



CONSULATE OF MALTA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2013 FRANK L SCICLUNA - HON CONSUL - FULL OF HISTORY AND CULTURE OF MALTA

EMAIL: honconsul@live.com.au

THIS IS MY LAST NEWSLETTER BEFORE I GO TO MALTA TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF MALTESE LIVING ABROAD. I WILL RESUME MY WORK AFTER MY RETURN AT THE END OF OCTOBER

THE SECOND MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MALTESE LIVING ABROAD 3 – 4 Oct 2013



The Government of Malta established the council in 2011 by an Act of Parliament. The Council meets annually in Malta and this year 2013, the Council is meeting on the 3 and 4 October at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Valletta Malta.

Among other items, the councilors, under the chairmanship of the Hon Dr

George Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs, will be dealing with these issues:

- Biometric Passports for Maltese Citizens Living Abroad
- Change of names on the Maltese Passport
- Website and radio station for Maltese living abroad based in Malta
- Identity Cards for all Maltese Citizens
- Bank Services for Maltese Living Abroad
- Voting rights for Maltese living abroad
- Establishment of Cultural Institute
- The Teaching of the Maltese Language overseas
- The inclusion of the History of Maltese Migration in Maltese schools
- International succession
- Register of Maltese Non-Government Organisation operating overseas
- Register of prominent Maltese living overseas
- Convention of Maltese living abroad in 2015
- Convention of the Constitution of Malta – the Council's participation
- Representation of the Council on *Europeans around the world*.

Full report will be published after the meeting

Frank Scicluna – representing the Maltese Living in Australia (except NSW and Victoria)

THE PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA CONCERNED ABOUT THE BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS

Hon Dr Joseph Muscat Prime Minister of Malta
Office of the Prime Minister
Auberge de Castille Valletta VLT 2000 MALTA

Dear Prime Minister

I write regarding the Maltese biometric passport, and some challenges in applying for the passport, that have been raised by the Maltese community living in South Australia. I understand that the biometric passport system was introduced in Malta in 2008, and uses advanced technology involving facial imagery, signature and fingerprint biometrics

being held within a chip embedded in the passport. This is an investment in national security and streamlined travel, which is to be commended.

Within Australia, the technology to collect the requisite information for a Maltese biometric passport is available in the nation's capital, Canberra, and in Australia's largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Unfortunately, it is not currently available in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. This means that Maltese South Australians must travel a minimum of 700km to Melbourne and up to 1,400km to Sydney, to apply for a Maltese passport.

Having visited Australia yourself, you will appreciate this arrangement is both difficult and costly for Maltese South Australians. It poses particular challenges for elderly people, people living with a disability, and people on low incomes. Compared to the wider South Australian population, the Maltese South Australian community has a larger proportion of elderly people, a far greater proportion of people requiring assistance with daily activities, and a greater number of people living on a limited income. I am concerned that the current Maltese passport application process further disadvantages these people, and jeopardises their opportunity to visit family in Malta.

Mr Frank Scicluna, Honorary Consul for Malta in South Australia, has provided me with examples of the experiences of three members of the South Australian Maltese community when applying for Maltese passports. The least inconvenienced of these travelled 700km from Adelaide to Melbourne. He was able to stay with family in Melbourne to reduce travel costs, but nevertheless was required to pay \$AUD230 for flights, on top of costs associated with the passport application. The most inconvenienced was an elderly gentleman with reduced mobility who travelled from Adelaide to Canberra (1,160km) with his wife who is his carer. In addition to costs for the passport and a citizenship certificate, he was required to pay \$AUD1,150 for airfares and disability taxis for their day trip.

As you may be aware, Mr Frank Scicluna is a member of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad. In October this year, he will travel to Malta to attend the conference of this Council. He will raise concerns about the difficulties involved in applying for Maltese passports, as experienced by Maltese South Australians.

Mr Scicluna has informed me of recent media articles that indicate that portable biometric scanning systems may be made available to Maltese embassies and consulates. I understand that Mr Scicluna intends to meet with the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable George Vella, to discuss the possibility of the Maltese Government ensuring that such technology be made available in South Australia.

The South Australian Government supports the concerns of the South Australian Maltese community, and requests that the Maltese Government gives due consideration to reducing the barriers to applying for a Maltese passport currently affecting Maltese South Australians. The availability of a portable biometric scanning system in South Australia would be a very positive outcome and I hope you are able to consider it.

I look forward to hearing from you about this matter.



Hon Jay Weatherill MP
PREMIER FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Hon. Jennifer Rankine MP
MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

A LETTER FROM THE MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Dear Hon Consul Frank Scicluna

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the difficulty experienced by members of the South Australian Maltese community in applying for Maltese passports. I understand that the introduction of biometric passports has resulted in a need for members of the community to travel interstate to provide the requisite information when applying for Maltese passports. I am told that this has caused expense and distress for community members, and may be particularly burdensome for those who are elderly, living with disability or living on low incomes.

Thank you also for providing information about the possible introduction of portable biometric scanning systems for Maltese embassies and consulates. If available in South Australia, this technology could eliminate the need for Maltese South Australians to travel interstate to apply for a Maltese passport.

The Premier of South Australia, the Hon Jay Weatherill MP, and myself have written to the Hon Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta, voicing the South Australian Maltese community's concerns and encouraging the Maltese Government to ensure that portable biometric scanning system technology be made available in South Australia.

I understand that you will also raise this issue when you attend the meeting of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad in October, and when you meet with the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon George Vella in October this year. So I have attached a copy of the letter for you to take with you to that meeting.

I wish you a successful trip to Malta, and a favourable outcome for the South Australian Maltese community. '

Once again, thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Hon Jennifer Rankine MP

MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

MIGRATION FROM MALTA – MEETING AT ST. PATRICK'S HALL – ADELAIDE

MALTA SOCIAL SOCIETY *Published in THE NEWS (ADELAIDE) 23 November 1948*



Photo: from left to right: Officer-in-Charge of Migration Mr John Axisa, Migration Minister Hon John J Cole, Commissioner for Malta in Australia Capt. Curmi.

