



MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

Journal of and for the Maltese Living Abroad

Editor: Frank L Scicluna OAM MQR



THE JEW OF MALTA

by Christopher Marlowe



Maltese-Australian Association
Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc.
A03242

Maltese - Australian Association
Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc.



Sovereign Order of Malta and Greece



Maltese Ghonnella

Meghan,
the hooded beauty



Malta
Historical
Fencing



Grand Master is laid to rest at St John's Co-Cathedral , after 246 years



Born in Northumberland, England, Festing was a Roman Catholic convert and was admitted to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in 1977. He was elected Grand Master in 2008, making him the third English person to hold the title in the Order's history, before he stepped down from the role in 2017.

Aside from the army of knights in attendance, Festing's funeral was also attended by Malta's highest seats of authority. These included Prime Minister Robert Abela, Speaker Anglu Farrugia, Chief Justice Mark Chetcuti, as well as Opposition Leader Bernard Grech.

Requiem Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi, the Pope's Special Delegate to the Order of Malta and co-celebrated by Archbishop Charles Scicluna.

In his homily, Tomasi insisted that the Order of the Knights

Fra Matthew Festing, the 79th Grand Master of the Knights of St John was laid to rest at the capital's co-cathedral on Friday.

Carried on the shoulders of his sovereign brothers, Festing's coffin was draped in the crimson embrace of the flag of the Order, as he was marched by his mourners to the altar against the backdrop of the cathedral's gilded walls.

Knights occupied rows of pews, gathered in prayer to bid their final farewell to Festing, a sea of crisp white eight-pointed crosses emblazoned on their ceremonial black robes.

Fra Festing fell ill while in Malta, attending the profession of vows of Brother Francis Vassallo, and was hospitalised at the beginning of November. He died eight days later, aged 71.

must uphold its duty to be forever a defence of the frail and of service to the poor.

"Today's battles are fought by the Order - not by the sword, but with a more effective weapon of charity to the poor and sick," he said.

Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi and Archbishop Charles Scicluna led the congregation during funeral mass. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier

Festing's burial in the crypt of St John's Co-Cathedral will mark the first time the site has been prepared for burial in 246 years.

He will be laid to rest among some of the mythic figures whose legacies are still told in history books, including L'Isle-Adam, who brought the Order to Malta in 1530, and La Valette, who won the 1565 Great Siege and founded the city of Valletta.

This journal belongs to all Maltese living overseas and those who live in Malta and Gozo. So please support and share it with your relatives and friends.



THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF MALTA IN SYDNEY PARTICIPATED IN FOMA 2021 - FABRICS OF MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA.



By Lawrence Buhagiar – Consul-general

FOMA is a sought-after event that was held at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. The Consulate-General showcased Malta's Tourism in a half-day multicultural exhibition promoting #malta, our beautiful islands, our Culturally-Rich History and our diverse industries which include Film Production featuring massive titles such as *Gladiator* and *Game of Thrones*.
www.visitmalta.com

www.fomaaustralia.com.au

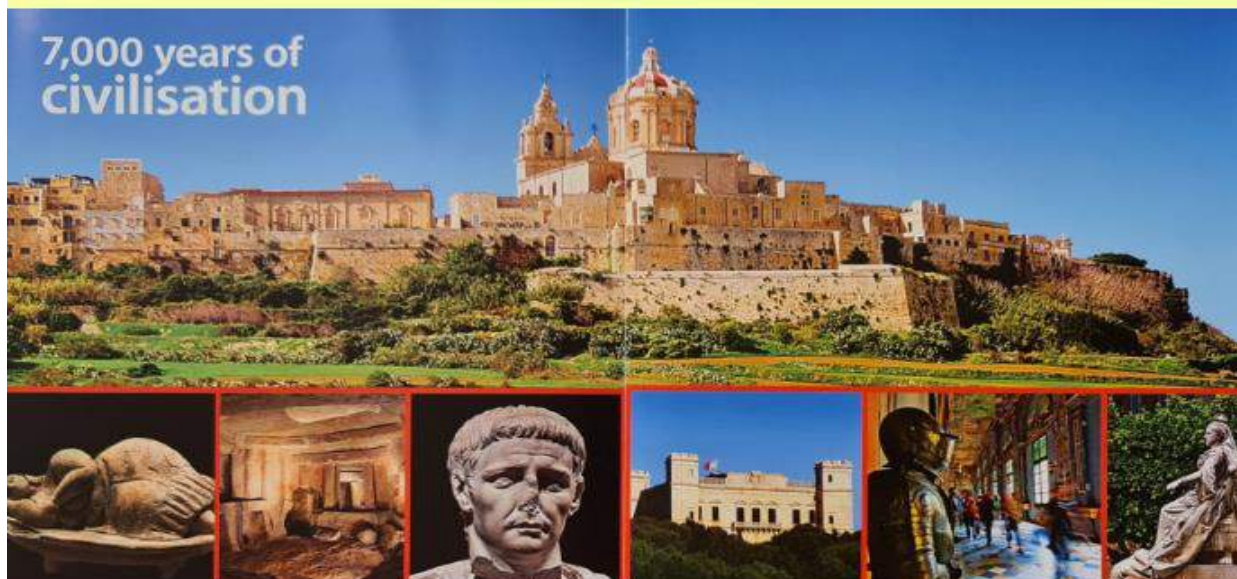
During the exhibition, I had the chance to visit the other stands on display showing the colours of Israel, Ireland, Jordan, Afghanistan, China, Korea, Chile and others. 's centrepiece attraction was the 'Ghonella', a traditional garment used predominantly before WWII.
<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C4%A7onella>

The Ghonella was worn by Meghan Markle in 2015 when she visited Malta, her grandmother's place of birth.
<https://www.eonline.com/.../meghan-markle-stuns-in-never...>

I thank the Consulate's staff in particular Mrs Rita O'Dwyer for assisting in the arrangements attached to this exhibition and for promoting Malta together with one of the NSW members on the Council of the Maltese Living Abroad, Mr Emmanuel Camilleri.

I would like to acknowledge Mrs Grace Schembri and her husband Joe for providing us with the Ghonella and several other accessories that coloured the Malta stand. I also thank the Malta High Commission, H.E. [Mario Farrugia Borg](#), High Commissioner and the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs for their support.

Finally, I would like to thank once more, Gandhi Promotions, in particular [Sonia Sadiq Gandhi](#) and her staff for organising such an event and getting multicultural Australia under one roof. This exhibition was later followed by the Fashion Show in which I was accompanied by my supporting wife Rosieanne Buhagiar.



FOMA 2021 · FABRICS OF MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA.

This Maltese Journal is archived at the **MALTA MIGRATION MUSEUM - Valletta**
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TIFKIRA TA'
LELI CAMILLERI
SOCJU TAL-MUSEUM FIL-QASAM
TAZ-ZURRIEQ
LI MIET MGHARRAQ
FIT-30 TA' OTTUBRU, 1948.

On Saturday 30 th October 1948, the ferry boat MV Bancinu cancelled the trip to Gozo due to stormy weather.

At 18:30 a luzzu capsized with all the passengers opposite Hondoq ir-Rummien ,a young man from Żurrieq, Leli Camilleri who was also a member of the Christian Doctrine Society was one of the 23 passengers who lost their lives in this tragedy. He was on his way to give some donations to Fr Nazzareno Tonna who was studying at the Gozo Seminary, and to teach religion to a young man, probably another member of the Christian Doctrine Society. Leli encouraged the other passengers to recite the rosary with him in the worst part of the storm, just before the boat capsized in front of Hondoq ir-Rummien.

