



Maltese eNewsletter

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We wish all our readers and all Maltese
living in Malta and abroad
a safe and merry CHRISTMAS



IL-MILIED HIENI LILL-QARREJJA U L-MALTIN KOLLHA

CHRISTMAS
2023

ST. MARY'S
CATHEDRAL
SYDNEY
NSW



Heritage
Malta

We wish all Maltese Living Abroad
a Happy and Blessed Christmas



Many people consider Christmas as the most heart-warming time of year that they excitedly look forward every year. It certainly is a special time bringing love and happiness to homes and provides great opportunity for family gatherings. However, it varies from country to country how people celebrate. In Malta the majority of the locals is Roman Catholics, thus Christmas retains a strong religious element for them. Visiting Malta during the festive season allows you to experience how Maltese turn Christmas a truly magical period with century-old traditions and customs, spectacular events and lots of fun.

Christmas preparation is part of the Maltese way of life. Many of the traditions that are still alive are family oriented. Every year turn out to be a fun activity for all the family. If you are lucky you'll have a chance for not only learning them but also sharing the joy of some of these activities with the locals.

Festive decoration and Nativity Cribs

Maltese people love decorating their homes with typical twinkling *lights*. Start dominating house facades from as early as the beginning of November. Decorations to be placed on tables or in the windows often include home grown *vetches*. That give a unique, warm appearance to all creations. As for *Christmas tree*, Maltese commonly use faux-plants which cannot be imagined without tinsels and colourful glass or ornament decoration. It might look a bit kitschy but it indeed makes homes a magical place for the festive period.

Creating *Nativity sets* is definitely one of the charming Maltese traditions. Considered to be as part of the Christmas decoration procedure. The cribs showing the moment of the birth of Christ are commonly found in public areas, in schools or in offices as well as in every house, too. Each family prepares its own crib with figurines of all the characters, reflecting their own, personal taste and creativity.

Midnight Mass and Children's Procession

The highlight of festivities is reached on the 24th of December when *Midnight Mass* is celebrated. Going to the church for the Midnight Mass usually starts after the family dinner at night. The celebration itself looks unique keeping the lovely tradition of The Sermon of the Child. Instead of the priest, a small boy or girl gives the sermon who tell the story of Nativity. The mass is customarily followed by a rather social event. The community gathers on the parvis exchanging greetings while the priest offering them traditional Maltese date cakes (*mqareġ*) and coffee.

In most villages you can see a group of local children carrying lanterns, holding a statue of baby Jesus and singing Christmas Carols. Sometime they are even dressed in nativity scene costumes. This lovely tradition is the *children's processions* and is held right after the Midnight Mass.

Once they are at home, families often end up with having an *early Christmas breakfast* that includes champagne or mulled wine. This is something of a cultural tradition rather than a religious one, though.

Christmas Day – it is all about meals

In Malta, this day is mainly about big family gatherings and about repasts, as well. Families are close and large here so there can even be over 20 people sitting by the dining table. Maltese people love food and they do take pride in their national specialities. They consider Christmas as just another excellent occasion for enjoying delicious treats. Five-course-meals are not rarely served and lunch can happen to go on during long hours.

Christmas meals in Malta consist mainly of *turkey* but also include the traditional *rabbit stew*, the legendary *pastizzi* followed by the rich *Maltese Christmas pudding*. It is assented with soft, juicy fruits, almonds, candied peel, spices and the warmth of brandy that will definitely brights up your Christmas lunch or dinner. However, the true highlights of the dining tables are the delicious home made desserts.

The small, fruit-based, originally British *Minced pie* and Italian *Panettone* are two of the traditional symbols of the Maltese Christmas. The latter is indeed a sweet cake with the addition of raisins (classic version), candied or dried fruits and nuts. Alao packed with fruits and a hint of spice, *Christmas fruit cake* also makes an appearance in households over Christmas together with the *Maltese Christmas Log* that looks truly popular throughout Europe, yet in some different versions. Instead of sponge cake, the Maltese one is made with crushed biscuits and a variety of nuts, fruit and sometimes chocolate chips. Besides it being sooo delicious it is very simple to make. As for drinks, the heartwarming *Imbuljuta* – nutmeg- and cloves-flavoured roasted chestnuts soaked in hot chocolaty cognac cocktail – is traditionally served after the Midnight Mass to warm you up. If you are in Malta at this period, do not miss to taste them! Merry Christmas to you all! Warm Home Malta



The Malta Council for Science and Technology, with the support of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade and the Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation, is currently in the process of gathering data on Malta's international diaspora with respect to research and innovation. It is therefore reaching out to Maltese researchers working abroad. This mapping exercise will lay the foundation for future initiatives in bridging together Malta's domestic R&I ecosystem and leading Maltese scientists abroad. These initiatives would be aimed at:

- **The promotion of collaboration:** By identifying and connecting Maltese researchers internationally, collaboration could be fostered on research projects, academic initiatives and knowledge sharing.

- **Facilitating networking:** Future activities would serve as a platform for researchers to connect, share experiences and

explore opportunities for joint projects and academic partnerships.

Supporting diaspora engagement: Joint-projects and networking activities would further help in anchoring diaspra researchers to their Maltese roots.

Interested Maltese researchers conducting research in any given domain are invited to sign up to the Voluntary registration of Maltese Nationals of value living abroad via this link: <https://foreign.gov.mt/formv>. We would like to seek your support in disseminating the above Form to Maltese researchers working abroad within your network. We would also like to extend an invitation to researchers who do not fall within the scope of the Form, but have a connection to Malta, to get in touch.



HIGH COMMISSION FOR MALTA IN AUSTRALIA

Christmas Message 2023

To the readers of the Maltese eNewsletter
Journal for Maltese Living Abroad

Well here we are again at the end of another year and, as we tend to do every year, we think in disbelief on “how fast this year has gone”! I wonder, is it because we forget that the previous year also went very fast, as did the one before it, or is it because, as we grow older, time does seem to us as if it keeps going faster and faster? Or is it maybe because we lead such busy lives that sometimes it seems to us that the time we have is simply not enough?

Whatever the case may be, 2023 is nearly gone and what a year it has been for us at the High Commission! This year, we had a number of high level visits, starting with the Hon. Dr Anglu Farrugia, Speaker of the Maltese Parliament, who was in Canberra to attend a Commonwealth Speakers Conference, followed by the Hon. Helena Dalli, EU Commissioner for Equality and Human Rights, who was attending the Human Rights Conference in Sydney. And more recently, of course, our highlight for this year, the visit by H.E. Dr George Vella, President of Malta, between the 13th and 22nd October, visiting Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney.

Travelling with the President gave me the opportunity to once again meet our communities, which I like to keep in regular contact with, as I also do with our honorary consuls and members of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad.