At a meeting in St. Patrick's Hall of the recently formed Malta Social Society, a crowded audience was addressed by Mr. John Cole (Minister of Immigration for Malta), Mr. John Axisa (Officer in Charge of Immigration) and Capt. H. Curmi (Commissioner for Malta in Australia). They stated that they were on a goodwill mission to Australia and wished to impress upon their countrymen the urgency nominating as many of their friends and relations in Malta as possible. Thirty-eight thousand were anxious to come to Australia, and so far 2,200 had been nominated. If there were sufficient nominations, a ship would be chartered to bring them out. Mr. Cole is a very fluent and charming speaker, but he pointed out that they can do very little unless they are supported by the Malta residents in Australia.

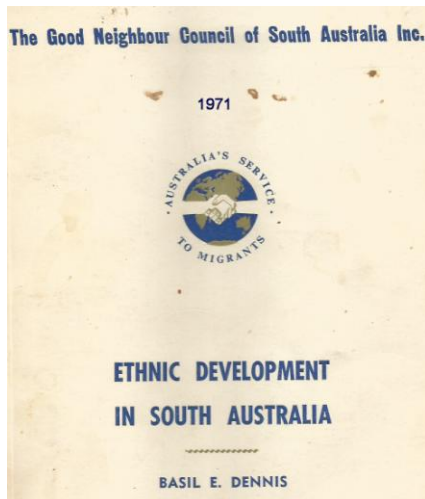
. Rev. Fr. Ferriggi, O.F.M. opened and closed the proceedings with prayer. Officers of the Society are: President, Mr. P. A. Greene; Vice- President, Mr. C. F. Baldacchino; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. T. J. Barnett; Assistant Secretary, Mr. T. L. Rafferty; Committee of Management, Messrs. G. Bugeja, Vincent Galen, Vincent Callus, N. A. Vowles; S. A. Bland, J. Neagle; Auditors Messrs. G. Schembri, L. R. Herriman, Trustees, Messrs. W. Nicholson, P. Coleiro. ' V A social; , function has been arranged. St. Patrick's Hall an Saturday. "November 27, at which a spleen progamme of musical items andehslcmg will be presented. The supper arrangements are in the capable hands of Mrs. D. Bugeja.

A very successful conversazione was held in St. Patrick's Hall under the auspices of the Malta Social Society. Ballroom dancing, Irish folk dances, musical, instrumental arid elocutionary items made the evening a very happy one, and gave the new Australians an opportunity of meeting old friends and making new ones. The Malta Ladies' "Committee provided a most sumptuous supper. Mr. C. J. Baldacchino was "a very capable master of ceremonies. On

account of a prior engagement His Grace the Archbishop was unable to attend.' Among the clergy present were Very Rev. Fr. M. J. Bayard, Adm., Rev. Fr. G. Ferriggi, O.F.M., H.C.F., Rev. Fr. A. Killian, and Rev. Fr. J. O'Callaghan.

Items were rendered by Messrs. Ansbert Campbell, Sam Aquilua, G. Aegair, Robert Bird, C. J. Baldacehino and musical friends, George Schembri, Misses P. Greene, Mary Grima, Carmel Bugeja, Mary O'Driscoll, Miss Galen, and several talented Maltese children. The popular Irish traditional dancing was beautifully performed by Misses Monica Attard, Valmai Moriarty, and Gertrude Doyle.

The president (Mr. P. A. Greene) and secretary (T. J. Barnett) expressed great satisfaction with this first social function, and invited everybody particularly all Maltese children to the Christmas social at St. Patrick's Hall on Monday, December 20, 1948.



EXTRACT FROM THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1971 **Maltese Guild of SA Inc.**

THE MALTESE ISLANDS are situated between Europe (of which continent they form a part) and Africa in a strategic position near the mid-Mediterranean Narrows, about 35 miles south of eastern Sicily and approximately 180 miles from both the Italian mainland and Libya. The group is a parliamentary state and member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Malta itself is 95 square miles.

The rolling, hilly contours of the island have soil held together by rubble walls. The overall effect presents a strange etched appearance.

Population of the island in 1971 was estimated to be 322,070. Malta has very few natural resources. There are no important minerals and even soil and water are restricted in supply.

After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the living standard of the Maltese became increasingly dependent on British defence expenditure. In recent years about half of Malta's income has been derived from the British dockyards and naval

base at Valetta, and the Royal Air Force base at Luqa.

The people of Malta are among the purest descendants of the Phoenicians, although their language is more closely related to Arabic dialects of North Africa, especially to that spoken in Tunis. Although scattered remains of alleged Phoenician origin have disappeared, Greek inscriptions, coins and works of art have since been found.

In AD. 60 the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked in the bay which now bears his name and it was he who converted the island to Christianity.

For many centuries, Arab and European countries have dominated Malta. In 1799, in answer to an appeal for help to the British to assist in driving Napoleon from the island, Lord Nelson landed, hoisted the British flag and later the French surrendered. In 1814 Malta was granted British citizenship. Malta sought independence from Britain and this was achieved on the 21 September, 1964.

Following World War II, there was a big influx of Maltese into South Australia. They settled quickly into the large industrial areas and some in market garden areas. Little difficulty was experienced with integration and they are represented in most sections of industry and commerce.

During the late 1940's, the Malta Community Society of South Australia was formed and about 1952 it was incorporated and became known as the Maltese Guild of Australia (S.A.) Inc. With the increase in the number of Maltese arriving in South Australia, the Guild has become very active in providing a diversified program of activities for members, and encourages mutual assistance. Culture is promoted through the Maltese Dance Group and displays of handcraft which includes lace for which Malta is famous, weaving in traditional designs, views of Malta and art work.