Maltese Australian Association of Canberra and Queanbeyan



A shout out to all the people who helped make this day so special for us. Joanne Conti from Escape to Malta Eats, for her generous hamper and vouchers, Mary-Ann Borg for her scrumptious, homemade Maltese treats, all those who brought along the raffle prizes, High Commissioner Mario Farrugia Borg and Ms. Denise Demicoli.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, hope to see you all again at our functions in 2022.



THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA E-NEWSLETTER

Editor : Dan Brock
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*We thank the editor, Dan Brock, for sending us
this beautiful and informative e-Newsletter*



**IF YOU HAVE A
STORY TO TELL
DON'T KEEP IT
TO YOURSELF
SHARE IT WITH
OTHERS.
SEND IT TO US**



Businesswoman and philanthropist Constance Milstein nominated US ambassador to Malta

US President Joe Biden has nominated businesswoman and philanthropist Constance J. Milstein as Ambassador to Malta. The announcement was made on the official website of the White House.

According to a biography uploaded on the website, Milstein is an attorney, businesswoman, philanthropist, and social entrepreneur. She is a Principal and Co-Founder of Ogden CAP Properties, LLC.



Constance Milstein

Milstein has led international initiatives to address pressing global issues and geopolitical threats. She is a founding board member of Blue Star Families, the nation's largest support organization for military spouses and children.

Milstein pioneered the inventive non-profit Dog Tag bakery, dedicated to empowering disabled veterans.

During the Obama-Biden administration, Milstein served as a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.

She has played key roles with many nonprofits and NGOs focused on international relations, global education, and democracy building, which include Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy, United Nations Association, Refugees

International, and UN Watch.

Milstein earned her B.S. from New York University and her J.D. from North Carolina Central University. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Angel Award, Blue Star Families; Distinguished Service Award, NYU College of Arts & Science; and the Albert Gallatin Medal for outstanding contributions to society, NYU.

She speaks French and Italian.

Milstein is the daughter of New York real estate developer Seymour Milstein. She lives in New York, NY and Washington, D.C. with her husband, Saïd Abu-Kaud.

The US government is currently represented in Malta by Chargé d'Affaires Gwendolyn "Wendy" Green, who took on the role in August 2020. [MALTA INDEPENDENT]



We are proud of our Maltese Achievers

Promoting the Maltese culture, history and heritage



FAUCI, GAUCI AND BABY JESUS — Tonio Borg



The traditional Baby Jesus procession on Christmas Eve, launched more than a century ago by St Ġorġ Preca, founder of the Catholic catechism society MUSEUM, is again being cancelled owing to COVID-19 restrictions.

So long as all public manifestations, religious or profane, were prohibited, there was nothing to justify any challenge to such an order by the health authorities but now that hundreds may participate in fun runs, soccer stadia are open to the public and other profane public manifestations are allowed, why are the local health authorities being so intransigent with regard to a religious procession, which is part of Maltese Christmas traditions?

The traditional religious activity consists of a statuette of Baby Jesus lying in a small manger being carried outdoors, shoulder high, by young boys and followed by a small crowd of adults and youngsters, with, sometimes, a small band playing Christmas hymns and songs.

Certainly, such activity is much less dangerous, as far as infections and contagion go, than attending a football match or running with hundreds of others.

By no stretch of the imagination can it be defined as a mass event, which is defined by the World Health Organisation as follows: “an event counts as a ‘mass gathering’ if the number of people it brings together is so large that it has the potential to strain the planning and response resources of the health system in the community where it takes place”.

The current intransigence reminds me of what happened 2,000 years ago, when our Creator was born in a stable, “for there was no place in the inn”. Have we become so hardened in our spirit and attitude that we cannot allow such processions to proceed in the various towns and villages, with all necessary health precautions being taken?

In Malta, thankfully, there have been no mass protests against vaccinations and green passes. The people of this country have accepted the recommendations and orders of the health authorities; they have voluntarily taken the first, second and third doses of vaccines. They have endured lockdowns, social distancing, temperature control, the wearing of masks and hand sanitising.

Is it necessary to also prohibit this holy tradition?

Surely Charmaine Gauci, who, I believe, is a reasonable person, can find a solution to this problem- Tonio Borg

Fr Mario Mangion, archpriest of Qormi, was right in voicing his concern regarding this apparent discrimination against religious public activities. As Archbishop Charles Scicluna lamented last Good Friday: “Everyone is tired.”

Why impose this unnecessary burden? One can require the organisers to ensure limited attendance, the use of masks, the possession of a green pass and maintenance of social distancing.



A Christmas procession with Baby Jesus is not a mass gathering of revelling and dancing or of repeated body contact. Surely Charmaine Gauci, as superintendent of public health, who, I believe, is a reasonable person, can find a solution to this problem while protecting the public from the spread of the disease. Hundreds will gather in our main cities and towns to do their Christmas shopping. There will not be hundreds participating in any Christmas Eve procession; these processions are not held on a national but on a parochial level. They are held in every town and village in small gatherings.

In the United States, Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert, told performing arts professionals last January that he believed that theatres and other venues could reopen depending on the vaccination roll-out and suggested that audiences might still be required to wear masks for some time.

Gauci should follow suit. If theatre audiences in closed environments are to be permitted, why not an open-air religious celebration?

May we hear during the festive season the Maltese traditional songs of Christmas, particularly *Ninni la tibkix iżjed* (Hush: cry no more).



The Immaculate Conception is celebrated at Cospicua church

On the 8 December the feast of The Immaculate Conception was solemnly celebrated in the parish church of Cospicua (Bormla). In his homily, the Archpriest of Xagħra in Gozo, Fr Karm Refalo appealed to all Christians to overcome fears and turn to Our Lady to overcome fear, uncertainty and the division from Christ. Same as last year the statue of Our Lady remained in the Collegiate Church in Cospicua but hundreds of parishioners still paid visits to show their respects.

The weather was good on the feast at Cospicua to commemorate the Mother of God conceived without original sin. Fr Refalo said this is a message of hope in a period of great pandemic that humanity is currently undergoing.

The revered statue was made in 1905 from sheet of silver on the designs of artist Abram Gatt and the figure was assembled in Milan.

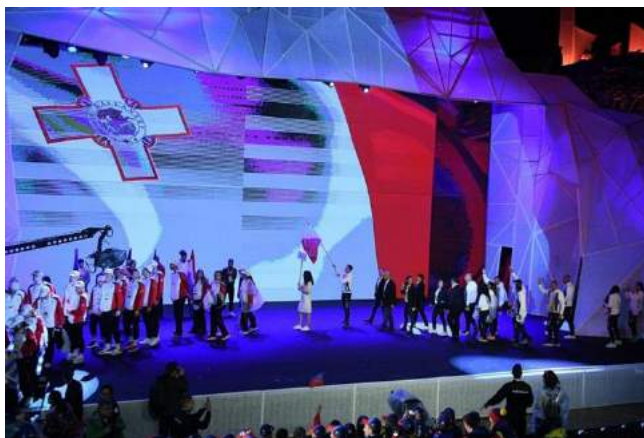
The ceremony was attended by the country's highest authorities in a Cospicua Parish known for its devotions to the Immaculate Conception. The celebration began with the novena when the statue is taken out of its niche nine days before the actual feast and draws daily crowds of reverent visitors.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception grew in stature when 167 years ago Pope Pius IX declared it as a pedestal for faith to commemorate the feast of the Immaculate Conception.



GSSE logo and mascot design competition launched for school children

BY [GOZO NEWS](#)



A design competition in relation to the forthcoming Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE) which will be hosted in Malta in 2023, has been launched by the Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC), in collaboration with the Ministry for Education's Centre for Physical Education and Sport.

They explained that the competition calls for the design of a logo and mascot that will be used as part of the Games of the Small States of Europe branding and is open to all school children aged 10 and 18.

The Maltese Olympic Committee said that the design should be dynamic and capture the essence of the Games of the Small States of Europe and the Maltese Olympic Committee's purpose and role. All in all it should convey a feeling of movement, athletic and team spirit.