Apart from this, in July I realised my dream of organising the first webinar for all Maltese associations throughout Australia and New Zealand, a webinar entitled “The State of the Maltese Diaspora in Australia and New Zealand – What Future?”. This was organised in collaboration with a number of Maltese entities and it was very well received by the associations that participated.

But as the year comes to an end, one generally takes a step back to unwind and reflect. And so, as Christmas trees, Santa Clauses and nativity scenes start to make an appearance in our homes, we should maybe consider what this time of year means to us, what the true values of the festive season are. And it would also be good if, while we enjoy the pleasures that come with this time of year, the presents, delicious food, etc, while our priorities might be Christmas shopping or going on holiday, we also spare a thought for those less fortunate who, either due to poverty, war, illness or any other reason, their only priority is to survive through Christmas and the new year.

I would like to thank my Deputy, Ms Gail Demanuele, and Consuls General, Lawrence Buhagiar and Gioconda Schembri, as well as our honorary consuls for their commitment and hard work throughout 2023. Joanne and I, together with my team at the High Commission, would like to wish you a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2024. And may peace reign on Earth!

H.E. Mario Farrugia Borg

High Commissioner to the Commonwealth of Australia

Non-Resident High Commissioner to New Zealand



Message from the Grand Master of the Confraternity of St. Peter and Saint Paul.

Christmas is a special time of the year, a time that brings Christians together to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus.

For many, Christmas is for family get-togethers, parties and time for holidays. But what is the true meaning of Christmas? A new baby brings joy to the family and so should the birth of our Lord, and first it should be celebrated in the house of the Lord, that is the church.

On behalf of the Confraternity of the Knights of St. Peter & St. Paul, I wish all the readers of the Maltese Journal a very Merry and Holy Christmas and a Happy New Year with peace to all men kind. God Bless.

H.E. Chevalier Peter Paul Portelli

Grand Master

CKSPP

Seat in Melbourne. Australia.

I'M DREAMING OF A MALTESE CHRISTMAS



Christmas is very important to the people of Malta and its sister Island of Gozo. Most people on Malta are Catholics and go to a Midnight Mass. Usually the churches are full with people. In Maltese Happy Christmas is 'Il-Milied it-Tajjeb'.

The Churches are decorated with lights and nativity cribs, 'Presepu', built by the church goers. The cribs are decorated with figurines, called 'pasturi' (representing figures like the shepherds and angels). Today some of the cribs are mechanical and the in them figures move! The figure of the baby Jesus is put on the main altar at midnight on Christmas night. At epiphany it is traditional to put the three figures of the Magi in the crib. There is a group on Malta called 'Friends of the Crib' who help to keep the Maltese crib tradition alive. Cribs were first introduced into Malta from Italy by rich noblemen. They were not popular at first and most were burnt. The first true Maltese crib is believed to have been made in Malta in 1617 and was displayed in the Dominican Friars Church in Rabat. In St Peter's Monastery in Mdina, there is a crib dating back to 1670. This is treasured and looked after by the Benedictine Nuns who live in the monastery.

At about the same time, another Maltese man made a crib with moving parts powered by water! As cribs became more popular, they also became more 'Maltese' with people replacing the Italian looking buildings and trades people with local ones. (Flour windmills were and are still popular buildings to feature in a crib scene.) The first imported Italian 'pasturi' were very expensive and most people couldn't afford them.

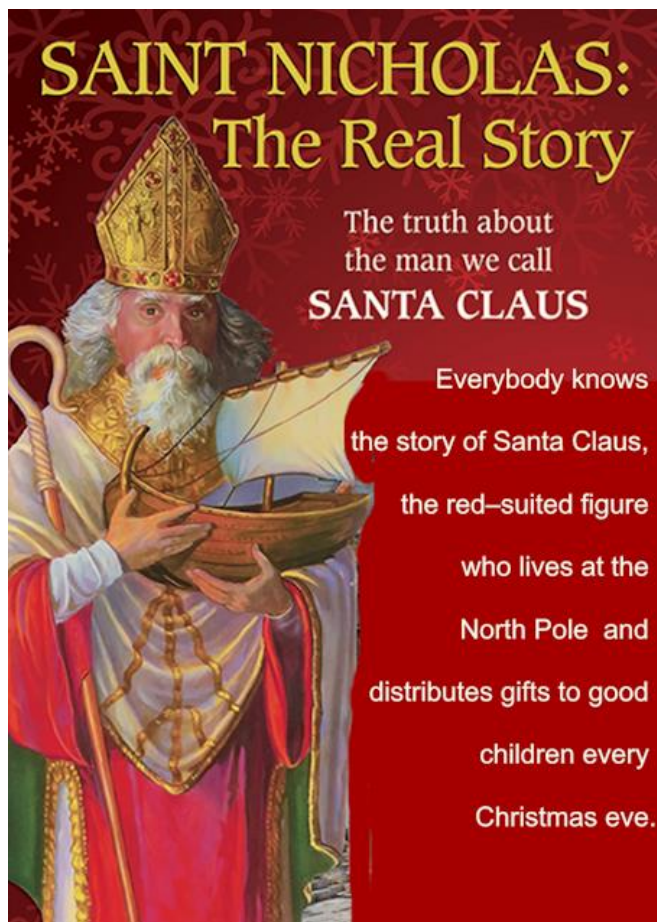
So people started making their own 'pasturi' from rough clay and plaster.

Some of these figures still exist today. (Modern pasturi are now often made of plastic.) By the early to mid 20th century, cribs were thought of as old fashioned and not very popular anymore. To stop the decline of Christmas, in 1907, a priest called George Preca founded children's charity and society called 'MUSEUM'. In 1921 he started a tradition of having a Christmas Eve procession with a life size figure of the Baby Jesus being carried at the head of the procession. At sunset on Christmas Eve in 1921, Fra Diegu Street in the town of Hamrun was crowded with children and adults ready to take part in the first procession.

In those days, street lighting was very poor in Malta and so many people brought lanterns with them to help them see their way during the procession and to shed light on the statue of Baby Jesus carried shoulder-high by four boys. The different types of lamps included, gas powered bicycle headlamps, oil lamps used on farmer's carts, coloured paper lanterns, Venetian lights, palm fronds and olive branches. The idea became very popular with people of all ages and so the very special Maltese traditional started.

These processions are still popular today and form part of the Christmas Eve celebrations. In 1986 the 'Friends of the Crib' society was formed and now they have over 500 members. Every year, in the weeks running up to Christmas, the Friends put on an exhibition of about 100 cribs of all shapes and sizes. Maltese houses are often also decorated with cribs with 'pasturi' (which are small plastic or clay figures representing figures like the shepherds and angels). Large figures of the baby Jesus are sometimes put behind windows or in balconies and lit at night. Houses are also decorated with Christmas wreaths, candles and all sorts of other decorations. Every household also has a Christmas Tree decorated with light bulbs, tinsel and Christmas decorations.

