Jews.

I Wish I Had Your Wings: A Spitfire Pilot and Operation Pedestal, Malta 1942 Hardcover

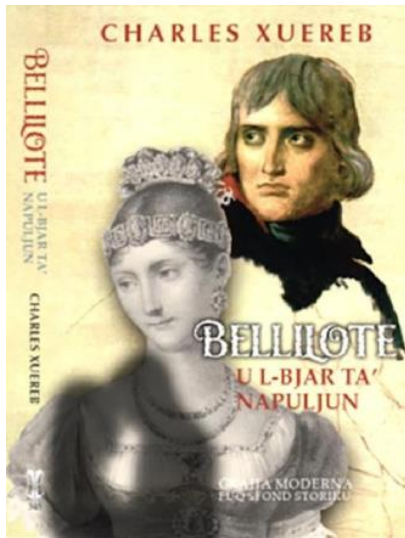
In August 1942, British launched Operation Pedestal in an attempt to deliver supplies to the stricken island of Malta, an Allied base which had been under Axis blockade for months. From 9-15 August a convoy of some 50 ships ran the gauntlet of Axis bombers, submarines, E-boats and minefields. Of the original fourteen merchant vessels, only five reached Malta Grand Harbour. In 'I Wish I had Your Wings', Angus Mansfield relates the experiences of two men involved in Pedestal, Captain David Macfarlane of MV Melbourne Star and his nephew David Mejor, one of the Spitfire pilots who fought to protect the convoy. Told using their log books, letters and papers, this is the story of one family's contribution to a relief operation that cost of over 400 Allied lives, but which has gone down in history as one of the most important British strategic victories of the Second World War. AUTHOR: Angus Mansfield is the author of 'Barney Barnfather: Life on a Spitfire Squadron' and 'Spitfire Saga: Rodney Scrase DFC', published by The History Press. He was educated at Wallington Grammar School and currently works in banking. SELLING POINTS: . The story of Operation Pedestal told using the papers of a pilot and his naval uncle . Previously unpublished papers and photographs . Captain David Macfarlane was later awarded the DSO by Lord Louis Mountbatten . Drawn from primary sources, including pilot's and captain's logs 40 b/w illustrations



*Captain of the Ohio,
Dudley Mason, awarded the
George Cross for bringing the
tanker SS OHIO into Malta on
the 15th August 1942.*



ST JULIAN'S PUBLIC SQUARE WITH NAPOLEON CONNECTION INAUGURATED WITH NEW BOOK



'Bellilote u l-Bjar ta' Napuljun' is authored by academic Charles Xuereb

A new historical novel, published by *Klabb Kotba Maltin*, was recently launched with an original twist during the inauguration of a quaint square in St Julian's, connected with the watering of several ships of General Napoleon Bonaparte's fleet on its way to Egypt in 1798.

The square, which was inaugurated by the mayor of St Julian's, Guido Dalli, on behalf of all the members of the council, is now called *Wesgħet il-Bjar ta' Napuljun* and is only a stone's throw away from Spinola.

The wells, originally dug by the Order of the Knights, used to collect rainwater coming down from Ta' Giorni when the area was still

uninhabited; it sourced a water spring flowing downhill to the bay. Neighbours kept referring to the locality as *Fuq il-Bjar ta' Napuljun* for more than two centuries.

This historical connection with the locality was exploited by academic Charles Xuereb not only to propose the name change of the square but also to write a novel entitled *Bellilote u l-Bjar ta' Napuljun*, lacing past events with a modern fictitious narration featuring the real-life character

Bellilote.

St Julian's mayor Guido Dalli inaugurating *Wesgħet il-Bjar ta' Napuljun* with the author of the new novel *Bellilote u l-Bjar ta' Napuljun* (centre) and Renaud Lallement, cultural counsellor at the Embassy of France in Malta. Photo: Perit Edward Said



In the novel, a Parisian young couple, Marin and Maxine, arrive in Valletta on a cruise ship in 2024 and in no time make friends with a Maltese young guide who introduces them to an academic and owner of a private archive in Valletta.

Protagonist Marin discovers that one of his ancestors, François Lhoste (a nephew of the only mayor who in real life was assassinated to safeguard public order in Żebbuġ in 1798), left a diary detailing where he had hid Saladin's emerald, a promise of love to Bellilote.

In the novel, the French bride lands in Malta with Bonaparte's army, after honeymooning on board, dressed as a male soldier in order to

remain with her spouse (this is true history).

After her novelised Malta affair, Bellilote travelled to Cairo where she was factually seduced by Bonaparte, becoming a famous historical figure herself.

In our time, Marin has to race against a rival, searching for the diary in London, Paris and Marseille. Will he complete the circle and find the emerald first? And where on the island?

The book *Bellilote u l-Bjar ta' Napuljun* by Charles Xuereb may be acquired from bookshops or online via Midsea Books.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE – LET'S WORK TOGETHER



Independence Day

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT SEAN RICHARDSON-NSW

Like all things in Malta, gaining independence from Britain was a hard fought and controversial path. Within Malta and in Britain, the differing views were debated over many years, till Malta formally gained independence on September 21, 1964.

60 years ago Malta became a sovereign nation within the Commonwealth, with Queen Elizabeth II remaining as the head of state. This year, 2024, is also a 50 year anniversary in Malta's path of nationhood towards carving its own place on the international stage. Ten years after Malta

achieved independence it became a **republic**, in December 1974 having its first president and replacing the Queen as head of state.