Kevin Azzopardi, Maltese Olympic Committee Secretary General, said that the involvement of the school community in this competition presented a wonderful opportunity to start building up anticipation and excitement towards the Games not just from this community but also from their families.

"It is in this spirit of such communities which we are calling for submissions for the creation of the GSSE logo and mascot. These will be prominently showcased in the build-up and

during the Games themselves on social media, correspondence and Games related branding," Azzopardi explained.

He added that, "getting children enthused about the Games is a good way of starting to inspire and motivate the Maltese public to support our athletes in these Games."

The Games are expected to attract 1,000 participants from across small European states and is certainly a wonderful opportunity for Malta to experience high level competition on home ground, the Committee said.

The winner will be selected by means of a specially appointed Jury. Closing date for this competition is Monday, the 17th of January 2022 and the winner will be announced at a later stage.

Dear Frank,

Four hundred editions of a much loved e-journal has indeed united a diaspora across the globe. Because of the wonders of technology, in part, we can access information about places, and people everywhere, their culture, hopes, fears, their humanity which of course we share with them. Do you think the time has come that the Maltese diaspora can be united in other ways, to save the future of the countries we have made home, where our descendants will grow up? What I am trying to say is for us to look at the terrible predicament the world finds itself in, confronting (among other threats) climate change? As I mentioned in an earlier letter, Malta will not be spared if a worse scenario becomes the worst. Awareness can lead to action, no matter how small, for the common good, that is everyone, including the Maltese in the world.

Rita Rotin Camilleri

Melbourne Australia



**WE THANK ALL OUR READERS AND SUPPORTERS
FOR MAKING OUR JOURNAL NUMBER 1.
BRINGING THE MALTESE COMMUNITIES CLOSER**
Together we defeat the COVID-19





The Jew of Malta

by **MONIQUE CHAMBERS**

The Jew of Malta is a story of a man seeking revenge; revenge that cascades into a series of ever-

more murderous events with disastrous consequences. It is set in an 'alternate' Malta, where the Great Siege never happened, and the Knights of Malta actually pay tributes to the Turkish Sultan Suleiman, in order to avoid war. Although Marlowe was William Shakespeare's contemporary, he died young, and had fewer works published. Yet he had a lot to say, particularly about politics, religion, and society and the corrupt nature of power. He includes all this and more in *The Jew of Malta*, and the resulting play is an action-packed mix of poetry, drama, and comedy. It is a play that, although written over 400 years ago, mirrors much of what is happening in the world today.

Marlowe's works are being rediscovered worldwide and to explore his life, the religion and politics of his time, and the myriad ways in which *The Jew of Malta* is still all too relevant, The Friends of the Manoel Theatre are organising a public talk by Prof. Vicki Ann Cremona. This will take place on 24 September at 8pm in the Teatru Manoel Studio Theatre.

The Jew of Malta boasts a strong cast including Mikhail Basmadjian, Naomi Knight, Antony Edridge, Erica Muscat, Edward Thorpe, Philip Leone-Ganado, Nathan Brimmer, Alex Weenink, Waylon D'Mello, Joe Depasquale, Maxine Brimmer, Helen Osborne, Joseph Zammit and Daniela Carabott Pawley, with Rakelle Portelli, Luke Bugeja Gauci, Keith Dimech, Yazi Muscat, Jes Sciberras, and Nicole Schembri. Original music has been composed especially for the play by Albert Garzia, and the choreography is by Francesco Nicodeme.

STUFF THAT HAPPENS

STUFF THAT HAPPENS IN THE PLAY

1. Barabas, the rich Jew of Malta, counts his money as he waits for news about the return of his ships from the East.
2. To his horror, Barabas learns that all the Jews in Malta must forfeit half of their estate to help the government pay the Turks.
3. Barabas protests and Ferneze, the governor of Malta, confiscates all of Barabas's wealth and turns Barabas's house into a convent.
4. Abigail, Barabas's daughter, pretends to convert to Christianity in order to smuggle her father's gold out of the convent at night.
5. Ferneze meets with Del Bosco, the Spanish Vice-Admiral, who convinces Ferneze to break his alliance with the Turks in return for Spanish protection.
6. Barabas dupes Ferneze's son, Lodowick, into thinking Abigail will marry him.
7. Barabas buys Ithamore, a slave who hates Christians as much as his new master does.
8. Barabas orders Abigail to get betrothed to Lodowick, in spite of her relationship with another man, Mathias.
9. Barabas tricks Lodowick and Mathias into a duel.
10. Ithamore falls in love with the prostitute Bellamira, who, with her pimp Pilia-Borza, is scheming to steal Barabas's money.
11. Abigail learns of her father's treachery against Mathias and returns to the convent.
12. Barabas cooks a special dish for the nuns.
13. Ferneze tells the Turks he will not pay for them and they threaten to attack the island.
14. False conversions, deaths, and deep-frying ensues.



Iconic Melita Stadium makeover

Matthew Badrov

Parramatta Eagles Football Club are set to enter season 2022 refreshed with a makeover to their iconic Melita Stadium. The Eagles were successful in obtaining \$50,000 from the Community Building

Partnerships Program. Melita Stadium is a historic venue known to all that love the world game and has been given a new lease on life thanks to the funding.

With the likes of past and present Socceroos such as Marshall Soper, Ahmad Elrich, Oliver Bozanic, Mark Milligan and Mitch Duke to name a few that called Melita Stadium home, the well overdue upgrade will no doubt support the development of more future stars coming through from the football mad area.

The stadium exterior has been rejuvenated with the renewal of the dugouts which have a new modern and sleek look.

New white handrails and a sheltered area between the two technical areas have made the grandstand shine anew.

Parramatta FC contributed \$20,000 to the upgrade, one that Club Facilities and Operations Manager Osman Jebara was grateful to see finally complete.

"The stadium has come a long way and the grant has made a real difference to the club," he said.

"Parramatta FC would like to thank Lynda Voltz for believing in our project and Cumberland Councillor Ola Hamed for her support as well."

Auburn State Member Lynda Voltz and Cumberland Councillor Ola Hamed attended the unveiling of the rejuvenated Melita Stadium.

"The Melita Stadium upgrade has shown how successful the Community Building Partnership Program can be for community clubs across NSW," Daniel Ristic said – Football NSW Manager of Government Relations, Funding, and Infrastructure.

Melita Stadium is not only home to Parramatta Eagles FC, but it's also home to Granville District Soccer Football Association.

The club and association now turn it focus on upgrading stadium lighting, changerooms and further upgrades to the grandstand as it seeks to revamp the historic football stadium for the future.

Homes of Football are a crucial pillar of the NSW Football Infrastructure Strategy as they significantly improve access to football programs, pathways, and development services. The planned upgrades for the future will ensure football can thrive in the historic Granville region.

(in appreciation to Anthony Grima)



LINO VELLA OAM – ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE PARAMATTA MELITA EAGLES.



Lino migrated FROM Malta to Australia on the liner “Sydney” in November 1954. As soon as he arrived in Australia, he had an immediate involvement with the club. Lino started playing for the newly formed Malta Eagles (Established 1952). He was President when the club amalgamated with Melita Football Club (Established 1953) in 1956 to establish Melita Eagles United Soccer Football Club. A lifelong devotee to football, Lino had been involved with the Eagles for six decades, serving as a player (Goalkeeper), coach, secretary, & President, making him a life member. His love of football led him into the world of journalism, and in 1957, he helped then Melita Eagles Assistant Secretary, L.

Dimech, produce a short-lived magazine called Soccer Light, the club’s official programme.

His journalism took a further step in the late 1950s when he was Sports Editor for the Sydney-based Malta News.

