



# MerHbA

**Maltese Historical Association (Aust) Inc**  
(Ghaqda Storika Maltija (Awstralija) Inkorporata)

**MHA Newsletter No. 1/2015**

[www.mha.org.au](http://www.mha.org.au)

**February 2015**

Merħba! Welcome, all the members and friends of the Maltese Historical Association, to our first newsletter for 2015. Our committee has already been busy planning an exciting programme for this year of anniversaries: from the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, through Gallipoli a hundred years ago this year, to the end of World War 2 in 1945, 70 years ago on 2 September. We anticipate commemorating these events from a unique, Maltese perspective, as well as exploring many other topics.

Our first lecture, on 17 February, will be given by Dr Albert Farrugia, who will examine the political situation in Malta through its elections, post World War 2. Professor Maurice Cauchi, who was originally scheduled to give the first talk, kindly deferred his lecture until March. On 21 April, just in time for the Anzac commemorations, we anticipate a talk by Mario Bonnici on Malta's considerable contribution to the First World War, focusing on her association with Australian troops.

In May, we may explore the state of affairs in Europe, setting the stage for the Ottoman invasion of Malta, 450 years earlier. It would be remiss of us not to do something extra special during the anniversary of the three month siege. Already many ideas are being tossed around. What part did the Cavalry play? What was the role of the Maltese Nobility? Weapons, Defences and Fortifications? How about looking at the siege from the Turkish side for a different perspective, maybe an argument between the different players, justifying their positions? Could we possibly stage a role play or pageant?

Would you like to be included in the development of a presentation? Do you have skills in Theatre, Scriptwriting, Costume making? How about involving your children and grandchildren? Contact me on [secretary@mha.org.au](mailto:secretary@mha.org.au) or 0425708830. All ideas and suggestions are welcome at this stage; the crazier the better. It's brainstorm time! Looking forward to hearing from you,

Charles Gatt (MHA Secretary)

## **MHA February Event**

*Parliamentary Elections in the Maltese Islands 1947 – 2013*

by  
Dr Albert Farrugia

**7.30 p.m. Tuesday 17 February**  
**Maltese Community Centre**  
**Ievers St Parkville**

## **Congratulations Emmanuel Cassar!**

In the last newsletter we printed these congratulations to Manwel Cassar on the occasion of his gaining of Master of Arts. "The artist, Emmanuel Cassar, and his wife, Josephine, have been long time supporters of the Maltese Historical Association. We are very pleased to congratulate Manwel on his graduation with a Masters Degree in Art from Victoria University. Prosit, Manwel!"

We can now elaborate:



Manwel Cassar has just been awarded by Victoria University the degree of Master of Arts for his thesis 'Mixed Hues on the Palette: Reflections of the diasporic artist painting across two landscapes.' He researched the experiences of Maltese-Australian artists living or having lived (now returned to Malta) in Australia who, willingly or otherwise, are affected in their performance, working across two cultural landscapes.

Manwel was interested in the artists' perceptions of their own works, and the effectiveness of particular art works by themselves, without the need of their authors' own interpretation, because art has its own visual language.

The artists affirm many of the views put forward by the social theorists with diverse discourse around concepts such as hybridity, diaspora, nostalgia and global trends.

Manwel as a serious artist, in similarity and in contrast to the other Maltese-Australian artists, reflected on his own works in context of the two cultural landscapes.



## Our Lady Ta' Pinu Shrine – All Nations Catholic Marian Centre

On Saturday 6 December 2014, I was privileged to visit the Ta' Pinu Catholic Marian Centre in Merrimu, near Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, for the very first time. The occasion was the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. I had heard about the centre before but had never visited, so I did not know what to expect. I had difficulty finding it, as I did not see it from the highway heading out from Melbourne, and drove past then had to turn around, so I was a little late. As it was a cold, wet and windy day, I was not very optimistic anyone would be there!



Imagine my surprise, when I finally made it up the hill, to find a massive shed full of people of many nationalities. Reciting the rosary and participating in mass, they were not ashamed to kneel on the bare concrete floor.