The Guild supports its members in times of need, whether it be financial, spiritual or moral, it also assists with accommodation in cases of emergency.

Its members make themselves available as interpreters when needed. Miss Malta and Miss Charity Quests are conducted each year to raise funds for the purchase of land on which the future Maltese Community Memorial Hall may be built. When this ambitious project has been accomplished, a wider range of activities will be provided by the Guild.

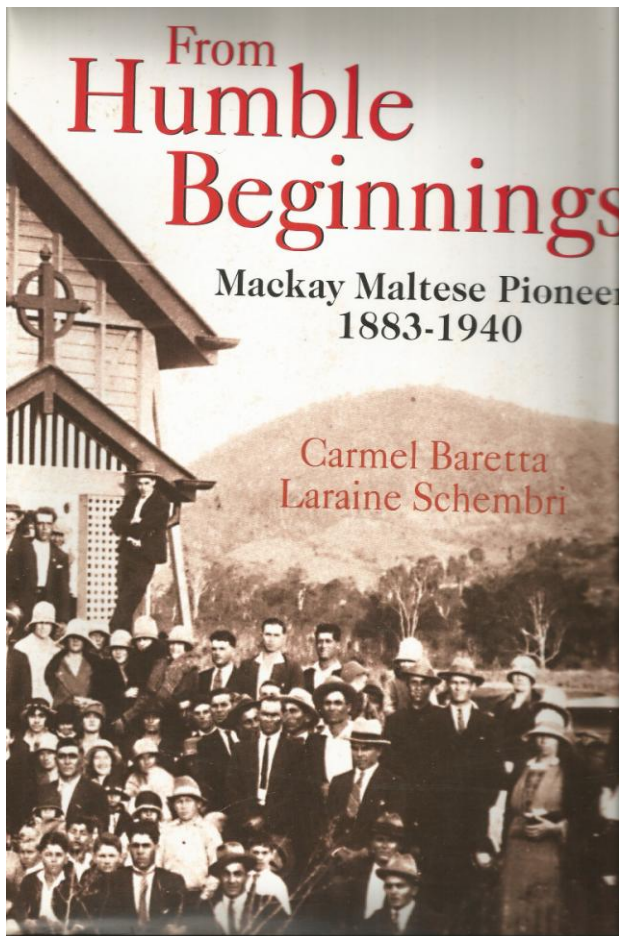
Maltese people are kept up to date with local news and items of interest from Malta through the Maltese Guild Newsletter which is published monthly.

Other Maltese organizations include the Malta United Soccer Club, the Maltese Sub-Branch of the R.S.L. and the South Australian Maltese Youth Club.

There are two major celebrations held by the Maltese people. Firstly, National Day which commemorates 8th September, 1565, when the international Order of Knights of St. John turned Malta into a Christian fortress against the Turks and by withstanding the Great Siege, checked the conquests of Sultan Suleiman. Secondly, Independence Day when, on 21st September, 1964, Malta became an independent monarchy within the Commonwealth.

The Maltese community is represented on the Good Neighbour Council, its members being actively associated with branches and committees.

From humble beginnings



Carmel Baretta and Laraine Schembri: From Humble Beginnings: Mackay Maltese Pioneers 1883-1940, 520 pp.

The history of officially organised Maltese migration to Australia, contrary to what has repeatedly been reported by some historical accounts published so far, dates back to 1882, not 1883; the date erroneously given by historians of Maltese settlement in Australia. It was Francesco De Cesare, commissioner from the Malta government, who, in his experimental journey to the antipodes in search of a suitable future home for prospective Maltese migrants, arrived in Brisbane, Australia, on the September 11, 1882, with the first group of eight officially sponsored young men. This was the undisputed first officially organised Maltese group of migrants to land on Australian soil.

In 1883 there followed the much publicised arrival of the *Nuddea* at the north Queensland port of Townsville. This venture was a direct result of De Cesare's good work upon which he reported in his official reports to Malta's then Imperial administration. The most well-known passenger on this trip of 1883 was the pioneer Joseph Busuttil (later becoming Busuttin) from Żejtun. His story is documented in the well researched account written by his granddaughter Valda Busuttin Winsor (*Island That We Knew – The Story of Brampton Island and the Pioneer Busuttin Family*, Valda Busuttin Winsor, 1982).

Prior to organised migration from Malta, a not inconsiderable number of Maltese ended up in Australia, some voluntarily as free settlers, a small unknown quantity of others remained here after jumping ship either as stowaways or after becoming disillusioned with their marine life as sailors engaged with the various merchant navies which called intermittently at remote northwestern Australian coastal inlets.

There were also a number of Maltese convicts; some were transported directly from Valletta while others were shipped out from Britain. Many years after this prolonged and often sad saga, in 2001 co-authors Carmel Baretta and Laraine Schembri, both of Mackay vintage, bequeathed to posterity the excellent compilation of the Maltese of Mackay entitled *From Humble Beginnings: Mackay Maltese Pioneers 1883-1940*.

This tenderly and sensitively put together account of the principal Maltese families of north Queensland comprises the most detailed biographical anthology to date of one of the earliest groups of free settler Maltese migrant families. The fine biographical details given of 182 families, all of whom settled in the north Queensland district of Mackay and surrounds, are a treasure trove of Maltese settlement history; an invaluable asset to the entire Maltese nation.

Interspersed with copious photographs, the clear images of the protagonists are supplanted with such detail as the traditional family nicknames each brought along with them from Malta. A few of these nicknames were also a product of the local Australian social ambience.

As one delves into the 520 pages of sheer pure Maltese country folk tales of determination, of back-breaking work, persistence in the face of incredible hardship, of unrelenting optimism despite all else and the belief in themselves, this moving historical anthology brings tears of admiration for the powerful spirit of a community come together under the harshest of conditions.