In 1971 Lino took over as editor of The Maltese Herald and became the sole owner of the newspaper from 1983 until 2013, when sadly publication of The Maltese Herald ceased. Lino published weekly reports with photos of the Eagles’ matches to keep the Maltese Community informed of the club’s news.

The former President of the Parramatta Melita Eagles Sports Club, Vincent Pisani

An icon of the Maltese Community, he is amongst those Maltese migrants who made a success of their settlement in Australia both in business and in community participation. Vincent was born in Kalkara, Malta, on this day back in 1927, & grew up in Gzira. With his wife & daughter, he emigrated for Sydney in 1949 on an Egyptian vessel named the Misr, and later had another five children.



As a successful Maltese businessman in the post-war era, it was only natural that he would be asked to assist Maltese Soccer Clubs, hugely popular in the fifties with thousands attending their matches every weekend. In 1958, Vincent formed a long association with the very own Melita Eagles United Soccer Football Club, where he was elected Club President, a position he held for 16 years. Under his direction the club became one of the best soccer clubs in New South Wales. Pictured in this photo is George Cross President, Louis Debono (Middle Left), with Melita Eagles President Vincent Pisani (Middle Right), believed to have been taken in the early 1960's, but after confirming with sources, we do not believe

George Cross & Melita Eagles competed against each other around this period



GEORGE BRIMMER 1963

MY JOURNEY TO AUSTRALIA FROM MALTA IN PICTURES



Top row: Left to right

1. My friend Frans Cassar and me at Marsa
2. Me on board the Roma
3. My friends Charles Agius, Frans Cassar, Freddie Debattista and John Pace all from Marsa

Middle Row: left to right

1. Horace Dalli (who we met on the ship and still friends today) & me on board the Roma
2. My Passport photo (I was only 17)
3. The Roma

4. My brother Charles Brimmer & Horace Dalli with some friend we met on board the Roma

Bottom Row: left to right

1. Arrived in Melbourne on 12 December 1963 - Laurie, Sandra, Alfred and my sister Mary Xuereb at Station Pier
2. Mary Xuereb & Charles Brimmer
3. Charles Brimmer, Alfred, Mary, Sandra Xuereb & me.



THE BRIMMER FAMILY IN VICTORIA - FROM MARSA MALTA



The soft heart and crusty exterior of the hobza tal-Malti, or its flatter cousin, the ftira, are part of Malta's history and lifestyle. The Maltese have been eating these for centuries.

Together with the qassatat: the 'posher' pastizz (cheesecake). Qassatat are filled with a cheese, peas or 'seasonal' filling in a similar way to pastizzi.

And did you know that these small, traditional savoury pies have been around since the time of the Knights?

A TRADITION OF BAKING Anna Marie and her husband Gianni continue the Gozitan tradition of baking at the Tal-Furnar Bakery and Restaurant in Xagħra, Gozo.

Genuine food that warms the heart

The bakery is located a few minutes' walk away from Xagħra's parish square, and right opposite The Toy Musuem in Ġnien Xibla Street. The family-run bakery has been around for more than a hundred years.

WARM HEART But the heart of the bakery has got to be its oven - one of very few remaining wood-burning stone ovens (tal-hatab) on the Maltese islands, and reputedly among the oldest. **FROM BAKERY TO RESTAURANT** A few years ago, the family-run business expanded and turned the bakery into a restaurant as well as being a bakery at the same time.

FIELD TO TABLE The restaurant specializes in local, traditional and homemade cuisine using recipes which have been in the family for over four generations. The bakery uses locally grown produce to cook typical seasonal dishes along with making their wine from their own vineyard. If you visit Gozo, be sure to stop by when up in Xagħra. Kappa Vision guarantees you will not regret it - and you will keep going back whenever on the island!

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HALFA TAD-DESTIN – Bint De Valette fl-Assedju l-Kbir

Author: **Michael Cini**

Publishing House: www.horizons.com.mt

It is a known secret that Grand Master Jean de Valette, together with his vows of chastity, had also his own illegitimate children.

The author of this book was inspired to write this novel after reading an interesting newspaper article, researched by Dr Giovanni Bonello about the lovechildren of this Grand Master. Cini's imagination also played an important part for the creation of the fictitious part of this novel, which blends in well with the events of the Great Siege of 1565. The opening features the ferocious Turkish attack against the half-battered walls of the Post of Castille, where Grand Master Jean de Valette was wounded. And soon after by the surprising arrival of Isabella Guasconi, one of the Grand Master's illegitimate children. According to this novel, she arrived in Malta in the thick of battles during the Great Siege with the Piccolo Soccorso, disguised as one of the soldiers. This is because she was running away from the future husband which her father had chosen for her. A dominant, possessive and extremely jealous man whom she was being forced to marry against her will. So, Isabella tries to reach her



father to convince him to change his mind, and also change her future. Little did she care that from the frying pan she was going to find herself straight into the Great Siege fire!

And for the situation to grow hotter and even more intense, soon after her arrival Isabella secretly falls in love with one of her father's own bodyguards.

From the beginning, the Grand Master did not approve of his daughter's arrival to Malta, since there was a good chance that the Ottomans could win over the Knights. And surely, he did not want his daughter to fall into the hands of the enemy.

So, as the enemy bombardments were getting even more fierce by striking down the local defences, De Valette lays out a plan to send Isabella away from harm's way – first to Mdina, then to Gozo's Gran Castello and finally back to Sicily. But this was certainly going to be a very dangerous mission with the thousands of enemy soldiers guarding all around, and the Turkish ships roaming the surrounding waters.

While venturing through this novel, the reader will take part in daring escapes with the Order's Cavalry soldiers along the moonlit countryside, among the long lost hamlets, down in dark valleys, over perched cliffs and also onto the deep waters across the perilous channel between Malta and Gozo. Moreover, this exciting adventure will even lead the reader to explore a number of underground secret passages below Fort St Angelo, Mdina and also Gozo's Citadel.

At this point, it is worth noting that in his previous novel *Ix-Xafra tad-Destin – L-Imdina 1565* (Horizons 2015), Cini made it a point to expose the important role played by Mdina during the Great Siege of 1565. And now with this new novel, he is also highlighting Gozo's role, among other things by describing how a system of fire signals was regularly in place. This was used to warn and guide Christian ships approaching the islands with correspondence and bringing over assistance to the knights, most of all the vital Gran Soccorso which finally forced the Ottoman attackers to lift the Siege. The author's aim in these two novels is to highlight Mdina's and also Gozo's contribution, as they are scarcely mentioned in documents about the Great Siege. However, they both deserve an important credit towards the victory of this heavy Siege.

Once again, this novel includes a number of pictures, maps, drawings and paintings about the

Great Siege, including Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's frescoes. As the story unfolds, one will also enjoy reconstruction sketches of various fortifications by Dr Stephen C Spiteri, such as Mdina, Gozo's Gran Castello, Fort St Angelo, Fort St Elmo and the Post of Catille during the Great Siege, adding more value and presence to the reader. Scattered along the chapters, one will also come across parts of Dun Karm Psaila's poem *Il-Għanja tar-Rebħa*, to compliment the patriotic atmosphere.