Afterwards, I went for a walk around the hill, past striking statues representing the Stations of the Cross, many carrying donor plaques, with names familiar to the Maltese community.



I also saw a multitude of oratories erected by different ethnic groups, Maltese, Italian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Slovenian, Sri Lankan, Polish, Indian, Indonesian, Hispanic and Australian were all represented.

What an amazing place!



The shrine was inspired by that of Our Lady Ta' Pinu near Għarb in Gozo. Although the earliest origins are unknown, the first written record from 1534, describes a chapel, devoted to Our Lady of the Assumption, known as "Tal Gentili", after the family who had rebuilt it. By 1575, it was derelict and demolition was ordered but the workman striking the first blow broke his arm. It was taken as an omen and the chapel was spared.

Pillippinu (Pinu) Gauci became the procurator of the church in 1598. In 1611 he funded its restoration and its name was changed to "Ta' Pinu". In 1619 he commissioned the painting of Our Lady Ta' Pinu, representing the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin to Heaven. By 1654 the chapel had again fallen into disrepair and it was closed to the public but Pinu's daughter restored the chapel and it was re-endowed in 1676.

By 1879 it had once again become derelict. However on the morning of 22 June 1883, a middle-aged woman named Carmela Grima heard a voice calling her as she prayed while walking homeward past the deserted chapel. "Come, come, because it will be another year before you will be able to return". She entered the chapel and knelt down to pray. She heard the voice telling her, "Recite three 'Hail Marys' in memory of the three days my body lay in the sepulchre".

Some time later, Carmela became bedridden for more than a year but eventually was cured. She recounted her experience to a friend, Francesco Portelli, who revealed that he too had heard a voice in the chapel, commanding him to pay devotion to the wounds made in Christ's shoulder while He was carrying the Cross. It is recorded that Francesco's mother fell desperately ill in 1886. Francesco vowed to light a lamp in the chapel should his mother recover. When his mother recovered,



Carmela and Francesco saw the recoveries as miracles and reported their experiences to Church authorities.

Word quickly spread, pilgrims came, and many miracles of healing were attributed to Our Lady of the Assumption, as were Gozo's escape from the plague in the following year and its escape from serious damage in World War II.

To accommodate the many pilgrims, construction started in 1920 on the Romanesque Ta' Pinu Church, which was consecrated in 1932, and designated a minor basilica in 1935.



The image of Our Lady Ta' Pinu was crowned in 1935 by Cardinal Alessio Lepicier after a special Papal Decree. In 1990, Pope John Paul II, concelebrated Mass at the Shrine and decorated the same image with five golden stars studded with precious stones.

Mgr Benedict Camilleri was rector of the shrine for 30 years. In 1992, he was authorised by his bishop in Gozo to help establish a shrine in Australia and he selected the Bacchus Marsh site. He felt it was his duty to promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The site was developed with the help of the Maltese community and continues to flourish and spread devotion to Our Lady, both among the Maltese and other ethnic groups. To show that this place belongs to everyone and is not restricted to some special ethnic group, it is also known as the All Nations Marian Centre.

Charles Gatt

#### References:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sohb6nvCvxQ>

<http://www.cam.org.au/News-and-Events/Features/General-Features/Article/17355/Our-Lady-of-TaPinu-a-beacon-of-light-and-love-on-the-hill#.VM8bNNKUeSo>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta'\\_Pinu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta'_Pinu)

[http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2002/apr2002p12\\_971.html](http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2002/apr2002p12_971.html)