It is no wonder the descendants of these pioneering families today are not merely the worthy owners of considerable wealth but also a proud breed, and justly so, who openly boast of their noble Maltese ancestry. The strong family ties which still persist to this day, the tender family values they still foster, the deep respect towards their forebears – all these and more – are the rock solid foundations upon which is their sound sense of community based.

This collection of individual Maltese (and Gozitan) family accounts is no mere nostalgic sentimental journey in time. The invaluable information and other leads concerning Malta's social, political, religious, demographic and economic status towards the end of the nineteenth into the early years of the twentieth century, in addition to the several individual family genealogies, elevates this book as a unique and essential reference text for high school students as much as for tertiary and postgraduate research.

Having met a number of the protagonists during my extensive research ventures into the Maltese Australian settlement story as a whole, but more specifically in reference to individual leading personalities or of people of unusual interest, one appreciates the vastness of this unique Maltese saga.

This precious collection of pioneer family biographies of the Maltese of Mackay, without any academic pretence, is in itself living evidence of the indefatigable spirit of an appreciative generation with the strongest anthropological ties to its proud ethnic Maltese roots. Such deep loyalty is graphically depicted in a number of contemporary photographs taken by descendants of the earlier folk upon their return to, or even their first ever journey to the land of their forebears. All libraries in Malta, including schools and tertiary institutions, should make it a point to purchase this essential contribution to our national Melitensia collection. To order this book send an email to the author: cmbarett@easynet.net.au

L-Ispeaker L-Onorevoli Anglu Farrugia Jircievi Zjara Ta' Kortesia Mill-Konslu Generali Ta' Malta F'San Francisco



Waqt laqgħa li nżammet dalghodu, l-Ispeaker l-Onorevoli Anglu Farrugia, ippropona diversi mizuri li jistgħu jkunu ta' beneficcju għall-Maltin u dixxendenti tagħhom li jinsabu jgħixu barra minn xtutna u aktar minn hekk, l'hinn mill-Ewropa bħal fil-kaz ta' Maltin li jgħixu fl-Amerika, u dan fil-kuntest tas-sehem tal-Parlament Malti u d-drittijiet tal-Maltin ta' barra.

Il-Konslu Generali s-Sur Louis J. Vella li kien akkumpanjat mis-Sinjura Vella, irringrazzja lill-Ispeaker tal-laqgħa li kellu għall-ewwel darba ma' Speaker Malti.

Louis Vella huwa il-Vici President ta Stars And Stripes Malta.

Here is the next Consular Newsletter

Please, read it and enjoy
When you finish pass it on to your
relatives and friends



**The more you learn about Malta
the more you love it**





A picture is worth more than a thousand words

Three lampposts were dislodged along the road off Ghadira Bay in Mellieha as the island was hit by a thunderstorm on September 5. People in the area said they saw the lampposts shake as a whirlwind passed by and moved on towards the sea. Photo: Jason Borg

St Martin's feast



The actual feast falls on November 11th but if it happens to fall on a weekday the Maltese usually celebrate it on the Sunday nearest to November 11. In the past the children used to hang an empty bag by their bedposts in anticipation for St Martin's arrival. In the morning, then the excited kids would find a bag full of goodies or a bag full of coal - depending on their behaviour.

Nowadays, at school children are usually given a bag called 'Il-Borża ta' San Martin', containing autumn fruits such as figs, oranges, tangerines, apples, pomegranates, nuts like walnuts, hazel-nuts, almonds, chestnuts and a sweet bread with an aniseed-tasting sweet on top (Il-Hobza ta' San Martin) associated with the feast. There is also a traditional rhyme associated with this custom:

'Ġewż, Lewż, Qastan, Tin, Kemm inħobbu lil San Martin.. (Walnuts, Almonds, Chestnuts, Figs, Oh how I love Saint Martin!)

The feast of St Martin is celebrated in the village of Baħrija on the outskirts of Rabat at the the only chapel in Malta dedicated to this saint. It is the tradition that on that Sunday a fair is held to commemorate the feast. The Turkey's Fair, in Maltese referred to as 'Il-Fiera tad-Dundjani', originally took place in 1953, when the rector of the time started the fair as a fundraising for the building of the new church to replace the small chapel that had become too small for the evergrowing congregation that attended. At this fair one can find plants, fresh vegetables, local honey, and other such local stuff and an exhibition of local animals. At this time of year we usually have a temporary respite from Autumn and enjoy what we call in Maltese - *Is-Sajf ta' San Martin* - St Martin's summer. I always look forward to this feast because we get to enjoy a couple of warm days at this time of year. This feast is also associated with a substantial increase in hairfall too. Have you noticed how much more hair falls at this time of year? Men beware!

The Three Crosses



During one of my walks in Marsascala I came across this strange monument in the Bidni area. It's got these three crosses engraved on a wall. The middle cross which is slightly larger than the other two has around what look like seven tools hanging from it.

My question is who erected this memorial and for what reason? It's a pity that there is no date or inscription to explain why it was built in the first place.

Till 1615, Zabbar and Marsascala, were still forming part of the Zejtun parish. At that time a mere 650 people inhabited Zabbar.

As was the practice, Bishop Cagliares established the limits of the young parish. As a matter of fact, a section of modern

Marsascala remained within the limits of Zejtun, while another part which included the areas where the first parish church of Marsascala was built, fell within the limits of Zabbar. It is possible that the Three Crosses at Bidni were put up as an indication of the place where the limits of Zejtun and Zabbar met.

According to Guze Muscat Azzopardi there are three versions regarding the origin of these crosses. There were three monks who got killed by the Turks and buried here, the second version says that a man died of the plague and was buried here by the villagers of Zejtun and the last version is undoubtedly the least credible one: an elderly hermit was buried three times in this place after repeatedly rising from death.

Maltese ambassador to USA meets Obama



Malta's new ambassador to the United States, Marisa Micallef, had called on President Barack Obama and presented her credentials.