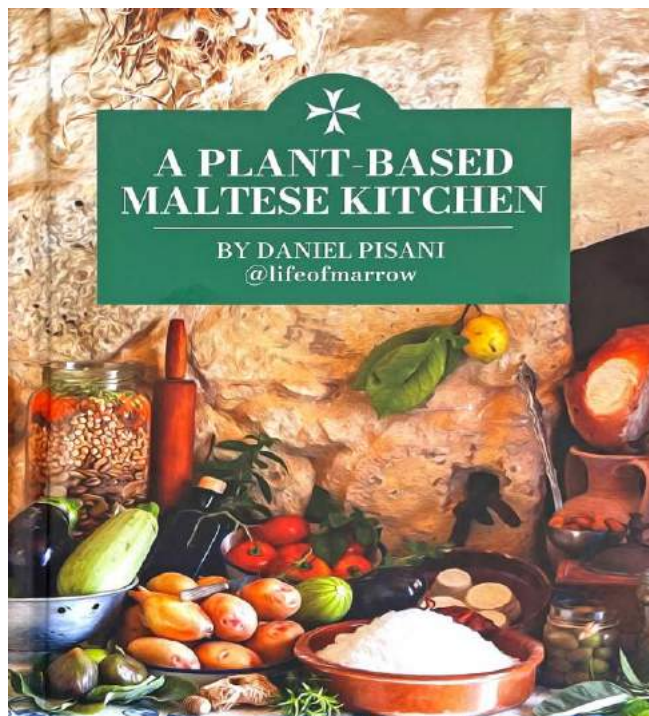
The story is recounted in the first person with the use of short chapters, specifically to help the reader become better acquainted with the characters and with the flow of events. As this romantic novel unfolds, the reader often feels as if he/she is taking part in the story itself, with the urge to discover even further what will be taking place next. This will certainly make it more difficult for the reader to put the book down. The author insists that these ingredients help him reach his primary goal, which is to encourage more and more people to read in Maltese. The use of idiomatic expressions and flowing language, together with an occasional touch of humour make his writing more entertaining and literary useful, for anyone who seeks to enjoy reading a good book in Maltese.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Cini was born in Ħamrun on the 20th July 1964, grew up in Balzan and lives in Mosta. He is a qualified Draughtsman, and today occupies the position of Senior Principal. He studied Arabic to understand better the Semitic roots

of the Maltese language. In the course of his career he also studied at the University of Malta, where he graduated in Public Administration and as a Proof-reader in the Maltese language. At this point in time, he started writing novels to contribute towards Maltese literature. His love for the mother language and his deep interest in Maltese history help him to interweave historic novels. Together with his passion for writing, he is also keen to receive comments in order to remain close to the readers of his books.



CUISINE - A PLANT BASED MALTESE KITCHEN

BDL Books, Malta

'A Plant-Based Maltese Kitchen' revisits traditional recipes of the past and shapes them into more nutritious versions free from animal products.

The high consumption of animal products and highly processed foods have time and time again proven to be harmful to our well-being and that of the planet.

Whether you are vegan, vegetarian, pescetarian or simply interested in cutting down on your consumption of meat, eggs and dairy – this book offers a seasonal variety of delicious and easy to follow plant-based recipes influenced by the rich culinary history of the Maltese islands.

The book is divided into four chapters, mirroring the four seasons of the year and the different products available during each period. Therefore, one will not find recipes with fresh oranges in the summer chapter or recipes with fresh tomatoes in the winter chapter. 336 pages Price €45 Available from BDL in San Gwann, online from our website (link provided) and from book shops and stationers in Malta and Gozo

"One of my goals in this book is to celebrate the love for Maltese cuisine and Mediterranean culture, which our generation is slowly losing," David Pisani See the book here <https://bdlbooks.com/product/a-plant-based-maltese-kitchen/>

If this book doesn't scream Christmas gift, we don't know what does! Let's teach ourselves and others, local or foreign, to appreciate our cuisine, our land and our heritage.

Gozo's smallest village marks its centenary as a parish

Fr Geoffrey G. Attard Times of Malta

Retracing mementoes of Għasri's Christian heritage throughout its history



1 hour ago | Fr Geoffrey G. Attard | 05 min read

A panoramic view of Għasri, dominated by its parish church and overlooked by the Gordan Lighthouse.

Photo:

Shutterstock.com

With a population of

less than a thousand people, Għasri is the smallest of Gozo's villages. It can still be considered one of the quietest spots on the island of the three hills.

Despite its small population Għasri has a relatively large geographical area within its embrace, situated as it is between Victoria to the southeast, Żebbuġ to the north, Għarb, San Lawrenz to its northwest and Kerċem to its south.

The name of the village is derived from the process of oil-making which must have been quite popular in this western part of the island.



Christian roots - Christianity in Gozo goes back to more than 1,500 years, with the Għar Gherduf necropolis possibly being the earliest testimony to it. The Byzantines hardly left any traces of the Christian faith on the island. Documents testify for the presence of various small chapels in the area. There were many chapels situated between the four many valleys known in Gozitan toponymy as Wied il-Għasri, Wied is-Seqer, Wied il-Mielah and Wied Sara.

A chapel dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin – a popular Marian title in medieval Malta – was to be found in Wied Sara, and it was established by William De Bigeni (De Briconis/De Buscenis).

For hundreds of years, the Christian community of Għasri must have frequented one of the two parishes of Rabat (Victoria) for its pastoral needs until 1688, when the church of St Mary in Żebbuġ was established as a separate parish, and the Għasrin would have frequented it for Mass and the other sacraments.

The importance of the church in the area of Tal-Wied, known among the locals as '*il-Knisja tal-Patročġnju*' (Basilica of Patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary), should not be underestimated.



At the beginning of the 16th century, a chapel on this site was already being frequented and was even considered the main Christian place of worship for the area. In the late Middle Ages, the area of '*tal-Patročġnju*' comprised a hamlet, with various houses cuddled around the chapel. Dun Tumas Saliba decided to restore it and its second version was blessed by Don Adeodato Formosa on September 16, 1737. However, seeing its popularity and devotion grow, Dun Saliba decided to rebuild it on a bigger scale. The church we see today is the third one on the spot, and it was solemnly blessed again on May 8, 1739. Strange as it

may sound, the church was given the status of a minor basilica by the Vatican in 1749 and subjected to the papal basilica of St Mary Major in Rome. From 1872, until the establishment of the parish, this church served as a vice-parish for the village of Għasri.

Strange as it may sound, the church [il-Knisja tal-Patročġnju] was given the status of a minor basilica by the Vatican in 1749

A new parish church - The need for a bigger church for the area began being discussed by the local priests and people of the area, and the idea of a new church for Għasri was recognised by Bishop Mgr Antonio Grech Delicata in 1869.

The first stone of the new church was laid down on September 6, 1903; after it was completed, the church was consecrated by Bishop Giovanni Maria Camilleri, OSA, on January 9, 1916, and dedicated to the body and blood of Jesus Christ, better known in short and in Latin as Corpus Christi.

The new Għasri church started being built in 1903.

Għasri was at last erected as a separate parish on December 16, 1921; its territory was taken from that of Victoria, Żebbuġ and Għarb, with the parish of Żebbuġ recognised as its Matrice, or mother-church. Dun Gužep Galea became its first parish priest.

Development of the titular feast. - Since the parish was dedicated to the body and blood of Jesus, the titular painting shows *The Last Supper*, during which Our Lord instituted the Eucharist. It was painted by Lazzaro Pisani of Żebbuġ, Malta, around the year 1917. In 2007, Mgr Edward Xuereb, parish priest from March 2004 to September 2021, commissioned the restoration of the painting by Emanuel Zammit from Żejtun, with the help of financial assistance from Bank of Valletta.

Due to the spiritual dimension of the titular of the church, a discussion ensued as to whether the church should have a titular statue that would be taken around the streets of the locality in the form of a procession. After a time of reflection and the holding of a vote, the *Għasrin* decided in favour of a titular statue.

Michael Camilleri Cauchi, son of the late Wistin, was chosen to be the statuary. The statue of the Eucharistic Christ was sculpted in papier-mâché and brought to the church in October 1980; it is often referred to as *Is-Salvatur*, though the name is not precise. The feast is celebrated in June.