**NINNI, LA TIBKIX IZJED,
NINNI, GESU' BAMBIN**



Meet St. Nicholas!

Nicholas was born to wealthy Greek parents in the year 270 on the coast of what is now Turkey. He died on December 6, 343, in Myra, where he was bishop.

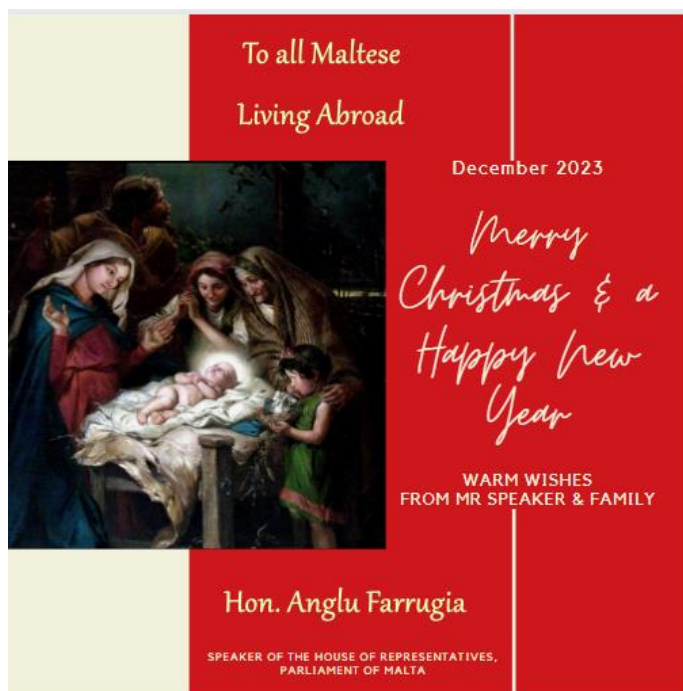
As bishop of Myra, Nicholas devoted himself to caring for the poor and defending children. At the Council of Nicea, he defended the divinity of Christ. To Roman officials who wanted to know who he was, he fearlessly declared: "I am Nicholas, a sinner, servant of God, and bishop of Myra."

The man who would later become the basis for our modern-day "Santa Claus" was gentle with children, but tough when it came to defending truth and justice. During the persecution of Christians, Bishop Nicholas was thrown in prison and tortured. Scientists studying his skull have found his nose had been broken, probably by Roman soldiers during the bishop's time in prison. As a young man, Nicholas made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land so he could pray at the places Jesus lived. During the voyage, a fierce storm struck the ship. "Do not fear; God will protect us," Nicholas told the sailors. Then he calmly prayed as the storm raged. Finally, the storm calmed down, but not before a sailor fell from the rigging. Nicholas prayed over the seemingly dead man, who miraculously arose as if he had only been asleep.

Another time Bishop Nicholas learned of three sisters who wanted to marry but were unable to afford a dowry. Nicholas visited the family's home in the middle of the night, throwing a small bag of gold coins in the window. The coins landed in a pair of shoes that were drying by the fire. Nicholas did this three times, supplying enough money for all the girls to marry. Once, Nicholas stopped the unjust execution of three men. He grabbed the sword out of the executioner's hands, unchained the men, and brought them back to the judge to demand their pardon.

When famine struck Myra in 312 and 313, Nicholas prayed to God for help. Soon he learned of several ships that had landed nearby, laden with grain destined for Egypt. He rushed to the port and begged the captain to sell some of the grain, promising the man that he would not get in trouble for the missing amount. Very reluctantly, the captain sold some of the grain to the people of Myra.

When the grain was unloaded in Egypt, true to the good bishop's word, it weighed as much as when it had been loaded! Back in Myra, the grain was enough to feed people for two years, with enough left over for planting. It was a miracle of sharing—the sort of miracle that is especially appropriate during Advent!



We thank all those who during this year helped us by sending articles, biographies, news, poems and other contributions

This Is the Most Festive City to Celebrate Christmas in Canada in 2023

Discover the most enchanting holiday destination in Canada for 2023. Celebrate the magic of Christmas in Toronto!

Nathan Phillips Square Toronto Canada at Christmas

Toronto is known as the "Queen City" and offers a vibrant and diverse cultural experience, making it the most festive city to celebrate Christmas in Canada.

The city transforms into a winter wonderland during the holiday season with enchanting light shows, a charming winter village, and the iconic Nutcracker Ballet.

Toronto has unique traditions like skating at Nathan Phillips Square, admiring holiday window displays, and enjoying the twinkling holiday lights that create a warm and inviting atmosphere throughout the city.

Toronto, often referred to as the "Queen City," is the largest and most populous city in Canada. Located in the province of Ontario, it is a dynamic metropolis known for its cultural diversity, vibrant arts scene, impressive skyline, and a wide array of attractions that appeal to both residents and visitors.

Toronto is gearing up to transform into a winter wonderland as the holiday season approaches. With a fascinating array of holiday events and festivals, it's no wonder that Toronto is often hailed as the most festive city to celebrate Christmas in Canada.

As the city prepares itself for another unforgettable holiday season, its rich history and dynamic present continue to shape a place where tradition and modernity coexist harmoniously, offering residents and visitors alike an extraordinary festive winter experience with lots of activities to enjoy. Here's why Toronto is the most festive city to celebrate Christmas in 2023.

The holiday season in Toronto kicks off with a spectacular lineup of limited-time events that promise to fill the heart with warmth and cheer.

Whimsical Light Shows

Toronto's enchanting Christmas festivities commence with a breathtaking showcase of whimsical light shows. The entire city undergoes a magical transformation into a winter wonderland, with lights adorning streets and landmarks. Notably, Casa Loma takes centre stage at Christmas, becoming a radiant beacon of holiday cheer.

A sea of lights illuminates its majestic architecture, crafting a picture-perfect spectacle. Toronto's streets come alive with beautiful decorations and twinkling lights that infuse the city with a festive ambiance.

This dazzling display of holiday lights is a sight to behold, setting the stage for an unforgettable Christmas season in the city.



I thank all those who sent a small donation towards the production of this journal

If you would like to contribute these are the details

Bank: Commonwealth (Australia)

BSB: 065-106

Account: 0050 2507



Maltese and Gozitan crib-makers exhibit their works in Rome

An exhibition, entitled “The Maltese Crib: Art, Faith and Tradition” is being held at the basilica of Sant’Andrea della Valle in Rome, on the initiative of the “Ghimmanu-El Ghaqda Presepisti Ghajnsielem” society which is celebrating its 10 anniversary.

The exhibition, which was inaugurated by Cardinal Mario Grech, consists of 31 cribs, diorama and crib sculpture in contemporary style by 28 Maltese and Gozitan artists.