The picture (left) was issued by the US embassy in Malta, who wished the new ambassador every success.

Dar tal-Providenza office in Valletta



Louise Coleiro Preca thanked id-Dar tal-Providenza for being a living example on what needed to be done on social inclusion. The office was blessed by the Archpriest of St Paul's Parish Mgr Alex Cordina. It was opened on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the founding of the home, on September 12 1965.

An office for the Dar tal-Providenza was opened yesterday evening at 244, St Paul Street, Valletta.

Home director Fr Martin Micallef said that the idea was for the public to have a central office from where to get all information about the home's work and activities and make donations.

It will also serve as a place where residents can exhibit their works and wares and as an inclusion opportunity and job exposure as a resident will be with the volunteers running the office daily. Opening the home, Social Solidarity Minister Marie

Some Maltese Door Knockers



Yesterday I learnt that in the past people did not knock on doors but they used to scratch at them. I had never heard of such a thing!! I wonder how they heard anyone scratching if they were upstairs!

Anyway I thought of sharing some information about some of our old and beautiful door knockers. In Maltese they are known as il-*"Habbata"*. Long after the method of scratching was scrapped the

'Habbata' entered in the picture many years ago as a

matter of necessity. Somehow it has survived the mechanical and electric doorbell and

has become part of our street embellishment. These door knockers used to reflect the personality and taste of the house owner. They were available in numerous motifs, shapes and sizes.

Some of our old buildings throughout the Maltese Islands can boast of some exceptionally fine examples which can ultimately be described as truly works of art. Perhaps the most traditional motif in the Islands is that in the shape of a dolphin. These are still manufactured in significant quantities and much in demand but very costly.



Maltese model wins New Star Italia 2013



Maltese dancer Jasmine Camilleri has been crowned Miss A New Star Italia 2013 becoming the first foreigner to win title.

Jasmine came tops in dance, singing and modeling to see off the competition of her rivals.

In the competition held in Assisi there were also awards for a number of other Maltese girls including 16-year old Anabelle Calafato who won Miss Showgirl, Lorita Curmi aged 21 was voted Miss A New Star Cinema 2013 and 16-year old Abigail Allen Pellegrini took the title of Miss a New Star Fotomodella 2013.

Maltese shooters at ISSF World Championships



Maltese Double Trap shooters William Chetcuti and Nathan lee Xuereb together with their coach Jimmy Bugeja have arrived in Lima, Peru for The ISSF World Championships 2013.

They will be competing among 400 shooters from 55 Nations, including 120 Junior shooters under 21 years of age.

William Chetcuti will be shooting in The Double Trap Seniors Event while Nathan Lee Xuereb will be competing in The Juniors Double Trap event. These events both start on Friday 20th at 4.30pm Malta time on five rounds of 30 clays each. The top six shooters of each event qualifies for the semi finals and The medal matches to determine the podium places.

The Maltese shooter's participation was possible thanks to The Malta Shooting Sport Federation, The Malta Olympic Committee and Kunsill Malti Għall-Isports. Special thanks also to The Armed Forces of Malta where William Chetcuti had been recruited.



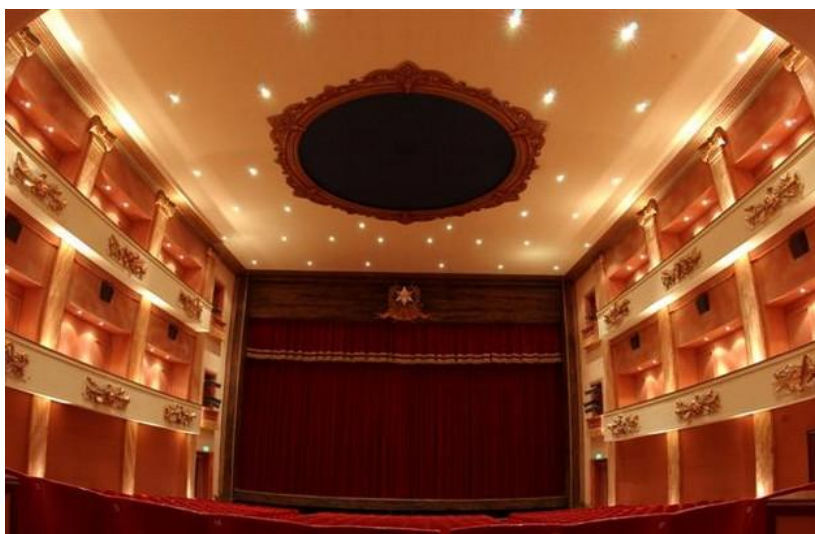
What our readers wrote:

- Just a couple of words to congratulate you for your effort on the weekly newsletter, very well constructed and informative and above all it is in English an opportunity for our children and grandchildren to learn about our Maltese culture. Great job Frank. L. Psaila*
- Thank you for the newsletter Frank, very informative and interesting reading. Have forwarded to some friends and relatives in Malta, Melbourne and Sydney too; Keep up the good work. Regards Ray Grima*

- *I managed to squeeze in time to read all of your last newsletter just in time to pass it on to Mum – another fantastic read and I don't like to miss any of it! Your newsletters are far more enjoyable, relevant and easy to read than some of the other current affairs or news emails we get. Rosemary Norton*
- *Thank you so very much for sending me the Newsletter 15 I really enjoyed reading it, I'm sorry to have missed out on the other previous 6 editions, Yours Faithfully M. Zahra.*
- *I am printing every newsletter and collect them and later on I will make them into a book. They are full of Maltese culture and traditions as well as beautiful photos. G Bonnici*

Keep on sending your comments!!!!

Teatru Astra commemorates Verdi's bicentenary with Otello



Festival Mediterranea, twelfth edition, will be characterised by the commemoration of Verdi's bicentenary. The theatre said that a star-studded international cast, which is soon to be announced, will grace the Teatru Astra stage in two performances of the maestro's *Otello*, to be staged on Thursday, the 24th and Saturday, the 26th of October 2013, starting at 7.30pm.