A small, quiet haven - Although Għasri is the smallest village of Gozo, in the past couple of decades it has become very popular with foreigners looking for a place to settle. Renowned for its quietness and its countryside while at the same time being conveniently situated so near to Victoria, the village is a small haven for both locals and tourists. With its motto being "*Ex Labore Fructus*", meaning 'From work, the fruit', Għasri's name is a constant reminder of the hard-working Gozitans who inhabited the area and built the beautiful church that dominates the village to this very day.



Maltese Community of Adelaide - 1953



A picnic at Silverlake Mylor 1953

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Good morning Frank. I am still reading the Journal and enjoying it everytime I receive it. . I Have found a photo from the past of a picnic at Silverlake Mylor 1953 a real blast of the past you might want to use. I am at the bottom left-hand side and on the far right my sister Teresa and brother Chris with his hands in his pockets. If you look closely, you will see many who have passed away and some who are still with

us. Can you recognise anyone? Let us know.

To you, Josie and your family have a BLESSED CHRISTMAS and STAY WELL

Joe and Georgina Chetcuti – Adelaide SA

One of most unpopular grand masters likely buried in an unmarked grave



Jessica Arena

The grave of Fra Matthew Festing alongside the tomb of Grand Master Ximénez. Photo: St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

Despite the funeral of Fra Matthew Festing last week being a solemn occasion, the burial of the 79th grand master of the Knights of St John also closed the book on the mystery of the final resting place of one of Malta's most unpopular grand masters.

Francisco Ximénez de Texada, who served as grand master of the Order between 1773 and 1775, had long been suspected to be buried in the crypt of St John's Co-Cathedral, like every other grand master who died in Malta has been. However, Ximénez's burial site was not marked,

nor are there any funerary monuments dedicated to him in the crypt.

But as the crypt was being prepared to inter Festing, new insights into the previous burials carried out there were uncovered and documented, curator Cynthia de Giorgio said in a new research paper on the discovery.

"Ximénez is listed in the register of deaths as having died on 9 November 1775. His is a strange case as he is the only Grand Master of the Order to have died in Malta and does not have a proper funerary monument either in the Grand Master's crypt or in the nave of the Church," de Giorgio said. The register notes indicate that Ximénez died at age 72 after succumbing to pulmonic fever. His body was displayed at the palace for 10 days and, on the 11th day, a procession was held and he was buried in the chapel of the Holy Cross, another name for the crypt of the grand masters, following funeral Mass. While there is no mark on the grave, a watercolour by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff, painted in the 1840s, shows that one of the pavement stones in front of Grand Master Jean de La Cassiere's monument did contain an inscription marking the grave.

"The reason, however, as to why Ximénez de Texada was never given a proper tombstone remains unclear and highly out of character,



especially since by this period it was customary for the Grand Masters of the Order to erect an elaborate monument within the chapels of the conventual church,” di Giorgio said.

“But as a result of the recent excavations, a coffin made from lead and that was once covered with wood was uncovered and we can now be certain that Ximénez was laid in the crypt and never moved. The position of the tomb can now also be confirmed.”

According to a document by Visconte de Villeneuve Bargemont, Ximénez was described as an “excessively haughty” person who introduced harsh measures that alienated him from his peers as well as the Maltese.

“None were attached to him for his ingratitude and even contempt for the services they rendered to him,” de Giorgio writes.

“This was the fate of this Grand Master, to rest in peace in an unmarked tomb.”

Historical accounts detail Ximénez’s tenure as grand master as one marked by austerity and economic hardship.

Increasing the price of corn and banning hare hunting made him deeply unpopular with both the people and the clergy and gave way to a revolt known as the Rising of the Priests, or Ir-Rewwixta tal-Qassisin, in 1775.



News from the Maltese-Canadian community

The Consul General of the Republic of Malta, Dr Raymond Xerri attended the event, 'Breakfast with Santa' at Carmen's Hall in Hamilton, attended by many Maltese Canadian families.

The event started with an introduction by founder and president of MCACH, Joseph Brincat who welcomed all and introduced Consul General Xerri. The Consul General delivered a speech in both Maltese and English where he stressed the importance of such events for maintaining the community and was very pleased to see and encouraging to see so many youth and children in attendance. He augured to all the best wishes for a Merry Christmas and prosperous 2022.

This was the third trip outside Toronto to meet Maltese Canadians living in other parts of the province of Ontario since the easing of the pandemic restrictions.



Sovereign Order of Malta announces opening of diplomatic relations with the Hellenic Republic

2021 The Sovereign Order of Malta and the Hellenic Republic have established full diplomatic relations and will soon exchange ambassadors. The formalization, which took place on 2 December last with the ratification of the Hellenic Parliament, follows several high-level

exchanges with the intention to launch a bilateral collaboration for the development of projects in the humanitarian field.

“We are particularly pleased to establish diplomatic relations with the Hellenic Republic, a country to which the Order of Malta is closely linked,” affirmed Ambassador Stefano Ronca, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs of the Order of Malta. “Greece has a fundamental role in the migration crisis, both for its geographical position – straddling the East and the West – and for its proximity to regions and countries from which migratory flows originate, such as Syria. We are sure that diplomatic relations will facilitate projects in the health, social, humanitarian and cultural fields,” said Ambassador Ronca.

“Greece, cradle of European culture and democracy, is a strategic country on the geopolitical chessboard, as demonstrated by Pope Francis’ visit to Athens today,” added the Secretary General for Foreign Affairs. The Order of Malta has a profound and ancient bond with Greece. Under the leadership of Grand Master Fra’ Foulques de Villaret, the knights of the Order of St. John moved their headquarters to Rhodes in 1310 and remained there for over two centuries. In 1523, after six months of siege by the fleet and army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the knights left Rhodes with military honours to settle on Malta.

The number of countries with which the Order of Malta enjoys diplomatic relations now rises to 111.



The story behind Malta's curious Christmas tradition



The Maltese Christmas with its emphasis on the crib and the figure of Baby Jesus would not be the same without its *gulbiena*. We have not, so far, done away with Christ at Christmas, despite a growing commercialisation. Nevertheless, both our faith and our traditions keep us firmly on track to keep Him firmly in sight, while taking a break and gathering in families.

It was St Francis who gave us our first live crib, when he celebrated Christ's nativity, his poverty and humility, at Greccio. But St Francis did not know the *gulbiena*, although I am sure he would have smiled agreeably at our addition to the crib.

It sprouts everywhere like a mystic, hairy, white shrub, on the Christmas Night altars, around cribs, in windowsill displays of the Child Jesus, in every decoration that recalls the birth of the Saviour.

Where would we be without our *gulbiena* on Christmas night? The tourists enjoy the sight of our cribs especially if they come from countries where Christmas is just a holiday time or a winter break. They admire the mechanical cribs, note the carol singing, go all over Malta in search of little feats of engineering and imagination in honour of the Child Jesus. But what is that snowy shrub that can be found everywhere in the company of this celebrated Child?

Like the mustard seed of the Gospel, the smallest seed that grows into a large tree with bird-sheltering branches (Mt. 13,31), the *gulbiena* gathers around the Divine Child lovingly as it pushes tall towards heaven. The smallness of the seed recalls the smallness of the babe. Big things start small.

Grown in the dark, the *gulbiena* yearningly pushes up into the air, tall and white, still devoid of the sun which it will see for the first time when Jesus Christ is born. Innocently and purely it grows in search of the light which it misses, until the day when, brittle and trembling, it sings its *Nunc Dimittis* – now I can go; my eyes have seen salvation.

The trick has worked. Horticulturists will assure us that plants need light, and if they do not find it, they grow tall in the hope that up there, they will find salvation. Light is their first quest. The colour will come afterwards. So our poor innocent *gulbiena* is the victim of a trick. The beginning of this beautiful custom, like so many other things in our folklore, are lost in the mist of tradition.