The President of the “Ghimmanu-El Ghaqda Presepisti Ghajnsielem”, Paul Stellini, said the society is committed in the organisation of courses on the crib, conferences and exhibitions, while promoting the Maltese crib abroad.

The Bergamo and Turin exhibitions in 2019 and 2022, and this one in Rome we are exhibiting high level artistic works, as master Claudio Mattei told us. Our aim is to continue to promote the crib not only in Italy but in other European countries. Next year we plan to exhibit at the European Parliament building in Brussels.

Paul Stellini

Cardinal Mario Grech expressed his honour to attend the exhibition inauguration, saying that the crib delivers various values including faith, culture, art and the Maltese and Gozitans wish for peace.

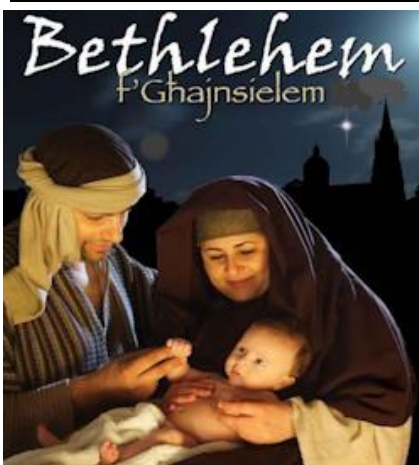
I am convinced that the Maltese and Gozitans have this wish, not only for peace in the world, especially where wars prevail, such as those in the Holy Land, Ukraine and other places. But also peace between us, in our families and in society. Therefore, this exhibition is a platform that communicates the desire in the hearts of the Maltese and Gozitans.

Cardinal Mario Grech

The Ghimmanu-El Ghaqda Presepisti Ghajnsielem’s exhibition in Rome was supported by the Tourism Authority, the Foreign Affairs Ministry through the Ambassador to the Holy See, the Gozo Ministry and the Ghajnsielem Local Council.

It is estimated that between 8,000 and 10,000 people visit the Sant’Andrea della Valle basilica daily, while the Christmas holidays attract far more visitors.

The Ghajnsielem society is also holding exhibitions during this Christmas period at the St Joseph Institute’s hall and at the parish church basement in the locality.



Bethlehem comes to life in Ghajnsielem - Gozo

It will be open until January 7

The animated Nativity village in Ghajnsielem has gone live.

In its 14th edition, the village, launched by Gozo Minister Clint Camilleri, is spread over 20,000 square metres of fields on a stretch of land known as Ta’ Passi.

The ‘village’ will offer visitors a naturalistic reproduction of the environs of the Bethlehem and the Nativity story. It is brought to life by around 150 actors animating the crib, helped by around 50 other people. Visitors will, among others, see horses turning mills, villagers

going about their business, animals roaming in enclosed spaces and a poor couple tending to its new infant surrounded by a donkey and a cow in a grotto. The village will close on January 7 with the Adoration of the Magi. The minister encouraged visitors to Gozo to visit the village.

Clerk of the House Raymond Scicluna retires in last Parliament session of the year



The Clerk of the House of Parliament Raymond Scicluna will be retiring from his role after 44 years of service.

The news came out during the last parliamentary sitting on Monday, where both sides of the House thanked and gave their appreciation to Scicluna. Scicluna has served as Clerk of the House since 1978.

MPs applauded Scicluna, who was described as a professional and always available. Deputy Prime Minister Chris Fearne, PL Whip Andy Ellul, PN Whip Robert Cutajar, Opposition Leader Bernard Grech, as

well as Speaker Anglu Farrugia spoke to honour and appreciate Scicluna for his dedicated work.

Ellul described Scicluna as a professional friend, with a strong sense of humour. "He is a walking encyclopaedia on parliamentary procedures," he said, adding that he has always been available for anything that was needed.

Ellul also said that whenever there is a lack of agreement in the House, Scicluna was the one to take MPs aside and address the matter.

He wished Scicluna a happy retirement and thanked him for his service.

PN Whip Robert Cutajar said that it was a sorrowful day, as the House will be losing a person who worked with commitment, loyalty, responsibility, and humility.

Cutajar said that Scicluna is the person the Whips speak to most regularly, and Scicluna was accessible from Monday to Sunday, even whilst abroad.

He described Scicluna as having been a great example for workers in Parliament, crediting him for it. Cutajar said that Scicluna has important values at heart.

Cutajar also said that Scicluna gave an example which none of the members of Parliament ever follow, which is that he commutes to work on a bicycle, and not by car.

Speaker Farrugia thanked Scicluna for his dedication in his work, preciseness, good conscience, and for always being courageous enough to speak up when he disagreed with something.

Farrugia said that Scicluna is "an example of how things should be done in a democratic country."

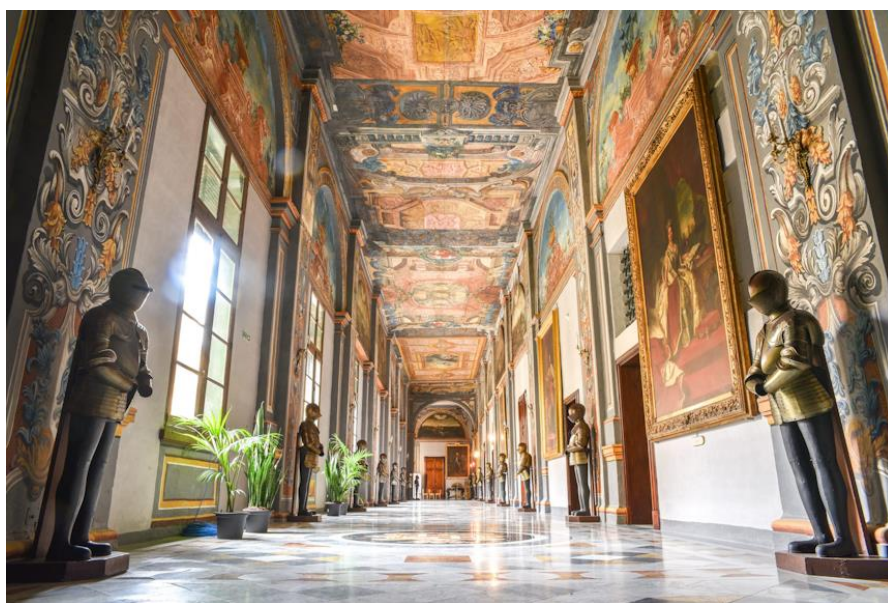
He said that Scicluna valued family first, and joked that if Scicluna felt he could continue a few more hours of work, he was always welcome.

Scicluna himself spoke briefly, thanking all the members of the House, and his family. The Speaker and the PN presented small gifts in appreciation.

On behalf of the readers of the Maltese Journal I wish Raymond a happy, relaxing and well-deserved retirement after serving the Malta Parliament and the Republic for 44 years in the capacity of the clerk of the House of Representatives. His professionalism, intelligence and dedication are some of his many excellent qualities are I am sure that he will be missed by both the government and the opposition. I am proud to state that Raymond is my nephew.