Verdi's penultimate opera, with a libretto by Arrigo Boito, will return to Teatru Astra after an absence of ten years.

The Malta Philharmonic Orchestra will be under the direction of Prof. Joseph Vella, with a spectacular new production of artistic director Enrico Stinchelli and the Teatru Astra Opera Chorus ably trained by Dr Maria Frendo, will

ensure the audience an evening to remember.

For those who are interested but haven't managed to book yet, the theatre urges them to contact at the earliest for the limited availability of the best seats in the auditorium.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE ON www.ozmalta.page4.me

Applauding American Knights of Malta on Ta' Pinu pilgrimage



"I read The Gozo News report: "American Knights of Malta to hold a [pilgrimage](#) at Ta' Pinu." I am a papal Knight of a different, yet similar organization: the Equestrian Order of the Knights of The Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, plus in addition. I am also a member of The Brotherhood of Blessed Gerard, which is the relief-arm of the Order of Malta.

A picture is worth more than a thousand words.

The pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ta' Pinu in Gozo, was to have occurred this past Tuesday, 10 September, so I hope that everything went well and I salute my brother Knights and confreres on their dedication and devotion on this spiritual pilgrimage.



I also thank Bishop of Gozo Mgr Mario Grech for celebrating the Mass. The photograph of this historic landmark in The Gozo News was very impressive and indeed I hope I can see it in-person someday.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, is the oldest of the surviving papal Chivalric Orders.



THE MASTER TRIUMPHANT

This year may well be the year of Mattia Preti. But 400 years since his birth, there are still new works being discovered and attributed to the Baroque master, says art historian Keith Sciberras



Malta has had its fair share of artistic celebrities – none, perhaps, as infamous as Caravaggio. This year marks the 400th anniversary since the birth of another Italian Baroque master who left his mark on our tiny island – the knight from Taverna, Mattia Preti.

“Mattia Preti, who resided for nearly four decades in Malta, was one of the foremost exponents of the Italian Baroque,” says Prof. Keith Sciberras, Head of the Department of History of Art at the University of Malta. Altar painting of Siggiewi parish church representing the Miracle of St Nicholas of Bari

“His manner brings together those words that are usually used to describe the Baroque, namely: movement, theatricality, freshness, spontaneity,

monumentality and virtuosity.” The vault of St John’s Co-Cathedral is considered Preti’s masterpiece in Malta, but he was also attributed numerous altar paintings, laterals and private pictures.

A lot of work has been undertaken in the past decades to attribute and catalogue the works of Preti around the world. A major contribution to the field is Prof. Sciberras’s book, *The Triumphant Manner*, which includes complete catalogue of his paintings in Malta and which analytically discusses the artist’s entire oeuvre. “This is the fruit of 20 years of research, but it also picks up on the work carried out by other scholars during previous years.”

Prof. Sciberras is also involved in co-curating, together with Vittorio Sgarbi, a major show on the artist, entitled *Tra Caravaggio e Luca Giordano: Il Cavalier Calabrese Mattia Preti* that opened at the Regia La Venaria in Turin in mid-May. This show, he explains, brings together 50 major works by Preti and other masters of the seicento, including Caravaggio, Ribera, Guercino and Giovanni Lanfranco. It sees the participation of numerous museums, galleries, institutions and private collectors, and has contributions by 20 leading scholars in the field of Italian Baroque art. The exhibition showcases Mattia Preti as a major personality of the Italian Baroque and traces his style from its Caravaggesque beginnings to the triumphant manner of his maturity.



“I was responsible for drafting the exhibition concept and for the choice of works,” Prof. Sciberras explains. “The selection of works is conditioned by a happy mix of famous pictures and pictures which have recently been discovered and never shown beforehand.” This, he says, is what makes the research on Preti so exciting and dynamic. A number of new pictures have been discovered over the recent months and the surge in interest has made it possible to bring most of them together in one venue.

Conservationist Paul Muscat cleaning the Miracle of St Nicholas of Bari

New works have also surfaced in Malta following the publication of *The Triumphant Manner* last December. One may here name a painting representing a *Hercules and Prometheus* dating back to circa 1670. The painting, which is currently being restored to its former glory, can be compared with a pair of paintings also representing Hercules that are today in the Fine Arts Museum of Consenza. “This picture, especially in the rendition of

Hercules, shows Preti as an outstanding master of the brush, especially in the fresh and spontaneous way in which he handles pigments,” says Prof. Sciberras.

The Preti year has also brought an increased awareness on the need to conserve, restore and properly present the works of the master. “I have been personally involved in the restoration and study of a number of paintings from private collections, including, for example, *The Poet Philosopher*, *The Baptism of Christ* and *The Bishop Saint*,” says art historian Keith Sciberras. These were restored at ReCoop, a restoration and conservation co-operative of which Prof. Sciberras is one of the directors. The recently discovered Hercules and Prometheus is also currently being restored at ReCoop. “The Foundation of St John’s Co-Cathedral,” Prof. Sciberras explains, “has undertaken the restoration of the large lunette of the *Triumph of the Order*. This work was assigned to an Italian firm, while Heritage Malta undertook the restoration of the paintings in its collection in preparation for the *Mattia Preti: Faith and Humanity* exhibition currently on show at the Grand Master’s Palace in Valletta.” The anniversary celebrations surrounding Preti have done much by way of bringing this incredible artist’s oeuvre under the spotlight and, as a result, giving his work the attention it truly merits.

BENEATH THE AZURE WINDOW

Dwejra’s landscape is one of the most iconic on the Maltese Islands. But just below its glistening waters lies a unique world now brought to life by the Panacea Environmental education centre, as Katryna Storace discovers...