Even its cultivation has changed over the years. My mother used to plant it in saucers filled with cotton wool, but nowadays, I am told by the gurus, it is best prepared in soil or peat, kept in a completely dark place, and watered every other day. Some people prefer to add some *skalora* (bird-seed) to add a touch of redness, but this is not necessary, and can be anathema to the purists. You water every other day, as you blow a blessing and let God do the rest. The miracle of life ensues. The seeds burst into glorious action and perpendicular life. On Christmas Eve, the glorious miracle is ready for display and admiration.

Keeping Maltese Communities Connected



SPECTACULAR VILLAGE – ST. PAULS'S BAY



St. Paul's Bay, also known as **San Pawl il-Baħar** by the Maltese, is a town with over 15,000 inhabitants located in the north east



side of the Island over an area 14.5 km². It started as a small fishing village but has grown significantly since its founding. The large size of St. Paul's Bay is due to the fact that several areas form part of the **Local Council** such as Qawra, Bugibba, Xemxija and San Martin. St Paul's Bay is a very popular area during the summer months and population goes up to around 60,000 people due to the Maltese summer residents and the tourists.

St Paul's Bay was named after **St Paul**, who was **shipwrecked** on an Island located in the bay. St Paul was shipwrecked on Malta during his journey from Caesarea to Rome and the Maltese people believe that it was St Paul himself who introduced Christianity to the local population.

Some parts of Saint Paul's Bay are very developed and have many **touristic amenities**. There are some very beautiful and stunning natural highlights in the area and the coastline here has wonderful open sea views. The coastline promenade provides a long and easy walk from St Paul's Bay all the way to **Qawra**, with open sea views. **Mistra Bay** in the north part of the town is a pebble beach with numerous caves that were used as burial places in the past. At the edge of the cliff stands a military battery built by the knights, today used for aquaculture. St Paul's Island is close by, and there are several dive sites, including the spot where St Paul was shipwrecked.

St. Paul's Bay Several tourists' attractions

WIGNACOURT TOWER: The tower, built in 1610 during the reign of Grandmaster de Wignacourt, served as Malta's northernmost defensive outpost until Fort St. Agatha was built in Mellieħa in 1649. Today, there is a small museum dedicated to Malta's rich military-architectural heritage.

MISTRA GATE: It was the principal gateway to an estate set up in 1607 by Grand Master de **Wignacourt** to collect money for the ransom of slaves, through a Foundation known as the 'Monte di Redenzione degli Schiavi', said to have been inspired by a Lenten sermon preached by Father Rafel Camilleri, a Capuchin monk.

ST PAUL'S ISLAND: It is believed that it was St Paul who brought **Christianity** to Malta around 60 A.D. and since then Malta remained a Christian country. St Paul was being taken to Rome to be tried as a political rebel, however his ship, with himself and the 274 passengers, was caught in a violent storm and it crashed two weeks later on the Maltese coast.

MISTRA BAY: Pebble beach with clear blue waters

CART RUTS: Malta's mysterious Cart Ruts can be found on the heritage trail close to St Paul's Bay on the Wardija Ridge at Busewġien.

ST PAUL'S STATUE: This statue was erected back in 1845 and stands 4m high. It is located near the spot where St Paul was thought to be shipwrecked in 60 AD. The statue of St Paul is holding a book in his left hand while holding up his right hand. At his feet lies the snake, which, according to the Acts of the Apostles, came out of the fire and bit his hand.



The Malta Historical Fencing Association

www.historicalfencingmalta.org

"Dedicated to the study and practice of Historical European Martial Arts in the Maltese Islands".

Founded in 2009 and launched to the public in 2011, The Malta Historical Fencing Association was set up to further the study, research and practice of Historical Fencing, and the rediscovery of the European martial arts traditions that were practiced in the Maltese islands through the ages.

We are an independent structure, with our own methods of practice and research. We encourage our members to exchange, discuss and explore in the spirit of learning and personal growth, both for the association as a whole, as well as for individuals.

Our methods of practice encourage members to experiment under the guidance of more experienced practitioners and instructors while staying as true as possible to the proven historical methods of fighting systems found in manuscripts and treatises of past fencing masters.



The MHFA represents Historical Fencers who practice this discipline as a martial art. The MHFA DOES NOT practice re-enactments in costume, sport fencing, stage-fighting for theater or film, or oriental martial arts. However, the MHFA does not preclude individual members from participating in such activities in any way. MHFA instructors are often requested to act as consultants in any of the mentioned activities to demonstrate the proper historical manner a certain weapon

would have been used and anybody mechanics involved in that particular weapon.

In order to always get the best knowledge possible to pass on to our members, our senior instructors consult, study and train with the best researchers and teachers in Historical Fencing around the world. It is a goal of the MHFA to create cultural exchanges with other Historical Fencing associations around the world and build a network of dialogue and sharing of knowledge, which will further enrich our understanding of our shared martial heritage.

It is our intention to ensure, as far as is practicable, the availability of experienced instructors in the art of historical fencing; and to increase public awareness and understanding of historical fencing through exhibitions, seminars, lectures, and similar programs, that this art may not be forgotten and lost once more.

The study of Historical Fencing as a martial art in Malta started in 2005 when Andrei Xuereb founded Mithras Sword Fight Club, and started researching methods and teachers from whom he could further his studies. Mithras Sword Fight Club is now the official sala d'armi of the Malta Historical Fencing Association (MHFA).



Karamellu tar-Raħal t'Isfel' – a new storybook childhood in the past – timesofmalta.com



Karamellu tar-Raħal t'Isfel' – l-Ewwel Ktieb is a collection of 10 stories in Maltese, accompanied by specifically designed colourful visuals, about childhood in a Maltese village at a time before the advent of television, computer, internet, and mobile.

Karamellu represents a boy born and brought up in a worker's family that used to live in the part of the village of Żejtun, known as *Ir-Raħal t'Isfel*.

The author of the stories is the writer Carmel Charles Buttigieg, who in the book signs as *In-Nannu Karm*.

The author with the headmaster of Żejtun Primary School A, Saviour Sammut.

Some of the *Karamellu* stories were inspired by the true experiences of the author. Other stories introduce the reader to the life and behaviour of certain people in the life of the author during his childhood.

In general, the narratives offer an idea of the life pattern of children and their families many years ago, together with their way of life in a calm and serene environment where everybody used to know everybody and where there was no shortage of exciting moments or happenings (*praspar*).

The author with the headmaster of Żejtun Primary School B, Edmond Pace

The main aim of the *Karamellu* stories is to offer new generations easy-to-read and pleasing anecdotes that would help them get to know and understand better the kind of village culture and environment children of years gone by were brought up in. At the same time, the stories also offer some nostalgic reading to elders, especially those who like to read and recount narratives to children about the time when they themselves were still very young.

The idea to start compiling the *Karamellu* stories in books is rooted in the impressive support the stories received when they started to be posted on Facebook at the time of the COVID-19 lockdown, with many readers soliciting the publication of the stories in book form. Facebook has seen 64 *Karamellu* stories to date.

The author with the chief executive officer of the National Literacy Agency, David Muscat

The book was launched on October 26, 2021, at the Żejtun Primary School, with the permission and cooperation of the heads of the two sections of the school, Saviour Sammut (Primary School A) and Edmond Pace (Primary School B). This was the school that the author used to attend as a boy. Also present during the launch were Maria Dolores Abela, the mayor of Żejtun, and David Muscat, chief executive officer of the National Literacy Agency. The 100-page book is being published with the cooperation of the National Literacy Agency. The author with the Żejtun mayor, Maria Dolores Abela.

The designers and setters of the book are CN Creative Designs.

More information may be obtained from Rita Micallef (79093467) or the author (79080510).