Boxing Day - Grand Master's Palace Special Opening



We have another gift for you to unwrap on Boxing Day!

It may not be lying under your Christmas tree adorned with a big red bow around it, but its curious facade sculptures, splendid courtyard and luxurious interiors are sure to entertain and make you feel like royalty for a day!

On the 26th of December, we are inviting you to visit the

Grand Master's Palace for a refreshed peek as it regains its shine under our professionals' expert hands. It will welcome the public from 10:00 until 18:00, and all proceeds and donations collected during the event will be directed to the Malta Community Chest Fund.



FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

WE write to thank you and your community for your ongoing contribution to our state.

There has been much to celebrate this year. As we reflect on the highlights of 2023 and our shared achievements, we thank you for your commitment to making South Australia such a proud multicultural state.

It is the cultural and economic contributions your community continues to make that keep South Australia such a wonderful place to live, work and prosper.

On behalf of the South Australian Government, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We know many of you will use this time to celebrate with family and friends, and we hope this festive season brings you and your community much joy.

We look forward to seeing you and working closely with you in 2024!

Peter Malinauskas
PREMIER

Zoe Bettison
MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS

Athlete completes 24-hour run round university track for charity

Times of Malta

He ran almost four marathons James Cummings

Ultrarunner **STEPHEN SAMMUT NURMINEN** has completed a 24-hour run around the university track in Msida to donate thousands of meals to Soup Kitchen OFM.

Sammur Nurminen started running on Saturday afternoon and continued throughout the night and into Sunday morning, during which time he was joined by others keen to help him in his challenge.

In total, they racked up an impressive 7,258 laps round the course and covered over 2,900 kilometres, an achievement he described as overwhelming. "I'm so emotional, to be honest," he told Times of Malta just after completing the event.

"The show up of the public has been amazing — yesterday and today lots of people came down, I couldn't believe it. I wasn't expecting such a turnout to be honest," he said.

"This proves that if we create a space where people can come and get moving, and at the same time doing it for a good cause, look at the outcome."

Last Christmas, the runner donated 770 meals to the soup kitchen and this year expects to have contributed more than four times that many together with his fellow runners and including sponsorship and donations from the public.

And with each kilometre completed equivalent to one meal, the weekend's activities have seen more than 2,900 meals secured for the soup kitchen, equivalent to around one month's supply of meals.

Sammur Nurminen's efforts alone, which saw him complete 394 laps — equivalent to almost four marathons — raised enough money for close to 160 meals. This year saw the runner join forces with local companies BRND WGN and Garnish, the latter of which will provide the meals to the soup kitchen. The collaboration made for a considerably larger affair than the last, this time including fitness classes, two fun runs — one for children and one for adults — provisions of food and drink and DJs

playing music throughout the run.

Sunday morning's fun run for children saw around 40 youngsters turn up to take part — double the number of adults who turned up for the one on Saturday.

Sammur Nurminen said seeing people attending the fitness classes and fun runs had kept him motivated during the run, which earlier this week he explained he had prepared for by training four hours per day. While running for most of the 24 hours, every hour he made sure to take a break of a few minutes to eat and drink to keep his energy levels up.

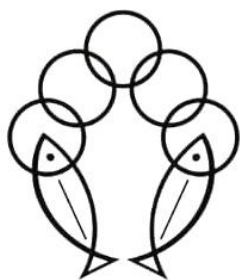
Sammur Nurminen being congratulated by his father. Photo: Jonathan Borg.

When asked what his plans were for the rest of the day, he said he was looking forward to grabbing a shower and a hot meal after the event.

"I've been thinking about it for at least the last five to six hours," he said, adding that, probably surprisingly to most, he didn't think he'd be able to rest that night.

"I doubt I'll sleep tonight; emotions are running high... Congratulations to everyone who got involved, thank you."

Soup Kitchen OFM provides freshly prepared meals three times per week, as well as legal and psychological help and assistance finding a job. To find out more about their work, visit www.soupkitchenofmvalletta.com. *Submitted by Charles Sammut*



SOUP KITCHEN
OFM VALLETTA



2024 OSCE Ministerial Council

Hon. Ian Borg – New Chairperson

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani and Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs and upcoming Chairperson-in-Office, Ian Borg at the 30th OSCE Ministerial Council, Skopje, 1 December 2023. (OSCE) [Photo details](#)

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani, announced the selection of Malta for the 2024 OSCE Chairpersonship and the extension of senior officials at the closing of the 30th Ministerial Council in Skopje today.

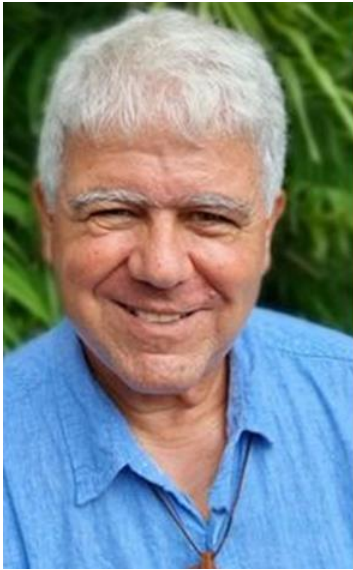
Chairman Osmani welcomed the participating States' adoption by consensus, of decisions on the selection of Malta as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for 2024, the extension of OSCE Secretary General Schmid, Representative on Freedom of the Media Ribeiro

and High Commissioner on National Minorities Abdrakhmanov, and the appointment of Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Mecacci, until 3 September 2024.

"Our ability to come together now and forge consensus among all 57 participating States reveals, once more, the importance and efficacy of building agreement through negotiation and compromise on behalf of our common goals and objectives. Despite our differences and disagreements, we have shown the strategic vision required to continue our constructive efforts toward implementing and applying the OSCE's competitive advantages through the work of its executive structures to the benefit of all our people," said Osmani.

Hon Ian Borg said – I am honoured that at Skopje, at the OSCE Ministerial Council, my colleagues expressed consensus for me to be appointed as the First Maltese Foreign Minister in the position of Chairperson in Office of this organisation. During these challenging times for the international community together with the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade team we will serve and strive for continuous dialogue and consultation to meet the expectations that carries this position.





Reflection by Charles Gauci Bishop of Darwin and Northern Territory Christmas Week

So, we are now in the last week before Christmas.

How is my reflection on all of my relationships going?

How is my relationship with God going? Am I remembering how incredibly and infinitely loved I am?

How pivotal and central is this relationship? Am I 'wasting' time in prayer? Am I growing in awe at the amazing mystery of an incredible God?

How is my relationship with myself going? Do I have a healthy love of myself?

God's incredible love for me is bigger than

any challenge that I have to face ...He sees the beauty in me and blots out my sins! His love is everlasting and forever energising.