It is a popular piece of trivia that over 70 per cent of the earth is covered in water. Seas and oceans are home to millions



of species of marine plants and creatures, all living in precariously balanced ecosystems. Overfishing, exploitation of marine resources, oil and gas extraction, pollution, and other human activity, however, have for many years threatened the future of our waters. The Mediterranean is no exception.

Because we live on an island – and quite a small one at that – us Maltese cannot be indifferent to the waters that surround us. They are our source of fun, living, and identity, and with that comes a responsibility: to care for and respect our seas to ensure their continued existence. This is the main aim of the recently opened PANACEA environmental education centre at Dwejra.

With its incredible rock formations and unique inland sea, the Dwejra area is equally spectacular below the water. This makes it a popular location with divers, who flock to Dwejra to explore the numerous underwater caves and underwater scenery it has to offer. Thanks to the value of its marine environment, Dwejra is in fact one of five Marine Protected Areas designated in the coastal waters of the Maltese Islands.



Situated a mere few metres from Dwejra’s inland sea, the PANACEA environmental education centre acts as the perfect accompaniment to a site of such natural complexity and interest. “The main benefit of the PANACEA project is that we now have a Marine Protected Area which finally has its own centre on location where anyone divers, tourists, swimmers, children can learn about what makes Dwejra’s underwater landscape so special,”



says Alan Deidun, a marine biologist and project manager for the PANACEA project.

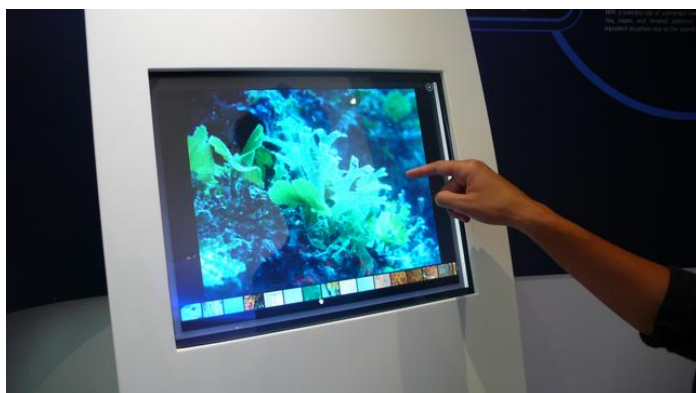
The project shares its vision with five partners: Provincia di Siracusa, Provincia di Palermo, Comune di Lampedusa/Linosa, San Lawrenz local council and the University of Malta (IOC-MOC). Out of the five, Dwejra's is the first centre to materialise – the other four Sicilian partners are expected to set up similar environmental education centres around their own unique Marine Protected Areas.

The San Lawrenz local council has played an important role in the realisation of the centre, which had been in the pipeline since 2006, and which finally opened its doors in March of this year. The council has been assisted by the University of Malta. "The University's input was mostly technical. I myself compiled all the information for the centre, which required a lot of research and checking before it was finalised. We have also contributed in terms of the photography, interactive material and videos," says Alan.

A visit to the centre is a great way to get informed about the vast and varied underwater world of the Dwejra area. It opens up onto a world that is colourful and interactive, with lots of photography, information boards, and 3D models, or dioramas, recreating specific underwater ecosystems. There is also a screening room currently airing a wonderfully filmed documentary by Alan, Shaun Arrigo and Pedja Miletic.



"This is the first Marine Protected Area to have a visitor centre in Malta," Alan points out. Internationally, he adds, it is the norm – MPAs are usually accompanied by a visitor centre as well as offices of those who procure it. Their importance cannot be underestimated. Marine Protected Areas are vital to the flourishing of biodiversity that is often under threat by human activity. By protecting particular areas, species are given the opportunity to regenerate or breed safely. They're also good news for the tourism industry – especially, in the case of Dwejra, when it comes to diving.



A few months since it opened its doors, the general feedback in relation to the centre has been positive. "The biggest challenge was not getting open," says Alan, "but keeping it open."

Despite having received EU funding, which has helped the project become a reality, there are still many problems that Alan and the local council continue to face. "Dwejra itself is a protected area, and so, any development takes a lot of time," says Alan. What's more, Dwejra has no direct electricity supply, and all the power required to keep the centre running

is being provided by a generator – which is precarious, at best. On its part, MEPA has agreed, albeit verbally, to cover the generator costs, which amount to about €15,000 each year.

I really hope that this concept is taken further and developed in other areas. I'd really like to see, for example, a visitor centre dedicated solely to fishing

But the biggest issue, Alan points out, is that the centre needs qualified guides to be able to interact with visitors and make it fully-functioning. "The long-term plan is to employ qualified guides to man the centre," says Alan. "For the council

to do so, however, it needs to generate some funds – and this can only be done if a bylaw is passed. But there is a long bureaucratic process involved, so these things take time.” For the time being, the centre is being run by Carmen and Annie from the San Lawrenz local council, who volunteer their time to open the centre every day and man it until this issue is cleared up. “The agreement between MEPA and the local council needs to be formalised to start the bylaw process to allow the council to generate revenue for qualified guides to man the centre. This takes weeks, but we’re hoping this will happen before summer comes into full force,” adds Alan.

In the meanwhile, Alan and his team are working hard on promoting the centre and the PANACEA project, participating in a number of national events and creating printed educational material to be distributed in schools and internationally. Despite the numerous obstacles, Alan remains upbeat about the accomplishments of the centre. “I really hope that this concept is taken further and developed in other areas. I’d really like to see, for example, a visitor centre dedicated solely to fishing,” he says. Such initiatives are vital to preserving the wonders that lie just below the surface of our all-consuming waters.

JEWELS, GLORIOUS JEWELS

From extravagant necklaces and cuffs to staggering stones set on rings – there is nothing plain about the marvellous jewellery worn by the Maltese throughout the ages.