Malta's strategic importance, underlined during the Second World War, coupled with the island's stern resistance against the Nazis and Fascist Italians was acknowledged by the British. The King gave the people of Malta the George Cross and raised the prospect of giving the Maltese people independence. Limited local rule was given in 1947 but considering its economic dependence on Britain, independence became a distant prospect even when the push for independence formed in the 1950s. Sir Herbert Brittain of the British Treasury remarked in mid-1955 that Malta could '*never be given Commonwealth status, because of defence considerations*'. The British government was hesitant to grant full integration, leading to frustration among Maltese leaders and citizens. Malta even flirted with the idea of integration with the UK in the 1956 referendum. After the failure of the referendum the focus again shifted towards full independence.

Independence was seen by the Maltese as an opportunity to assert their national identity, culture, and heritage. While there was a general sense of hope, there were also feelings of apprehension and uncertainty. Malta faced economic challenges and had limited natural resources, leading some to worry about the nation's economic future.

The turning point came in 1961, when a new constitution was drafted granting Malta full internal self-government, setting the stage for subsequent negotiations for complete independence. This was still not a certain pathway. Within the population frustrations built and there arose an anti-British and pro-Independence sentiment.

Malta's independence was granted through a series of political and constitutional developments, culminating in formal negotiations between Maltese leaders and the British government till the Independence referendum was held in May 1964. The referendum was successful and opened the way for a new constitution to be enacted. It provided for a parliamentary democracy with the British monarch as the head of state, represented in Malta by a Governor-General.

Malta formally gained independence on September 21, 1964. The transition was peaceful and marked by official ceremonies. A large celebration was held, with the lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the Maltese flag.

The next step along the pathway to full autonomy via a republic began. Another momentous decision awaited the country and of course there were political differences within Malta and scepticism in Britain.

Writing at the beginning of 1965, Britain's high commissioner in Malta, Sir Edward Wakefield, recorded: '*For the moment ... the change from dependence to independence appears to have been one of form rather than of substance. Before*

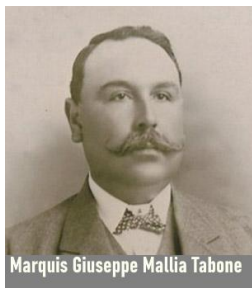
independence the Maltese were managing – or mismanaging – their own internal affairs. They are still doing so. Before independence their economy was sustained by British Services' expenditure in the island, coupled with British financial aid. It is still being sustained by the same means'.

It would take ten years till Malta's first President, Sir Anthony Mamo, was installed. Mamo having been the last Governor General, on December 13, 1974, helped make the transition a relatively smooth affair.

With 2024 marking the 50- and 60-year anniversaries, it should be remembered that Malta's independence was a significant and complex moment in its history, marked by a blend of hope, pride, and uncertainty.

The island nation further developed its own political and cultural identity, through becoming a republic and navigating its place on the international stage to later become a European Union members state.

This is the fifth article in a series of significant anniversaries marking Malta's pathway along nationhood. Other articles can be found in earlier editions of the Malta Journal or at seanrichardson.com.au, where Sean writes about Malta.



Marquis Giuseppe Mallia Tabone

IR-RAZZETT TAL-MARKIS – MOSTA

One true Maltese gem was founded in Mosta by a group of old enthusiasts in 1983 called the Ghaqda Filantropika Talent Mosti at the Razzett tal-Markiz Mallia Tabone. The founders have been sharing the same talents and unique interest in the theatrical arts and other creative activities over the decades.

Their undying love for the theatrical arts is exuded in each individual talent in various areas where they wholeheartedly contributed in many successful stage plays, dramatic and comical and folklore video recordings as well as religious pageants. They also have unselfishly shared their talents with the young and old alike and drama courses have been conducted for the enthusiasts.

Since the Ghaqda Filantropika Talent Mosti was allocated for this group of talented Mostin, many art and craft exhibitions and other related activities from literature, poetry readings and folklore to music and many more events have taken place at the Razzett tal-Markiz.

The people of Malta are truly proud of the Razzett tal-Markiz as it does not only give one the golden opportunity to express one's talent but a place to extend and exchange knowledge and to learn from one another. You can follow their activities on the Facebook page.



The Church in Malta and Gozo are launching a Maltese version of the official hymn for the 2025 Jubilee with the theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Next year, the Church and Catholics from around the world are called to be a source of hope, unity and compassion within their communities.

The hymn was originally written in Italian by Prof. Pierangelo Sequeri, with the music composition by Maestro Francesco Meneghello, tackling themes such as creation, fraternity, the goodness of God and hope. The 2025 Jubilee begins officially on Christmas Eve this year and

is then celebrated among dioceses all around the world on the 29th of December 2024.

The audio, lyrics and musical scores of the hymn for the 2025 Jubilee in Maltese can be found on the official website: iubilaeum2025.va.



THE PEOPLE WHO PAY THOUSANDS TO CARRY THE 'SANTA MARIJA' STATUE IN MGARR, MALTA

Wistin Vella has consistently headed the winning team for three decades

[Fiona Galea Debono](#)

Every year, the privilege of carrying the 'Santa Marija' statue in the Mgarr procession is given to the family that places the highest bid at a community auction. Photo: Facebook/Festa Santa Marija Mgarr

For over 30 years, Wistin Vella has outbid the competition for an unusual auction prize – the right to carry the *Santa Marija* statue during Mgarr's annual feast.

Last year his family paid €15,000 for the privilege and as the bidding war returns this Sunday, he is aiming to offer even more. Driven by an "act of charity" as the money is used to help the community, the traditional 'bidding war' dates to 1923, a year after the statue of *Santa Marija* was brought to the village – and carrying it has become somewhat of a family tradition for Vella and his relatives.

It is said the 'auction' was first held after the parish was overwhelmed with requests to carry the statue during the procession. It was decided that the team with the highest donation would earn this right and privilege, reserved only to today's approximately 5,000 Mgarr residents.

But this has remained firmly the domain of one family that manages to outbid the others, setting an unbeatable target offer every year.