How are my relationships with others going? Am I respectful to all in my life? Am I appreciative of them? Do I give thanks wherever it is due?

Is there some damaged relationship that I need to heal?

Am I contemplative as I view and relate to the rest

of creation? Am I a good steward, taking good care of this amazing miracle of creation?

Now is the time for a new day—every now!



This time every year in schools, churches, homes, hospitals, hospices and shopping centres the Christmas Crib stands as a tangible reminder to us that God is real and God is with us. Cribbs come in all shapes and sizes and often reflect the cultural context they are in. A crib is an important part of Christmas symbolism and a doorway to deeper reflection and prayer.

The formation of the first Christmas crib is attributed to St Francis of Assisi. In 1223, just three years before his death, Francis went to visit the Friars living in the remote mountain village of Greccio. St Bonaventure tells us that in order to excite the people of Greccio to celebrate the birth of the Saviour with all solemnity, Francis brought

St Francis and the Crib

together all the elements of the stable in Bethlehem into what would become the very first Christmas crib.

Francis used real people, straw and animals to bring the Christmas story to life for the people of Greccio. People came from far and wide to see this spectacle. The night was aglow with candlelight as hymns were sung in praise of the God who is with us.

Francis was very real and very practical. He understood that as human beings we often need to see, hear and even smell something before it can enlighten our minds and ignite our hearts. As Francis carefully brought the characters of the Christmas scene together, he also skilfully brought the people of Greccio together; uniting them in prayer and praise around a living and breathing expression of God's connection with the human story. The crib remains a beacon of peace, hope and reconciliation and offers an opportunity for us to reflect upon the deeper message it represents.

RUOK?
Are you OK?

How to Cope with Being Lonely at Christmas



Christmas can be a time of mixed emotions; joy, happiness and excitement, but it can also exacerbate feelings of loneliness, sadness or bereavement.

For many of us the festive season is a time of celebration, giving and a special time together with loved ones. But in the midst of the sparkly decorations, shopping chaos and preparation for the holiday season, it's important to understand it can also highlight what people don't have. And for some people feelings of sadness, bereavement, or loneliness might worsen. For those finding it difficult to feel this way

this can add to the pressure and feelings of isolation or loneliness."

Loneliness at Christmas

Holiday times can worsen feelings of loneliness and seeing others with their families can be deeply painful for those spending this time alone or finding it difficult to feel truly connected to those around them. Just because it's a 'happy' time of year, that doesn't make living with a mental illness any easier. It's important we offer support and understanding of this wherever possible.

Festive stress

Feeling stressed and overwhelmed may also make it difficult to feeling relaxed and joyful over this holiday period. Juggling the demands of work, caring responsibilities, personal needs and preparation for the Christmas season can prevent us from feeling really present in the moment.

Financial stress or the fear of not having enough money to buy gifts or celebrate and contribute to family events as you usually would, can lead to feelings of insecurity, sadness, guilt and shame. If you, or anyone you know may be impacted by feelings like this, spare a thought, keep an eye out for any worrying feelings or comments.

Grief at Christmas

Christmas, for most of us, is about being with those we love, but what about those who have **lost a loved one**? For those who have lost loved ones, holidays like Christmas can really highlight what we have don't have. Grief can be incredibly overwhelming for those missing someone who has died."

Loss can also be felt because of other reasons, like conflict between family or friends or divorce. The loss of health, such as **battling a chronic or terminal illness** can also exacerbate feelings of reflection, sadness, worry or grief at times like these.

Tell someone how you are feeling. This might be a trusted person in your life, or if you find it easier talking to someone you don't know, reach out to a national help line or a local GP. Trained mental health clinicians can provide you with support, guidance and advice.

Ask for help if you're feeling overwhelmed. This might be from your workplace, family, friends, or children. Don't feel obliged to take on all the planning yourself.

Think about what works for you. If you would prefer some time alone to reflect or grieve a difficult year, give yourself the time to do this. Also, give yourself the opportunity to participate in something that will bring you some relief from these feelings.

Look for volunteering opportunities. If you don't feel that you have someone to be with, or you don't want to be with anyone you know, why not help those in need? Look on the internet or call around to your local council to find out whether there is any volunteering.

Practice self-care. Looking after our mental and physical health is so important, at all times, not just at Christmas. Prioritise getting some 'you' time in, wherever you can. Use this time to do something that you feel is looking after your needs – whether it be something creative, relaxing, invigorating, or purely 'switching off' through a mindful activity. Wherever you can, look for the things that you can feel grateful for. Even if it seems difficult, appreciate yourself and what you have achieved this year, no matter how big or small.

THE WAY HOW WE USED TO COOK FOOD IN MALTA IN THE 1950s

BY DAVID JOHN CARDONA

In view of the vital appliances that were needed in post-war - Malta

Early Post-war Malta consisted of hard living, small wages, shortage of appliances and many more. Throughout this article a brief information will be shown regarding the most crucial things that a person living in the 1950's had to use throughout his life.

Of course cookers weren't invented yet...but what surely was available were the famous 'Valor' paraffin cooking stoves also known as 'Kuciniera' in

Maltese. Made in England and brought to Malta with the use of naval ships, the Valor cooking stoves were regarded as high-quality materials which could last forever, thus being perfect to use for a family which didn't earn a lot of money. One would open the small door found at the front of the stove and light up the wick 'Ftila', place an enamel teapot on top and make a nice warm coffee in order to gain energy for a hard working day in the fields. An interesting characteristic was that the tube part of the Stove was made out of enamel which was a very good material. Prices for these normally varied from 2 to 3 Pounds

Another appliance which was available was the kerosene cooking stove known as 'spiritiera' in Maltese. Basically this had the same use as the one mentioned previously, but had some structural differences mainly not having a small door to light the wick up but having to light it from the top part. The shapes were totally different but they served the same purpose. They were available in 3 modes, one which consisted of a single knob and had a single burner, the other consisted of 2 knobs and had 2 burners and the other consisted of 3 knobs and had 3 burners. Its material was made out of enamel and were regarded as high class. Prices varied between 5 to 6 Pounds



Another appliance which was well popular amongst Maltese people was the coffee grinder well known as 'Mithna tal-kafé' in Maltese. This was affordable for many families and was to be found almost in every house. It was normally used for coffee but was even used for other purposes, mainly grinding into

bits hard shelled food like walnuts and other nuts. One would grind the food and when ready would pick it from the small wood drawer. Prices varied between 2 to 3 pounds.