Text by Martina Said

A collection of 550 historic jewellery pieces gleam behind glass showcases at the Casino Maltese in Valletta. Some are small and subtle, others so large that they verge on bizarre. But each piece tells a story – one that is historically rich and part of Malta’s heritage.

Vanity, Profanity and Worship: Jewellery from the Maltese Islands is a remarkable exhibition bringing together pieces from a variety of jewellery collectors, ranging from the 17th to 20th century. It is the collaborative effort of three years worth of research and work, offering insight into a largely unexplored area of the island’s history.

“We’ve brought out items which have never been seen in public,” says exhibition curator Francesca Balzan, an art historian who specialises in the history of jewellery in Malta. “Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti has built an enviable reputation for putting

together one-of-a-kind exhibitions that shed light on an aspect of the arts or decorative arts, giving the public the chance to see all this under one roof.”

The exhibition set-up is unique, as it is divided into rooms according to a theme, each room designed in a way that is relevant to the jewellery it exhibits. It begins with a room dedicated to protective amulets, followed by devotional and secular pieces of the 17th and 18th centuries, local filigree work, the 19th century introduction of new materials and styles and lastly modern and contemporary pieces. Here’s a deeper look at some of the most historically remarkable pieces of the exhibition.

ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY



One of the most celebrated of the international jewellery designers was Andrew Grima, the grandson of Maltese architect, Andrea Grima – whose works include the design of the Msida church.

Ring , Gold, diamond, emerald crystal, 21mm (dia.) c.1960s, London, England
Andrew Grima (Private Collection, Malta) Andrea Grima – whose works include the design of the Msida church.

His style revolutionised post-war British jewellery design, and he was almost immediately patronised by royalty and international celebrities. His style is characterised by free-flowing shapes and uncut stones and his hallmark touches include bars of metal soldered together, asymmetrical forms and

unusual contrasts of gems and shapes drawn from nature. The featured ring is typical of his style, constructed as it is from textured bars of gold, resembling tree bark, in an asymmetrical shape, and mounted with an uncut emerald which shows the precious gem's natural beauty to great advantage. As though to emphasise its raw nature, a small brilliant cut diamond is put beside the emerald, creating a contrast in colour, size and cut.



Necklace of St Ursula. Painted miniatures, gold, silver-gilt, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, various other gems, glass, rock crystal, enamel. Necklace: 23 x 348mm, Pendant: 32 x 16mm Gozo Cathedral Chapter Collection

TALE OF A DOUBLE THEFT

It is popularly held that the necklace of the bust reliquary of St Ursula was given by Fra Eugenio Ramirez Maldonado, Governor of Gozo, to the Matrice in 1614. It is believed the necklace was stolen twice and twice recovered; the first time from the pocket of a man who had hanged himself, and the second time, around 1920, from a shop where the thief had traded it in.

The necklace consists of a series of painted miniatures each depicting a saint or holy image, and repeated on the other side of the central medallion, framed under domed glass or crystal, in a gemmed surround interspersed with gemmed links. The close back silver-gilt setting is engraved with floral motifs. The pendant at the front, although an old element, is completely unrelated to the necklace, and is possibly Spanish dating to the 17th century. The clasp which connects both ends together is made of a different colour of gold, and was clearly made later, possibly connected with the last plague epidemic that was raging in Gozo around 1813, localised to the village of Xagħra.

THE GOLDEN SCARAB



Earrings: 54 x 26mm 1874, Rome (micromosaic), Malta (gold mounts) Francesco Meli (gold mounts) (Private Collection, Malta)

This parure includes a bracelet, brooch and earrings and features micro-mosaic scarabs in the Egyptian revival taste, popular in the late nineteenth century. This motif also became fashionable in Malta where it was dubbed “tad-dubbiena”, probably because the Maltese likened what they saw as a winged insect to a fly.

The production of micro-mosaic panels, made up of hundreds of miniscule tesserae of glass, was a speciality of Rome. The style was in increasing demand and began being imported from Rome and mounted in raised gold mounts decorated with classical motifs of vines and scrolling tendrils. This parure is a rare survival in a complete or almost complete state. Of further relevance is the fact that the gold mounts of this parure were made by Francesco Meli, one of the best-known and most prolific goldsmiths in the second half of the 19th century in

Malta.



del Monte



Colomer



de Redin



La Valette



La Cassiere



Vasconcellos



L'Isle Adam



Porellos



von Hompesch



Lascaris



de Vilhena



Canafa



D'Omodes



Wignacourt



Pinto



la Fongle

✠ **Grand Masters of Malta** ✠

Maltese children's works in Berlin exhibition



Paintings by pupils from various schools in Malta are currently on display in Berlin at the 8th World Children's Art Exhibition on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the association 'Kinder-Kunst-Museum e.V.' (museum of children's art). The exhibition entitled "Give me your hand" will run until January 2014. It will show paintings of the palm of a hand produced by children (aged between 3 and 17) using different types of colour and materials. Children from Malta participated with 220 paintings from nine schools, of which many are exhibited. The initiative was coordinated by the Embassy of Malta in Berlin with the support of the Ministry of Education in Malta and Maltese schools.

The Ambassador of Malta to Germany, Albert Friggieri, went around the exhibition, which is hosted by the Domäne Dahlem, a historic manor house and open air museum for agricultural history and gastronomic culture. He was welcomed by Nina Vladi, the initiator and chairperson of the Kinder-Kunst-Museum, who guided him through the exhibition.

The Kinder-Kunst-Museum - "a museum in a suitcase", as they like to call themselves in the absence of a permanent home - aims to encourage children to create something of which they can be proud, to advance the artistic development of children and to build a bridge between all nations through the expressive artwork of children.

Apart from regularly organising children's art exhibitions in Germany and all over the world, as well as collecting and archiving the art, the association also provides supplemental activities for groups of children and school classes on cultural education. Some of the artworks by Maltese children can be accessed through the website of the Kinder-Kunst-Museum at www.kkm-berlin.de.