Vella said his grandfather started the offering over 100 years ago, when he helped pay for the statue of the Assumption of Mary, ordered from Marseilles in France through an agent in Valletta.

The tradition passed to his uncle before it became Vella's turn to place the family's bid.

Although he has consistently headed the winning team for three decades, Vella said he takes nothing for granted. Despite the family track record, he insists it is not a given that they will secure the highest bid again.

"We do not know who and how much others are bidding," he said, adding that the 'battle' is usually between around two to three groups.

While his group of cousins has already established a limit for the 'auction' on Sunday, and it should surpass last year's donation, he is, understandably, cagey about the amount.

We do not know who and how much others are bidding

In 2022, on the 100th anniversary of the statue, this broke the record, when their bid reached a whopping €46,000 – such was their drive to carry it on that special occasion.

Prior to that, the record bid stood at [€17,000 in 2019](#), almost doubling the amount offered some 20 years before. Vella intends to uphold the long-standing tradition, but "we will only know in those 15 minutes at noon on Sunday", he said.

Hundreds of Mgarr parishioners turn up on the church parvis after the Angelus to watch the groups announce their bids in turn, in a nail-biting auction-like fashion, hoping to edge the others out of the running.

Wistin Vella, right, with Mgarr mayor Paul Vella, says his family feel grateful for the honour of carrying the statue, after donating thousands of euros for the privilege. Photo: Facebook/Wistin Vella

If the 12 family members win, they will meet at the church at 5.30pm and proceed to carry the 800kg statue along the three-mile procession later that evening.

The group consists of eight bearers and four others holding the *forċini* – wooden poles with a metal fork at one end – used to support the statue when the bearers stop for a breather.

Although they do their utmost to be the bearers on the occasion, Vella said members willingly give up their place if they see that someone else really wants to do this. Besides the religious aspect of the event, he stresses on the charitable reason behind the initiative, explaining that the parish priest donates some of the money raised to a cause, while a portion of the funds will be allocated to works on the sacristy.

Asked whether being a statue bearer was a form of sacrifice and a way of saying thank you, or of asking for some grace, Vella said that "when we carry it, we feel very grateful".



(Photo Left) The first five female police officers were recruited back on the 4th of June 1956 and stationed in Valletta. (Photo Right) Check out this 97-year-old photo of Malta's first women police officers patrolling Valletta - 'Il-Pulizija' magazine and The National Archives of Malta

Malta's first women police officers

Emma Galea

Nowadays it has become a common occurrence to see female police officers in Malta, but it wasn't always like this.

They used to assist with work at the police station and even help with murder investigations and immigration cases. They in fact, helped in the infamous case of the murder of little [Twanny Aquilina](#). Even though they used to conduct many patrols, they were never allowed to patrol without any male police supervision.

They were not even allowed to leave their home with their uniform but had to change at the police station itself, unlike other male police officers.

Unfortunately, back then they had to stop working if they decided to get married and were paid much less than their male equivalents. In fact, their pay was only 4 shillings and 4 pence a day, €1.23 by today's currency.

The photo shows Rita Refalo (left) and Joan Cuschieri (right) walking by Valletta's city gate in their smart khaki uniform.

Alongside Rita and Joan, Mary Apap, Maria Cristina and Salvina Attard were also recruited. Both Rita, Salvina and Maria were from Gozo.

Being Gozitan and working in Malta is still somewhat a challenge these days, let alone in the 1950s when travel between the two islands was that much more difficult.

Before they were recruited, they had to sit down for an exam where they were tested in Mathematics, English and Maltese.

They even had to cut their hair to shoulder length as they were not allowed to have long hair. In 1962 and 1967, more female police officers were recruited and by 1967, Malta even had its very own first woman sergeant.



NEWS FROM THE MALTESE COMMUNITY OF ADELAIDE

After a successful sausage sizzle the Annual General Meeting of the St. Catherine Society of South Australia was held last Sunday 18 August 2024 at St. Brigid Hall, LeHunte Street, Kilburn. It was well attended. The President welcomed all the members present. The new committee was elected: Bernadette Buhagiar as President, Agnes Borg as Secretary, Jimmy Fenech as Treasurer, Debbie Cosford as Public Officer, Bernadette Agius, Deane Cosford and Antony Jackson. The trustees of the association are Ted Camilleri and Frank Scicluna. Mr Charles Zarb was the Returning Officer. We extend our best wishes and every success to the new committee.



THE MALTESE SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA is having the annual general meeting (AGM) on Friday 27 September 2024 at 1.00pm at the Council's Progressive Hall, LeHunte Street, Kilburn. This is the first AGM after the death of the late President, Mr. Frank Grima. It is very important for all members to attend this important meeting to elect a new committee to run this vibrant group.



The Maltese Chaplaincy Festivities Group of South Australia invites you to....

QUEEN OF VICTORIES FEAST

(IL-BAMBINA)

8th September 2024

Christ the King Catholic Church
Lockleys South Australia

Everyone
is invited
to attend

Maltese Mass commencing at 2.30pm followed by social gathering in the Parish Hall.

Stay tuned for more information closer to date posted via the MCFG Facebook Page...

A family's flight from Egypt 80 years ago Alfred Conti Borda recounts family's journey from British base in North Africa to Malta

Alfred Conti Borda

John Conti (standing far right) together with wife Georgette (sitting right) holding Alfred. Also in the picture are Charles Abela (left) and Helen (Georgette's sister) holding John, and the girls' father, George Choucri. Right: Alfred at nine months.

John Conti Borda, a leading steward in the Royal Navy, had been stationed in Ismailia, a British base in Egypt during World War II, since 1941.



He had not seen his parents, Alfredo and Maria, from the late 1930s and, so, he was yearning to see them. Finally, his chance came when, at the end of May 1944, the Free French Steamer SS *Eridan* arrived at Alexandria, to embark passengers.