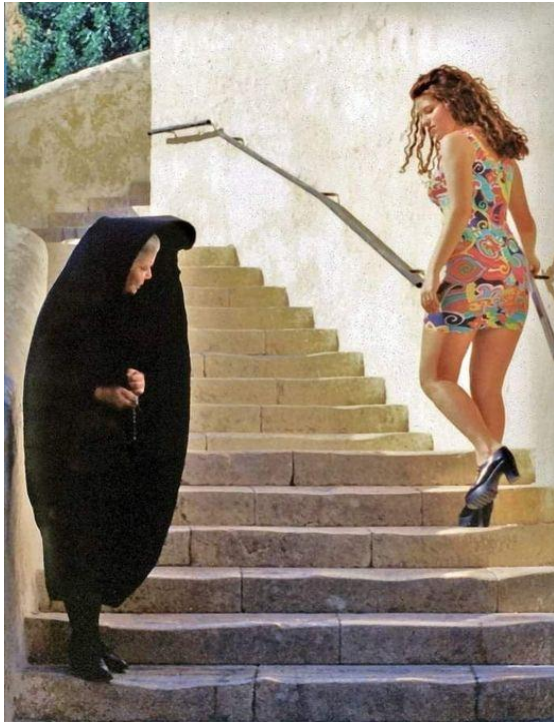
An appliance which was well used in the 1950's were the cups used for cottage cheese. These cups were handmade out of hay since plastic wasn't available unlike nowadays. The majority of families in Gozo had sheep, cows, hens and many other animals. They used to make cheese out of the goat's milk and used to place it in these cups.

As we can see, in the past a total different situation was present but although there was a scarcity of materials, unity was present amongst all the family members and everyone grew up appreciating the little things in life. To be continued.....

I wish you a very merry christmas full of love and prosperity!



THE GHONNELLA VERSUS THE MINI-SKIRT



THE Ghonnella, a traditional Maltese headdress is a garment that has long disappeared from the streets of Malta and Gozo. Here's a close look at the ghonnella and its history.

Dating back to the 16th century, during the time of the knights, women from the more well-to-do families adorned ghonnielen (plural.) in both white and bright colours. As a symbol of their wealth, the ghonnella was seen as appropriate dress as it covered the majority of the body. At a time when only the face of a lady should be seen, it was also often accompanied by a huge fan. Bearing a slight resemblance to the Turkish *charshaf*, the ghonnella is unique to both Malta and sister island of Gozo.

In addition to covering the body, another main purpose was to provide shelter from the intense Maltese sun, while capturing cool breezes and protection from rain and winds. Made of predominantly black rich silk or cotton, the headwear features an arch shape framing the top of the head, with loose material draped either side, falling to mid-calf length, to be clasped in the hand.

The arch is formed by having cardboard, cane or even whalebone stitched inside.

From its introduction until the mid-20th century this was common wear among elderly spinsters and members of the religious Christian group 'Tal-Musew' as formal Sunday wear for female churchgoers. Despite its former popularity, the headwear also had its disadvantages. Women wearing ghonnella had their sight restricted and during high winds they were particularly difficult to wear as the arch caught the wind and the loose sides had to be held tightly with both hands to keep them in place. Following its demise during World War II, today it is very rare to see ladies wearing this headdress but is still considered part of the island's traditional costumes.

During later years, remaining in dark colours, the headdress became more common, with women taking to wearing these during everyday duties. Brides took to wearing white ghonnella, while it is alleged that peasants were sometimes seen wearing green. There are many theories behind the origin of this garment and today the truth remains unclear. Stories include that it originated from a long skirt that was often thrown above the head to help provide shade, while some historians believe it was influenced by both Italian and Sicilian mourning rituals of the time and introduced to the island of Malta during the reign of the Knights of St John. There is also the belief that it could possibly be an adapted version of the Spanish *mantilla*.

That has slowly shifted us to today's fashions, and while you may still spot a nanna wearing a scarf over her head, most women wouldn't dream of wearing one nowadays. And that's not all; better pay and a decline in the church's influence has also got us to wear bolder outfits. Would our ancestors approve of them and wearing min-skirt or pants instead? Hardly, but they'd have probably worn the same

CHRISTMAS TREATS

Irkotta Cannoli

Serves 8

Ingredients:

- 8 cannoli cases
- 250g fresh irkotta
- 65g icing sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 200g chopped pistachios



Method:

- For the filling, first let the irkotta sit in a strainer over a small bowl in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to remove excess water
 - Mix the irkotta with icing sugar, vanilla and some of the chopped pistachios
 - Chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes
 - Fill a piping bag with the mixture, and pipe into the cannoli cases
 - Decorate the cannoli ends with the remaining chopped pistachios
- Chill until ready to serve. When you finish don't forget to send me one CANNOL.



Imbuljuta tal-Qastan – Hot Chestnut drink

Imbuljuta tal-Qastan is a traditional hot and spiced cocoa-based Maltese drink served after midnight Mass at Christmas and at New Year's Eve.

Servings: [6](#) people

Ingredients

- 2 cups dried peeled chestnuts
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 6 cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon spice blend (cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, etc.)
- Rind of a mandarin
- 4 tablespoons corn-starch
- 3 tablespoons sour cream (optional)

Instructions

1. Wash and soak the chestnuts for at least 8 hours.
2. Drain and put the chestnuts in a pan. Add 4 cups (1l) of water, cinnamon, cloves, cocoa powder, sugar, spice blend and mandarin rind cut in small pieces.
3. Bring to a boil and simmer until the chestnuts are tender, about 1 hour.
4. At the end of cooking, break the chestnuts into small pieces with a large spoon without crushing them.
5. Dissolve the corn-starch in a little water and add to slightly thicken the sauce.
6. Serve hot in a cup or a bowl.



FROM OUR READERS

----- Thank you for your newsletter and all the work that goes into presenting it.

I enjoy reading the articles of the past and present and also the recipes.

My dad was born in Hà Dingli and I still have may relatives in Malta so it always nice to feel in touch.

Merry Christmas and a hair New Year. Mary Kunowski

-----I am writing this email from the beautiful Italian city of Firenze.

My sincere thanks to you for your amazing magazine. I look forward to receiving it and catching up with news. My best wishes to you and your family for the Christmas Season. May it truly be a blessed one. May 2024 bring you all that your hearts desire, good health, family unity, love and serenity. With my warmest regards, Dolores Cristina.

----Many thanks for your lovely and colourful newsletter which brightens my day every time I click open your pdf file. God bless! Dr. Michael A. Riccioli

----I read all the Maltese newsletter, so interesting. You are doing such a wonderful and nostalgic and yes apostolate ministry to the Maltese Diaspora around the world. Thank you for your efforts, God bless you and have a Christ filled Christmas.