STOP PRESS - INVITATION TO EVERYONE

We will be publishing a SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EDITION of the journal. You are invited to send a personal message of peace, blessing and happiness to all the readers of the Maltese around the world

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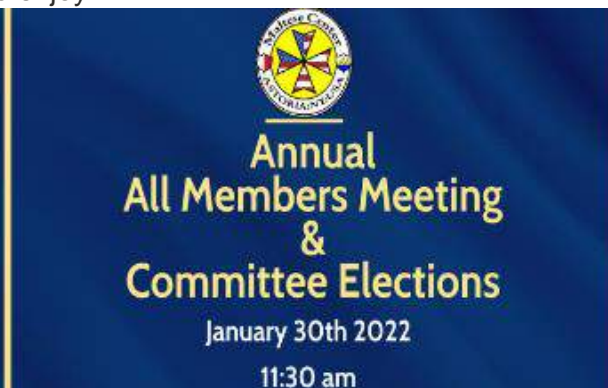
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Christmas officially arrived at the Maltese Center on Saturday December 4th. Our amazing talented Elves were

busy all month transforming the Center into a winter wonderland. Visitors were immediately wowed by the extensive model train exhibit and the Polar Express zipping around the tracks, the festive decorations, presepeju with gulbiena, It-Tina garden lit up, and the overall festive atmosphere. Children dropped off their letters in the North Pole mailbox and attended the children's Christmas party in the lower hall where more of our Elves helped the kids make Christmas ornaments and frame keepsakes.

Afterwards everyone gathered outside for the tree lighting ceremony while Maltese Christmas music played when all of sudden Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, and the MC Elf arrived! It was a chilly night and the children followed Santa inside to get their gifts and the adults returned to the warmth to enjoy the company and try their hand at conducting the trains. We had a good selection who came in their ugly sweaters even though some were too cute to be ugly but we did have a happy winner! We want to thank everyone for attending and making it a huge success.

A big applause to our volunteers and members who donated their amazing skills and precious time to make this happen for everyone to enjoy



EVENTS TO COME

BINGO Sunday
December 12th
1pm FATTAA!! Join
in on the Sunday
Bingo Fun

**NEW YEAR'S EVE
DINNER** Friday
December 31st Let's
ring in 2022

together!

Our annual New Year's Eve Party is scheduled. Put in your reservations today.

Adults \$170 Children Under 12 \$70 After you have RSVP'd you will be contacted for payment. First come first serve.

Annual All Members Meeting & Committee Elections Sunday January 30th 2022

11:30am

Committee Members, Advisory Board Members, all Members in good standing - all are strongly encouraged to attend Candidate forms will be available beginning Sun Jan 3rd 2022

MEMBERS who have renewed their dues may collect their 2022 membership cards at the Center.

New members can submit an application for review by the committee.

Renewals and donations can be fulfilled in three ways:

- **Website** - go here: www.themaltesecenter.com to pay online for membership dues or donations. Payments are processed through PayPal and you do not need an account.
- **Mail a check** - payable to **The Maltese Center**, address; *The Maltese Center, attn: Treasurer, 27-20 Hoyt Avenue South, Astoria, NY 11102*
- **In person** - Sunday's at *The Maltese Center, 27-20 Hoyt Avenue South, Astoria, NY 11102*



**Celebrate
Christmas
in Malta**

Maltese Christmas Traditions *Milied Malti*

Christmas is just around the corner and it's a very special time for the Maltese people. As in every country, Malta has its own customs and traditions for celebrating at this heart-warming time of year.

Midnight Mass and Children's Procession

Going to Midnight Mass after the family dinner on Christmas Eve is an established custom in Malta. The Sermon of the Child (Il-Priedka tat-tifel), dating back to 1883, is the oldest and one of the most important Maltese traditions at Christmas. The sermon is, unusually, not given by the priest but by a small boy or girl aged between 7 and 10, who tells the story of Nativity whilst standing at the main altar. In almost every town, after the Midnight Mass, children's processions are organised. Typically, four boys sing Christmas Carols around the village whilst carrying lanterns and holding a statue of baby Jesus.



The Vetches (Ġulbiena)

Vetches (ġulbiena) are a species of wheat, grain or even canary seeds which are grown for decorative purposes in Malta and Gozo during November and December. This hairy, white shrub, can be found everywhere; on altars, around cribs, in displays of the Child Jesus. The seeds are placed on cottonwool and grown in the dark for about five weeks before Christmas. They are left in corners of the house until the seeds produce white and stringy shoots. They are watered every day and on Christmas Eve the ġulbiena are ready to admire.

The Nativity Crib (Il-Presepju) and Baby Jesus

One of the charming Maltese traditions is the Nativity Crib (Il-Presepju), a tradition which is said to have started in the first half of the seventeenth century. It is very common to find nativity sets in houses, schools, organizations and public areas. Each family has its own crib reflecting their personal taste. It consists of figurines, (pasturi), a baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the 3 Wise Men, angels, a donkey, a cow and all the characters present at the birth of Christ. The statues, sometimes very valuable antiques, are taken out of storage, given a good cleaning and placed in a central location in the house. 'Il-Presepju' are often built with rustic stones known as 'gagazza', which are collected from the Maltese countryside, or made of paper and wood. Every year, over the Christmas season, about 100 cribs of all shapes and sizes are displayed around the islands. Displaying a figure of Baby Jesus lying in a bed of straw is also very typical in Maltese households at this time of year.



*Prime Minister's daughter
Giorgia Mae Abela delivers
Christmas Sermon In Bormla
Parish, Malta in 2020*

. The Sermon of the Child

Christmas still retains a strong religious element for the Maltese. Participation in churches increases around Christmas with a special attendance on Christmas Day. Churches are full for sermon services, with Midnight Mass still retaining its popularity. One of the oldest traditions would be 'The Sermon of the Child' (Il-Priedka tat-Tifel). A boy or girl usually aged between 7 and 10 years old is chosen to replace the celebrating priest in delivering the sermon of the Midnight Mass. This special performance is awaited with great anticipation from all persons present that day. For a few months leading up to Christmas Day, the parents, brothers and sisters would have helped the child practise the speech to perfection, encouraging them to give it their all. It is a highly prized event for every child who is chosen. This lovely tradition is



believed to have started in 1883 in the little village of Luqa, where a boy called George Sapiano was the first altar boy to deliver the sermon..

Children's Procession

In almost every town and village, following Midnight Mass, a children's procession is organised by the religious society. What happens during this event is that a statue of baby Jesus is carried shoulder high while children walk behind it through the village streets, carrying lamps and lights along the way and singing old traditional songs such as 'Ninni la Tibkix Iżjed' (sleep and cry no more). This heart-warming custom goes way back to when Saint George Preca set up the first procession in the village of Hamrun in 1921.


Gaulitanus Choir Music direction - Mro. Colin Attard

L-Erbgħa 15 ta' Diċembru 2021
fis- 6.15pm
fil-Knisja tal-Madonna tal-
Grazzja Kunvent tal-Kapuċċini -
Victoria
(Fi triq lejn Marsalforn)

L-organizzaturi ta' dan l-avveniment huma responsabbli li jsegwu r-regolamenti u d-direttivi kollha tas-saħħa u s-sigurtà ta' dik il-ġurnata, mahruġa mill-Awtoritajiet tas-Saħħa.

Wednesday 15th December 2021
6.15pm
Our Lady of Grace
Capuchin Convent Church -
Victoria
(On his way to Marsalforn)

The organisers of this event are responsible of adhering to the health and safety directives and regulations, relevant during that period, issued by the Health Authority.

 **Curia Generalis
Fratrum Minorum
Capuccinorum**


Cultural Heritage Directorate



**GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR GOZO**



**I HOPE YOU
ENJOYED
READING
THIS
EDITION.
SEE YOU
AGAIN NEXT
WEEK
AND DON'T
FORGET TO
SEND ME A
CHRISTMAS
MESSAGE.
THANK YOU**