The family of Georgette, John's wife and their son, Alfred, lived near the British base of Ismailia, so they had to take a four-hour journey to Alexandria to board the ship the next day.

Among the passengers were also British subjects, other people employed by His Majesty's government, persons working in the dockyard or in the services and their families, including Charles Abela, also in the Royal Navy, his wife, Helen (Georgette's sister) and their son, John.

John Conti (Royal Navy) on sentry duties in Ismailia, Egypt, on March 21, 1942. The two sisters, Georgette and Helen, were rather worried because they were leaving their family behind to settle in a new country.

Moreover, they could not speak Maltese but, since they had received a French education, they could converse between themselves and fluently with the sailors on board the French ship they were travelling on.



*Alfred Conti
Borda*

Leading steward John recalled that the large convoy consisted of a battleship, two cruisers, two troopships and two other ships, including the SS *Eridan*, escorted by destroyers weaving continuously to protect the ships, as witnessed by his wife, Georgette.

The convoy left Alexandria on June 6, 1944, but a journey which usually took three days lasted a week to finally arrive safely at Grand Harbour in Malta.

Alfredo and Maria were overjoyed to see their son John after so many years and more so on meeting Georgette and their son, Alfred for the first time. It was a very happy reunion for the whole family.

The island had received a battering by the Axis air forces during World War II and, so, it was in shambles. The family settled at the old address, No. 60, Pietà Wharf, on the seafront for a period of over half a century up until 1995. During that time, the address was changed to 63, Marina Street (Triq ix-Xatt), Pietà. *Published in the Times of Malta - 26 June 2024*



Friday 6 September 2024 at 19:30

Lost Paradise

**Exhibition by Henry Alamango &
Galina Troizky**

As Summer draws to an end, Il-Haġar Museum in Victoria, Gozo, is all set for the opening of a new temporary exhibition by artists Henry Alamango and Galina Troizky. The title chosen for this exhibition – *Lost Paradise* – evokes the English poet John Milton’s famous epic poem *Paradise Lost* and explores the concept of continuously searching for a “paradise” elsewhere while remaining blind to the “paradise” in the here and now. In this pursuit, our roots, family, community, identity, and culture are irrevocably sacrificed in the mad desire for a “lost paradise”.

The exhibition reflects a reality with which most viewers will be intimately familiar. Yet, the exhibits invite an inner examination of our pursuit of what we perceive as the “good” life, the paradise we yearn for but might already have at our disposal, if only we were not too distracted or disoriented to truly appreciate it.

The exhibition will be inaugurated by the Hon. Clint Camilleri, Minister for Gozo and Planning, on **Friday 6 September 2024 at 19:30**, and will remain open until Sunday 10 November 2024. The opening function will be followed by an exclusive event for a limited number of guests at The Roof at Il-Haġar, for which reservations are required. For more information, please send an email to events@heartofgozo.org.mt. Admission to the Museum is free. R.S.V.P: events@heartofgozo.org.mt



TWO amazing MUST ATTEND events in support of Dementia, right here on your doorstep in Malta!

We would like to welcome you to the upcoming International Conference on Dementia in Malta, as well as the Gala Dinner to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Malta Dementia Society. This is the first ever local conference on dementia being organised in Malta. Both events will be held at the prestigious Hilton Hotel in St. Julian’s Malta, on

the 6th and 7th September 2024.

The Conference is organised by the Malta Dementia Society, with the participation of the Dementia Care Directorate at the Ministry of Health and the Departments of Gerontology and Dementia Studies, and Nursing at the University of Malta. It brings together local and foreign experts in policy, health, and social care sciences in our endeavour to continue transforming the dementia landscape in Malta and raising awareness. The Conference is being held in English.

The Gala Dinner will close off the conference in a most enjoyable way, and is a great opportunity for all the participants to meet in a social ambience. It will be an occasion to come together and celebrate over some amazing food, and live music entertainment and dancing. In the course of the evening, an auction with some fascinating artworks donated by renowned Maltese artists and many other pieces, will be held, with all the proceeds going towards the various activities organised by the Malta Dementia Society for individuals living with dementia in the community or in residential/nursing homes, and their families.

FLORIANA PARADE GROUND XAGHRA TAL-FURJANA



Ivan Consiglio



Ix-Xaghra tal-Furjana Floriana Parade Ground

Ix-Xaghra tal Furjana dates back to the very early 1800s. On the 13th November, 1804, the two Maltese Provincial Battalions of Infantry were reviewed on the Floriana Parade Ground and were warmly commended in the General Orders issued on 14th November, 1804, for their "smartness, soldier like appearance, conduct and steadiness .. which would be highly creditable to any Corps whatever". Marquis Parisi commanded the 1st Battalion while Count Gatto commanded the 2nd Battalion.

The Floriana Parade Ground also hosted several other magnificent military parades throughout the 1800s and 1900s. In 1878, the parade ground was the scene of a grand review of 7000 Indian troops dispatched to Malta to join with British forces.



Independence Arena (also known as *Ix-Xagħra tal-Furjana*) was a multi-use stadium in Floriana, Malta.

The **stadium** has fallen in a state of disrepair and is now used as a parking.^[1] The stadium was used mostly for football matches and was the home training pitch of Floriana. The stadium held 3,000 people.

When Malta was a crown colony of the United Kingdom, the Arena was mainly used for training purposes by the British Military in preparation of important ceremonies. The grandstand, which is still present to this day, was erected in anticipation of Malta's Independence celebrations. Indeed, on 21 September 1964 the Maltese flag was hoisted for the first time at the stadium.^[3] This also explains why the stadium was named the Independence Arena and why it is held in fond regard by the Maltese public in general.

Over the years, Floriana expressed their willingness to develop the stadium on more than one occasion. During a supporters rally held on 22 August 2024, Floriana unveiled plans for a new 4,000 all-seater football stadium.