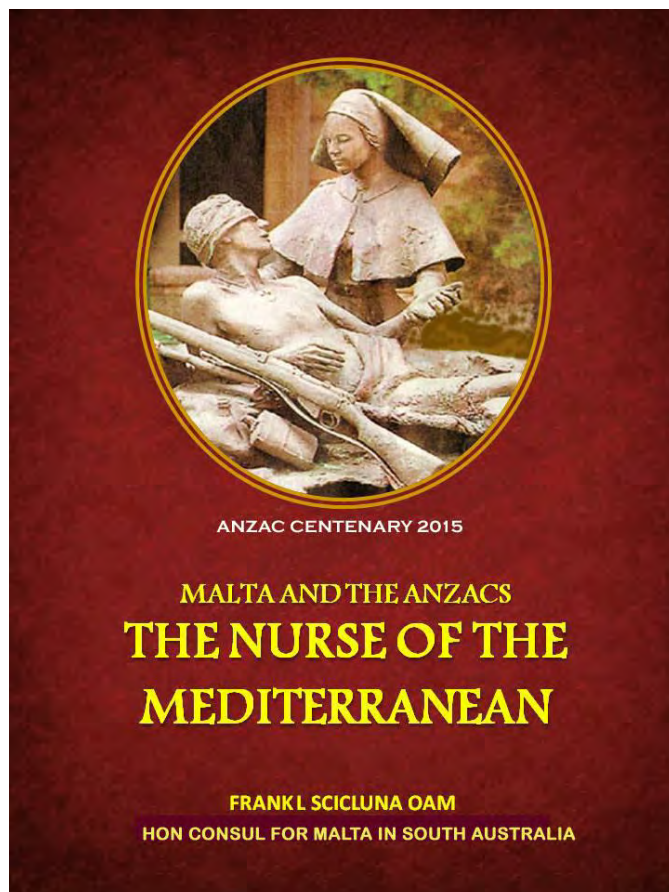
<http://www.malta-guide.net/travel/ta-pinu-sanctuary-gozo-malta/>

<http://www.marypages.com/OurLadyofTaPinu.htm>

<http://www.tapinu.org/index.php?lang=en>

## Malta: Nurse of the Mediterranean

Now that the festive season is over and our bank balances are recovering somewhat, you may like to become part of history by helping sponsor this forthcoming book, if you have not already done so:



### ANZAC CENTENARY 1915 – 2015

**This commemorative book is packed with detailed information regarding the role Malta played during World War 1. It includes photos, documents and list of ANZAC soldiers, hospitals, military ships and cemeteries which are associated with Malta and the ANZACS.**

**This book is compiled by Frank Scicluna, the Hon Consul for Malta in South Australia and it will be for sale in the next couple of months.**

**You are invited to be a donor or reserve a copy. Donations of \$50 or over will be acknowledged and a complimentary book will be sent each donor.**

**For further information please contact Frank**

**Email [honconsul@live.com.au](mailto:honconsul@live.com.au)**

## Albert Agius

Albert Agius, better known as Bertie, together with his wife Phyllis, shall soon be leaving Melbourne to return to live in Malta.

After attending a Course in Journalism at the University of Malta in 1975-76, Bertie graduated as a journalist. He migrated to Australia in November 1978 and settled in New South Wales but after a year there he transferred to Melbourne, where he worked in various Commonwealth Government departments. He was a correspondent for the Times of Malta between 1983 and 1998, producing his popular "Australian Newsletter", which reported on Maltese Community activities in Australia. He was also the senior journalist in the Maltese Language on SBS Radio between 1987 and 1989. He also contributed various feature articles in 'Malta Cross' and 'Il-Maltija'.

Bertie was also instrumental in publishing two major works here in Australia. One was his two volume 'Maltese Settlement in Australia', dealing with the history of Maltese migration to this country (both worth reading). The other, which I personally regard as his 'Major Opus', was 'It-Tesawru, Gabra ta' Sinonimi u Antonimi' (2 editions), which has been of immense benefit to the Maltese Language, since this work is the first thesaurus in the Maltese language. He also published a book in Maltese called 'Qwiel, Idjomi, Laqmijiet Maltin u Trufijiet Ohra'.