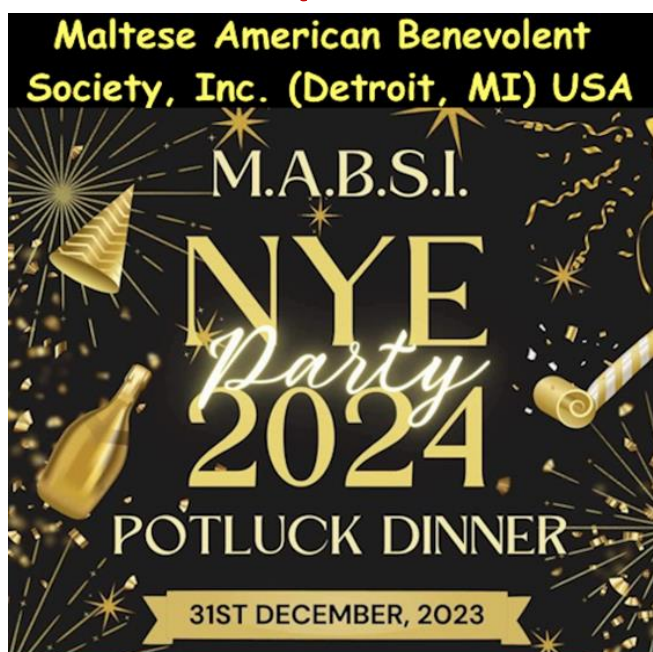
P. Manuel Adami. – Malta

-----Again, another fantastic newsletter. So much to read – so much information and history – it is amazing and an insight to many stages in Malta's history.

On a personal note, I am wondering if anyone knows much about the Casa INGUANEZ on Triq INGUANEZ, in Mdina. This is the ancestral home of my Inguanez family and although I have visited twice – I have not ever been able to find anyone who knows how to contact the owner so that I may be able to gain access to view what I would think, an amazing Casa. I have never had any success. I do not know who is the owner or who lives there at present but maybe I would be able to contact the owner – somehow – to see if there are any photos of the interior of the Casa and/or gain any more information about the Casa.

I have looked over a long period of time but I do not think there are any tours of the Casa. I have made many enquiries but not one has been successful in gaining an answer or any information regarding this. I am just wondering if you know of anyone who may have this information? Sending further good wishes for a very Merry Christmas to you and all your family and to all the Maltese E-Newsletter readers and also for a very healthy and Happy New Year and for all that is good in 2024. Kind regards and sincere thanks,

Marion Atkinson Queensland Australia



Bless you all
greetings from Maltese community
group maltaozzies
Maltese in Canada, America,
Australia, Neitherlands



BKR 94.5 FM

Lehen Karkariż madwar id-Dinja kollha



Birkirkara's own radio station has been broadcasting on 94.5 FM since 2001. This was an initiative taken by Mr Carmelo Calleja and Mr Victor Zammit (then president of Birkirkara FC). With its varied programming, BKR has sought to bring together the Birkirkara community by offering something for everyone. Fast forward to 2023, and BKR is still going strong. BKR is aimed at providing something for everyone, from traditional Maltese Folk Music, to Opera, to sports, to the best hits from the 50s till today. We are a community radio station, and therefore we involve ourselves deeply in community events, both religious and secular. In fact, 2023 was a record breaking year for BKR, as we were involved in a number of such events. To try and improve our community presence further, we promote events by organisations from Birkirkara, both on air and on our website.

To continue fostering our relationship with our listeners, this year we re-launched "Club BKR", an initiative where for only €5 per year, our listeners would be helping their favourite radio station, and in return they receive official BKR merchandise for free. In addition, we hold a raffle every end of the year for our members who are automatically entered in the draw.

If anyone is interested in obtaining more information about this community radio station, one can keep contact by sending an email to info@bkr.mt, or by visiting our website www.bkr.mt. Looking forward to hearing from you! **We wish you all a Happy Christmas – Il-Milied it-Tajjeb - Jordan**

Il-Milied u s-Sena
t-Tajba

Happy Christmas and
a Happy New Year

**Nativity play by the students
of Attard Primary School
1955**
National Archives of Malta

*The National Archivist and Staff
L-Arkivista Nazzjonali u l-Istaff
Dr Charles Farrugia CEO*

Thank you for sending
me every issue of the
Maltese e-Newsletter.

Besides
making us feel closer
to our relatives
in Melbourne
and New York,
even if we are very
often in contact
on Whatsapp, etc,
it keeps us
in line with what
goes on among
fellow citizens living
away from home.
Have a marvellous
Christmas full
of Joy and Peace.
Charles Bellia
Attard - Malta



**GHAQDA HBIEB TAL-PRESEPJU
MALTA**

While we celebrate the 800th Anniversary of the
first Live *Preseppju* by St Francis of Assisi in
Greccio, Italy we send Best wishes to the
producers of this Maltese e-Newsletter and its
readers for a

**VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS FILLED
WITH THE JOY & BLESSINGS OF
HEAVEN THROUGH THE BIRTH
OF BABY JESUS.**

Our motto:
Celebrate christmas around the Preseppju!

Contact details:
The Secretary: Charles A. Bellia
eMail: presmal18@gmail.com.



*Merry Christmas
& a Happy new year*

To our family, friends
and readers of the
Maltese Journal
A Blessed Christmas



Mary and Harry Bugeja
Adelaide - Australia

O HOLY NIGHT
the stars are brightly shining.

Many and sincere thanks
for your excellent
Maltese Journal and wish
you good health and
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.
Charles Zammit.



Maltese eNewsletter



This journal is for all
Maltese living abroad
It is free, bilingual, non-political
and multicultural publication
produced in Adelaide, Australia
This Journal is loved, read, respected,
enjoyed and shared
by readers from all over the globe.
Subscribe now
and will not miss a thing



The George Cross Falcons Community Centre

25-27 Lake Ave Cringila NSW 2502

The President, Mr Louis Parnis,
committee and members



would like to thank the Maltese Journal for the support given throughout the year 2023 and wish the editor and the readers all over the world a happy and prosperous Christmas and a healthy and peaceful New Year 2024



I sincerely thank
all the associations,
Clubs, libraries,
museums and
libraries
who supported my
journal during 2023



Betlem, Betlem'
Art ta' Guda
Inti l-akatar
Ixxurtjata

Rodrigu Bovingdon
Fl-Ahwija Maltija

Holl iilsienek
Semma lehnek
Uri l-ferh ta'
Dil-gurnata

MILIED HIENI U QADDIS
LIL GHAIJRI KOLLHA
TA' RIEDA TAJBA



**GRAZZI MILL-QALB
TA' L-GHAJNUNA
TAGHKOM
IL-MILIED HIENI**

Pierre Calleja
Co-ordinator
DONINU MALTA
<http://doninu.eu/innu-tfal-maltin/>



**TO ALL THE READERS OF
THE MALTESE-NEWSLETTER**
FROHE WEIHNACHTEN UND EIN GUTES NEUES JAHR
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
BIX-XEWQAT TAJBA GHAL MILIED QADDIS
U SENA TA' HENA
warmest wishes to you and your families
with kind regards
Christian and Bettina Launer
Maltese German Association