Floriana Football Club recently announced future plans for a 4,000-seat stadium situated in the Independence Arena, an area otherwise known as *ix-Xagħra tal-Furjana*.

The plans were announced by the club's president Johann Said during a press conference launching the club's aspirations for the 2024/25 season.

Johann told members that the aim of the club is to achieve self-sustainability and establishing a 4,000 seat stadium in the heart of Floriana. The project will be done in collaboration with the investor MIG.

I always look forward to receiving the Maltese Journal from you. My grandson, Dominic, loves reading about the Maltese history and especially about Malta during the war. He is only 10 years old and every time you put something about the past history of Malta he loves to hear about it.

He is also interested to know how much we suffered and especially when we didn't have enough food during the World War II and how Santa Maria Convoy came in the harbour and saved the people of Malta from surrendering. Thank you for publishing the journal for Maltese living abroad and please keep on send it to me and to my grandson to read. Carmen Theuma



Maltese kajjik 'Santa Maria' spotted in French harbour

Times of Malta
18/8/2024

[Jessica Arena](#)

The Santa Maria against the backdrop of colourful timber houses in Honfleur harbour in Normandy. Photo: Daniel Cilia

Maltese travellers overseas are often surprised by little reminders of home on their travels, but seldom do they come across a piece of vibrant living history so far away from the island.

That's exactly what happened to photographer Daniel Cilia this week when he spotted a traditional *Maltese kajjik* (fishing boat) floating in a French harbour.

Against the backdrop of the colourful Honfleur harbour in Normandy, the *kajjik* stood out to Cilia with its familiar blue and yellow hues and the *Eyes of Osiris* keeping watch from the bow of the boat, setting it apart from the more modern vessels floating nearby.

The boat bore the name of 'Santa Maria', in a somewhat auspicious reminder of the important feast week Malta is currently celebrating.

"I had to do a double take when I saw it, had I seen the photo I took online, I might have mistaken it for AI," Cilia told *Times of Malta*.

The vessel attracts a lot of attention as there is nothing like it around. Photo: Daniel Cilia

After making inquiries with the Poudreux shipyard, Cilia discovered that the vessel, which was built in 1967, belonged to a family who lived in Malta at one time.

When it came time for them to relocate to France, they decided to bring the boat they had fallen in love with and had it professionally restored in 2021.

"The boat was carefully transported to Honfleur in Normandy, France from Malta in a container when the owners decided to relocate and wanted to ensure their cherished *luzzu* accompanied them," Cilia said.

"Recognising the sentimental value and the potential of the boat, the Poudreux shipyard in Honfleur undertook a comprehensive restoration project in 2021. During this process, they meticulously restored the boat to its former glory, paying attention to every detail."

The shipyard also brought more longevity to the *Santa Maria*, fitting an electric motor to the rudder in a seamless blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology.

"It is a truly unique and refined boat which gets lots of attention because there is nothing like it in Honfleur harbour which is visited by thousands of tourists," Cilia added.

MALTA

A Childhood Under Siege



MALTA: A CHILDHOOD UNDER SIEGE

Extracts from Linda Peek's book recounting her mother's wartime experiences in Malta. Linda has used her mother's voice to tell the stories she grew up listening to as a child, as well as her grandfather's wartime diary.*

Margaret Staples was nine years old at the beginning of 1939 when her father, Sam Staples, was posted to Malta with the Royal Engineers. Enjoying blue skies and balmy weather; Margaret and her four siblings thought they were in paradise.

When Italy entered the War everything changed.

If the Maltese can take it, so can we

'Air raid warning, Air raid warning. Shut your doors and windows'

"The Rediffusion blared out in English and then in Maltese, at 6.55am on the morning of 11 June 1940...My father was in the middle of getting dressed and still in his underwear. He shouted for us all to go downstairs

to the kitchen. We sat on the floor, under the window, listening to the tremendous noise. It went on for over an hour and was our first experience of an air raid. It sounded like a big thunderstorm and we were all terrified.

When we went outside, we were shocked by what we saw. Huge piles of broken masonry and glass lay all over the street where we lived [in Floriana]. Several people had been killed, one near the Porte des Bombes, just 300 yards away. I saw my first dead body, an elderly man who was missing an arm."

When Sam Staples suggested at the end of 1940 that his wife and children should join the evacuation of service families from the Island, Margaret's mother, Hilda Mary, adamantly refused, saying: 'We will stay together, whatever happens. If the Maltese can take it, so can we.' Living in Floriana and St Andrews, the family survived the worst of the mass bombardment, and endured the hardship of severe food shortages.

A near miss

Despite the raids, Margaret and her younger sister Daphne daily took a boat across Marsamxett Harbour to and from school in Sliema. After a day of constant raids, the siren sounded again as their boat was half way across. They reached shore in time to hear 'Raiders passed. Raiders passed' then started to climb Great Siege Road towards home.

"Suddenly, loud gunfire and whistling bombs made us sprint for a small gap in the bastion, where we huddled with some Maltese workmen. A sailor and two Maltese soldiers joined us. A few minutes later, the sailor said that the raid was over and we could continue our journey home... but before we had walked 200 yards, I looked up and saw three planes coming at us. One of them screeched as it dived towards us. In seconds, it was almost above us, firing machine gun bullets along the ground. My father's instruction, if ever we were in such a situation, was to lie flat, but that all went out of my head.

'Run,' I shouted to Daphne.

As we ran, hand in hand, a blast lifted my sister and dropped her 10 yards ahead of me in a clump of daisies. It knocked me flat on the ground. When I stood up, the air was full of dust and smoke and at first, I couldn't see Daphne, so I shouted her name. She stuck her head up and started to howl. From a slit-trench close by, a soldier ran towards us, picked up Daphne, who was as light as a feather, and yelled for me to follow him. My heart was pounding. He kindly took us all the way



home and my parents were very grateful.