Albert Agius giving a lecture on *Superstitions and the Maltese Bogey Men* to the MHA in March 2014. **Photo: Lewis Zammit**

Bertie was instrumental in the formation of the Maltese Historical Association. We had been discussing the formation of the Association when, as luck would have it, his brother-in-law, Joseph Sammut K.M., happened to be visiting him and Phyllis. Joseph Sammut is well known for his knowledge of the History of the Knights' Coinage as well as Political Satirical Cartoons during the Napoleonic Wars. In fact he has published books on the subjects. So Bertie asked Joe to deliver two lectures at the Maltese Centre on the two topics and he obliged. It was after the second lecture (December 1986) that the decision was made to establish the MHA.

Bertie has been a great contributor to the MHA, having delivered many lectures on various topics of Maltese History and Culture over the years. Those of us who were present at these lectures remember the

enthusiasm with which he delivered the lectures and how enjoyable and refreshing they were.

Bertie was made a Knight of Malta (SMOM) in 1997.

Whilst it is with great sadness we see him leave our shores, we wish him and Phyllis the best of health. May they enjoy their time in Malta to the fullest.

**Tislima Kbira Ghalik Habib!**

Joe Borg on behalf of the MHA.

### **MHA February Event:** *Parliamentary Elections in the Maltese Islands 1947 – 2013* *The ups and downs of a democracy* by **Dr Albert Farrugia**

In 1947 the British awarded the Maltese their first constitution, featuring universal suffrage. All citizens over the age of 21 years, irrespective of sex, property status and literacy, could vote. The result was a seismic shift in the political landscape which had existed since the inception of constitutional aspirations in the nineteenth century, with the election of the first Labour government. Over the next years, the political landscape gave rise to the two-party system which nowadays characterises Maltese politics. This presentation will go over the factual outcomes of each election from 1947 to the most recent contest in 2013, outlining major features of the contestants, the results, and some of the salient events of the resulting administrations.

#### **The presenter:**

Albert Farrugia was born in Malta and received a Bachelors' degree from the Faculty of Science in the University of Malta in 1978. In 1981 he was awarded a British Council Scholarship to further his studies at the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, from which he was awarded a PhD in 1984. Albert worked in the Maltese Health Department until 1987 when he moved to take up a position with the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories in Melbourne. He has had an internationally recognised career in biological therapeutics.



He resides in Montmorency, Victoria with Josephine, his partner of 35 years, who graduated in pharmacy in Malta and subsequently was the first Malta University graduate to graduate in pharmacy in Australia. She also holds a Masters in Public Health from the University of Queensland. Their sons David and Adrian are academics in Australian universities.





**ANZAC Memorial:** Inaugurated on 25 May 2013, it is located in the Argotti Gardens in Floriana. The memorial commemorates the 270 Australian & New Zealand soldiers buried in Malta



**Chapel of the Madonna of Mercy, Qrendi:** Built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the old hamlet of Hal Lew, which later became part of the parish of Żurrieq, then of Qrendi. It was known as Our Lady of Grace until 1650, when it was rebuilt and given its current name. The Feast is celebrated on the Sunday after the 8<sup>th</sup> September.



**Malta Room with a view, Mdina:** Window on the Bastion Wall of Mdina overlooking the valley below, towards Żebbuġ.



**Bettina Tower Gudja:** Part of Palazzo Bettina, where it is believed that Napoleon stayed during his time in Malta, when it was under French rule. It is also believed that Madonna stayed here during her visit to Malta. The tower is said to be the only Moorish construction in Malta.



**Malta Noon Gun Salute, Upper Barracca Gardens.** Nowadays the gun salute is for "tourist purposes". However, in the past, the salute had a more practical use: it allowed ship masters to calibrate their clocks, to enable them to calculate their longitude accurately when out in open seas.



**Cross in Żejtun Village Square:** People from Żejtun would recognize this Cross immediately. It represents the "War Trophy" taken by the men of Żejtun, who attacked a French Garrison, forcing them to take refuge behind the fortifications of Valletta & Cottonera. This wooden Cross stood in front of the then abandoned Capuchin Friary in Kalkara.