We later learnt that the three servicemen we had met were all killed less than 100 yards from the spot where we had parted ways."

The Staples sisters in Malta ca 1942. Margaret (13), Daphne and Joan (11)

Rationing

"Fortnightly rations for my family included a one-pound tin of corned beef, a tin of sardines, a small bag of dried beans and sometimes tea and sugar. Occasionally, there were some dried eggs or powdered milk. Bread was rationed to one slice per person per day... You had to queue up for almost everything, including water, kerosene and bread. Sometimes my mother would send me to buy something, and I would wait for two or three hours, only to reach the front of the queue and be told they had run out..."

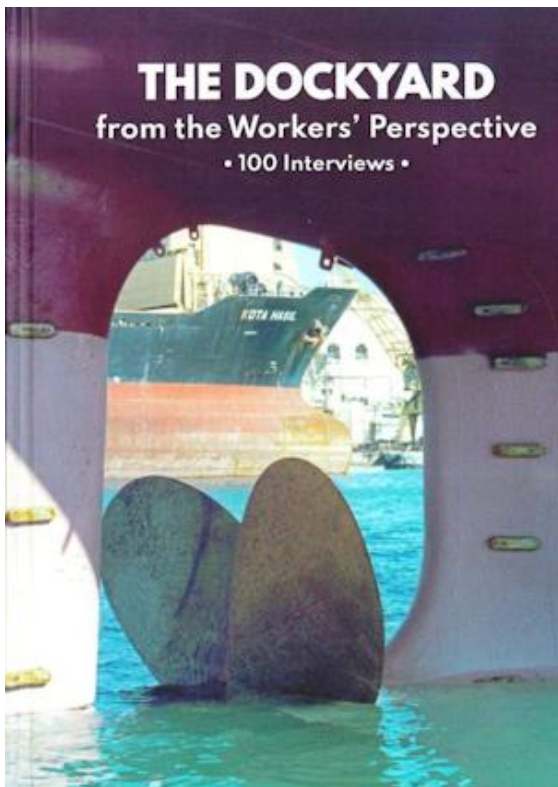
Dad's friend at the Mess must have felt sorry for him, with so many children to feed...[One day he] came home with a big sack of porridge oats. Unfortunately, it was alive with weevils. Eventually we gave up trying to pick them out. But we were hungry, so we cooked and ate the porridge and played 'loves me, loves me not', putting the cooked weevils around the edge of our plates, like stones from plums."

Margaret's story is an inspiring one of a family not just surviving but forging a life in the most extreme circumstances. The children formed the 'Staples Five', putting on shows to entertain the troops. One of their admirers was Christina Ratcliffe, who knew Sam Staples from the Lascaris War Rooms, which he designed in his capacity as Garrison Engineer.

The Staples would not return to England until 1945, when Margaret was aged 15. According to Linda: "she was always a happy, fun-loving person, but she obviously had PTSD from some of the experiences such as visiting a morgue as a child, finding a loaded gun in the linen cupboard and almost being killed by a diving plane. When I was quite young, I remember she would take us to hide in the cupboard under the stairs when there was a thunderstorm which she said sounded like bombing..." *Malta, A Childhood Under Siege, Linda Peek; Woodlands Publishing, 2023 <http://www.woodlandspublishing.au>



Thank you for your donation
If you want to help - these are my bank details
Commonwealth Bank- Australia
BSB: 065 106
Account: 0050 2597
Name: Frank Scicluna



Last March Heritage Malta launched a publication offering unique insight into one of Malta's most iconic industries – the Malta Dockyard, through its famed skilled craftsmen's own words.

Over the past four years, more than 200 hours of memories from ex-Dockyard workers have been carefully documented by Heritage Malta's Digitisation Unit, as part of the agency's biggest intangible heritage project to date. The first 100 recordings are now being presented in this publication, entitled 'The Dockyard from the Workers' Perspective – 100 Interviews'. Its contributors have poured their hearts out in these recorded narrations of their days working amidst the clamour of the workshops and in the depths of the docks, as part of a whole community of men with skills of every shape and form, who challenged death daily. Snippets from each interview, which can also be enjoyed fully by scanning a QR code, interlaced with a myriad of donated precious photos and other national collection items, introduce the reader into the Dockyard

world, welded by a deep sense of brotherhood.

The book, however, has much more in store. Lesser known facts, such as that women too walked the Malta Dockyard's grounds, and quirky curiosities drawing a common line between seemingly unrelated cohorts such as the cast-iron lamp posts at Castille Square and Senglea's beloved Jesus the Redeemer statue, amongst others, promise a tantalisingly enjoyable experience whilst flipping its pages.

The publication was launched during a special private event at the Malta Maritime Museum in Birgu, in the presence of the interviewees. The museum is currently housing an extensive display on the Malta Dockyard as part of its recently launched state-of-the-art, immersive exhibition 'An Island at the Crossroads', confirming intangible heritage as no less of a treasure trove than tangible heritage.

Anthony Cassar, Head of Heritage Malta's Technology and Experience Development Unit, remarked that digitising cultural heritage ensures preservation and accessibility, as it safeguards both tangible and intangible artefacts for the future, and the use of digital platforms enables remote exploration, fostering appreciation across diverse communities for continued relevance. Joseph Meli, a dedicated Heritage Malta volunteer and former Malta Dockyard commercial manager, mentioned that the aim of Heritage Malta's Digitisation Unit is to extend beyond the 100 interviews conducted which, although worthy, represent only a small sample of the many workers still alive from the Dockyard. The milestone aimed for is 200 interviews.