## Frank Scicluna's Maltese Newsletters

Frank is a prolific writer. He has issued 11 newsletters since last November! Some highlights of special interest and relevance to Maltese history follow: The newsletters can be found at: <http://www.ozmalta.page4.me/>

### Issue 61

Maltapost - Stamps commemorating WW1

Mediterranean Convention Centre – Malta: The 16th century building is one of Valletta's most remarkable landmarks.

Oliver Reed - His Last Pub in Valletta. The actor died in 1999 after a drinking session in The Pub in Valletta's Archbishop Street

Pembroke – Malta

Lorenzo Gafà: The Great Maltese Baroque Architect

### Issue 62

Malta Shoulder to Shoulder With the ANZACS: ANZAC Centenary Commemoration (1914 – 1918) – (2014 – 2018) The beautiful and unique ANZAC Memorial at the Argotti Botanical Gardens, Floriana, Malta

The Grech and Muscat Coats of Arms

St Bernadette Catholic Parish in Sunshine, Victoria, Australia

The Main Guard and the Chancellery – Valletta

### Issue 63

What is folklore? Written by Victor Fenech Illustrated by Joe Mallia

Piracy and Legends: The Legend of Saint Dimitri

Haunted Malta – Mischievous, Madness, Malevolence, Mystery!

WW2 Gladiator Survivors: Faith, Hope and Charity

Haż-Żebbuġ coat of arms

The Żejtun Roman Villa: past and present excavations of a multi-period site

St. Martins Day by Doris Fenech

### Issue 64

The National Archives of Malta, spanning from the 1530s up to the current day, have moved into three refurbished premises in Rabat, Mdina and Rabat (Gozo).

The Landing of Count Roger In Malta 1090 A.D. and The Arab Plot

Farmhouses in Malta

First Maltese Mayor in Australia 1918-2009 - Loreto York, Mayor of Brunswick.

### Issue 65

History Repeats Itself: Maltese Refugees in 1916 - The Gange Ship of Shame

Xlendi and its Ancient Shipwrecks:

Maltese Migrants on The Skaubryn

Discrimination, Racism and Bigotry: an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1947

### Issue 66

5 Christmas Customs in Malta by Grazielle Camilleri

Festive Maltese Christmas Traditions

### Issue 67

First heart op on soldier was performed in Malta in WWI

Maltese Casualties during World War II

Poor Clares nuns preparing to celebrate their centenary

Archaeologists study discovery at Gozo cathedral square

Nostalgia - 1958 Television comes to Gozo!

One World - Protecting the most significant buildings, monuments and features of the Maltese islands: Villa Bologna located in Triq Sant' Anton, Attard

New Years' Traditions in Malta

Two Renaissance paintings restored: Antonio de Saliba (c.1466- c.1535),

### Issue 68

Order of Malta: The Knights of Malta

### Issue 69

Malta - Gozo Ferry since 1885

St Paul's Grotto at Rabat, Malta

Portraits at the Palace – by Bernadine Scicluna

Surnames in Malta: 100 surnames cover 75% of the population

History of the Malta Wheelchair Dance Sport Association

### Issue 70

Censu Tabone monument unveiled in St Julian's

Belli Family

Protecting the most significant buildings, monuments and features of Pembroke Australia Hall, St Andrew's military complex

Joe Cassar – “By Horse and Cart to Port Kembla NSW” (Early Maltese to the Illawarra region, NSW)

Malta Historical Society: The Sacra Infermeria

Ghar il-Kbir, Malta. Marriage documents 1588-1733

Malta Toy Museum; Howard Gardens, Rabat; Sa Maison Garden, Pieta

### Issue 71

Laying up of the old Colours of the AFM ceremony Anzacs and Malta: The Nurse of The Mediterranean: Australia Hall in Malta?

Maltese Folk Music and Singing: Għana


Antonio Sciortino 1883 – 1947: Sculptor

ANZAC Centenary 1915-2015

The Armistice: November 11, 1918

Malta During and after WW1

Rent reform in Malta



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