Kenneth Gambin, Heritage Malta's Chief Operations Officer, quoted and stressed that he fully agrees with the words carved on a memorial at the entrance to the Dockyard: "The worker who through work creates, never dies", because when people take their last breath and become part of history, they leave behind a legacy – not only of objects, but also the intangible value of remembrances. This Heritage Malta project is intended precisely so that these memories are never lost. This publication may be purchased from any Heritage Malta museum or site, and online here <https://heritagemalta.mt/store/the-dockyard-from-the-workers-perspective-100-interviews-pre-order/>



The highly anticipated [Opera in the Capital](#) concert is just around the corner, set to make its grand return to St George's Square in Valletta on the 30th of August at 9pm. With less than two weeks to go, this annual event is eagerly awaited by both locals and visitors, promising a beautiful evening of

unforgettable music.

Join us in the heart of Valletta for an evening under the stars, where the majestic elements of the human voice will take centre stage. This year's concert features a stellar lineup with tenors Alan Sciberras and Cliff Zammit Stevens performing alongside soprano Nadia Vella. These talented artists will be accompanied by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, under the expert direction of

Maestro Michael Laus. Highlights of the evening include:

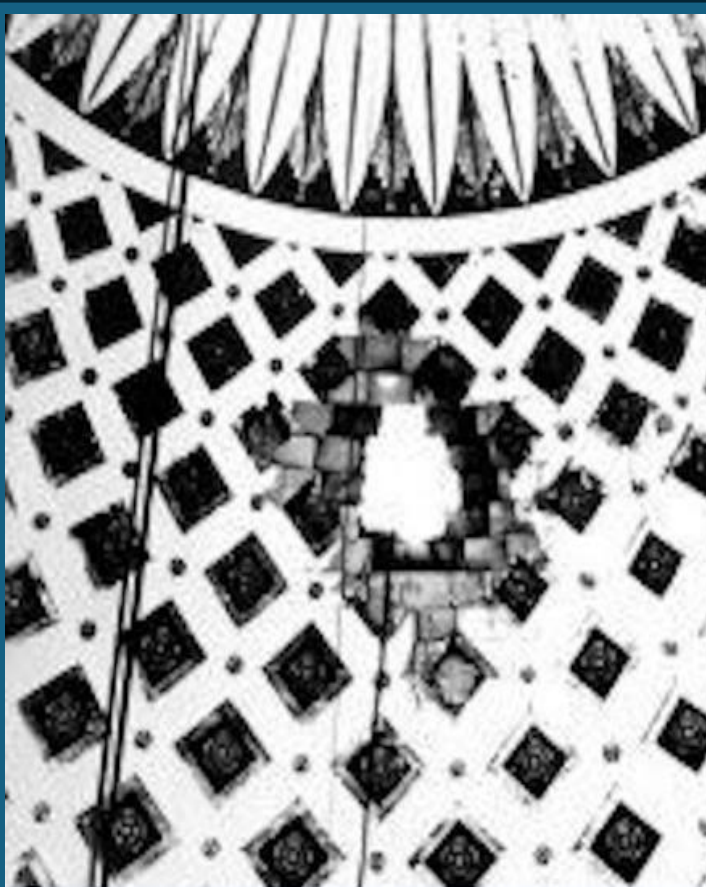
"La fleur que tu m'avais jetée" from Bizet's *Carmen* *"È la solita storia del pastore"* from Cilea's *L'Arlesiana* *"Donna non vidi mai"* from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*

We will also delight you with: Louiguy's *"La vie en rose"* *"Lippen Schweigen"* from Lehár's *The Merry Widow* *"Je veux vivre"* from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* *"All I Ask of You"* from Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*

Adding a local flavor, Opera in the Capital will feature the beloved Maltese song "Xemx" and Zammit Stevens' "Fil-Qrib," promising to make this night truly unforgettable.

Don't miss out on this beautiful evening of classical splendour in the heart of Valletta.

We look forward to seeing you there!. [Secure Your Tickets Now: Opera in the Capital](#) Want to find out more? Visit vca.gov.mt for further details and events.



10 German bombers were ordered "Target Mosta Barracks"
At 4 pm on 9 April 1942 Mosta's parishioners were assembled beneath the beautiful Rotunda of St Marija Assunta for the daily hour of prayer. At the sound of the air raid alarm, many headed for shelter; some preferring to remain in one of the side chapels to pray. At approximately 4 40 pm a 500kg Luftwaffe bomb pierced the dome, smashed into masonry and clattered to the stone floor. Miraculously, it did not explode

**BE PART OF OUR
WONDERFUL HISTORY.
SEND US YOUR STORY**



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

High Commission & Consulates of Malta in Australia

High Commission of Malta - Canberra

H.E. Mr. Mario Farrugia Borg
High Commissioner for Malta to Australia
38 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley, ACT 2606

(02) 6290 1724 / 1426 / 1573

0433 799 947

www.foreignandeu.gov.mt

mario.farrugia-borg@gov.mt

Consulate General - Sydney

Mr. Lawrence Buhagiar (Consul General)
St. Martins Tower, Suite 10.04, Level 10, 31 Market St, Sydney NSW 2000

(02) 9262 9500

0430 402 177

(02) 9264 4722

maltaconsulate.sydney@gov.mt
lawrence.c.buhagiar@gov.mt

Consulate General - Melbourne

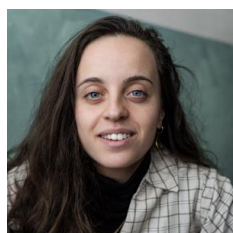
Ms. Chirelle Ellul Sciberras (Consul General)
Suite 613, 6th Floor, 343 Little Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

(03) 9670 8427

0413 621 177

(03) 9670 9451

maltaconsulate.melbourne@gov.mt



MALTESE PERFORMER GRADUATES FROM ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND

On July 4, 2024 a Maltese performer Julianne Restall graduated with a second upper class Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Contemporary Performance Practice from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Restall was a recipient of the Malta Arts Scholarship throughout her time at the Conservatoire.

The course was four years in length and included exposure to multiple disciplines that crossed contemporary art and theatre, and taught students how to engage in a communal and ecological practice. Maltese performer Julianne Restall

During her studies, she specialised in visual theatre-making and performed her graduation show *On Shifting Ground* at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow in February. She also presented her dissertation entitled 'What ingredients of the warmup transform a group of individuals into a collective, devised theatre ensemble? A warmup recipe for generating ensemble'.

Restall has performed locally with *Teatru Malta* in their trilingual musical *VII (Sette)* and their recent production *FiDo*, as well as with the New Victorians in MARA, having toured with them to the Edinburgh Fringe and Vault Festival.

She will now be working on original theatre works for audiences between Scotland, where she is based, and the Maltese islands. Restall says she is very thankful for the support that her parents, Joseph and Simone, the rest of her family, and her partner Hayden and his family have shown her throughout her course. Julianne is also an associate artist of The New Victorians Company, a Malta-based group that generates new music-theatre. Their show 'MARA' debuted at VAULT Festival in 2019, and transferred to the Pleasance for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Julianne Restall is a recipient of the Malta Arts Scholarship

GBEJNIET: Recipe: Traditional Maltese Cheese

The word “gbejna” (singular form of “gbejniet”) most probably derives from the arabic word “jaban/jabna” meaning cheese. Gbejniet are a versatile little cheese, being used fresh (friski), sundried (moxxa) or pickled in vinegar and cracked pepper (tal-bzar).

Each form it comes in has a different flavour and use – fresh being used like ricotta, dried being grated like parmesan or used to flavour dishes, and the “pikanti” pepper cheese eaten most often as a special treat on “galleti” (Maltese crackers).

How ever you like it, you can make all types from the same gbejniet recipe below.

Gbejniet recipe

Ingredients:

- 3 litres of milk (cow, goat or sheeps milk are all fine, just get the creamiest you can find)
- 1 cup of full cream milk powder (optional)
- 3 tsp. dried rennet or 3ml liquid rennet or junket tablets
- Salt

Equipment:

- Large stainless steel pot
- Milk thermometer (or pinky finger)
- Slotted spoon
- Gbejniet baskets (or small mozzarella/ricotta baskets, available from speciality stores)
- Draining trays (baking racks and trays work well)

Method:

Add milk to saucepan, and whisk in milk powder (if using). Heat milk gently on stove until it reaches 38 degrees celcius. Lily just uses her finger (she’s a pro!). The milk should be warm but not hot, just a little above body temperature. Remove milk from heat and add rennet and stir through the milk. Transfer to a fridge or cool place for two hours, until the mixture sets. Once set, scoop the curd into baskets sitting on a drip-tray over a collecting pan so you can save the whey. Sprinkle with salt. Leave to drip overnight.

The following morning, turn cheese out onto the dripping tray and sprinkle with salt again. Keep in the fridge or a cold place for another 12 hours.

Your gbejniet are now ready to use fresh (like ricotta), or can be dehydrated in a drying cabinet or electric dehydrator until hard. Dry gbejniet can be used as is, or to make peppered ones.

To make peppered gbejniet place dry gbejniet into a jar filled with vinegar for 24 hours. Remove from jar and toss gbejniet in cracked pepper. They can be stored in the refrigerator in oil and/or vinegar.





BECOME A SPONSOR

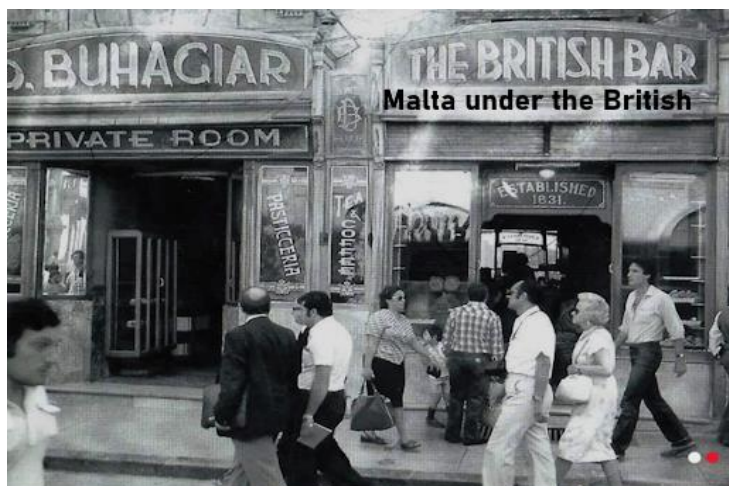
SHOW YOUR LOGO AND EVENTS

to thousands of readers all over the world

this space could be yours

Contact me:
maltesejournal@gmail.com

**Please, help us to continue producing
the ONLY Maltese Journal for Living
Abroad**



Down memory lane

WAVES OF INSPIRATION

On Thursday 5th September 2024, Heritage Malta is inviting young art enthusiasts, aged 7 and older to immerse themselves in the beauty of the sea as depicted by renowned artists throughout history. Titled 'Waves of Inspiration: Admiring Seascapes and Unleashing Your Artistic Talent', this engaging activity starts off with a guided tour which invites the young participants to explore the diverse moods and interpretations of the ocean, from tempestuous storms to serene calmness.

Secure your child's spot for this artistic voyage, with sessions available in English at 9:30am and in Maltese at 11:15am. Book early to ensure an intimate and inspiring experience, either online on Store – Heritage Malta or at any Heritage Malta museum or site. Each participant is to be accompanied by one adult. The session is conducted in English/Maltese. This event forms part of Heritage Malta's Student Summer Programme 2024.

