



Maltese eNewsletter

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**25% of Maltese Children
under 10 say English is
their first language**



**Survey
Result
published Friday**



**THE PRESIDENT
VISITS
THE SCOUTS**

**REFLECT
RESPECT
CELEBRATE**



AUSTRALIA DAY

26 January

**We are all
part of
the story**



**A COMMON EVENT IN
MALTA DURING A
RELIGIOUS PROCESSION**

Nearly a quarter of Maltese children under 10 years old consider English to be their first language,



Data shows Maltese children are far more likely to be English-speaking than adults

James Cummings

Nearly a quarter of Maltese children under 10 years old consider English to be their first language, census results published on Friday show. The data suggests English usage is becoming more predominant than it once was, with a notable gap between its use as a first language by children versus older Maltese.

Around 15 per cent of Maltese children aged 10 to 19 consider English to be their first language. That rate drops to around nine per cent for adults in their 20s, 30s and 40s and falls further for senior citizens.

While Maltese remains the mother tongue across all age groups, those in Swieqi, Sliema and St Julian's are the most likely to speak English from an early age. Almost four in 10 Maltese nationals in Swieqi and around a quarter of those in Sliema and St Julian's spoke the language from early childhood, the third volume of the Census of Population and Housing 2021 from the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed.

It is not possible to compare these rates to previous periods, as the last census - held in 2011 - did not ask respondents to state which language was their favoured one. Instead, respondents at the time were asked to list the languages they spoke and whether they spoke them 'well', 'average', 'a little' and 'not at all'.

Meanwhile, the literacy rate reached almost 96% in 2021, leaving around 20,500 people unable to read and write. This was an improvement of around three per cent from the previous census in 2011, when the literacy rate was almost 94%. With almost 99% of people able to read and write, Swieqi was the locality with the highest literacy

rate in the country, closely followed by Balzan and Attard, both of which stood at 98%. Luqa reported the lowest literacy rate of just over 89%, followed by Bormla and Marsa at almost 90%.

A survey published the same year as the census was taken, meanwhile, [showed](#) the Maltese find their own language easier to speak and understand, but English easier to read

and write.

That year, 57% agreed that Maltese was easier to speak than English, with around the same number (55%) disagreeing that Maltese was easier to read and write when compared to English.

Education and employment

Education levels have also risen over the past decade, census data indicates.

Almost a quarter of people aged 15 or older had completed tertiary education by 2021, an increase of more than 10 percentage points when compared to 2011. Tertiary education includes university diplomas, degrees, teacher training qualifications, post-graduate diplomas or certificates, Masters degrees and PhDs. Malta's workforce saw even bigger rises.

The number of workers aged 15 or older increased by around 60% from 2011, with almost 284,000 people in work in 2021 compared to 172,000 a decade before.

However, there was little change in the jobs that men and women are doing, the NSO noted.

Men were most likely to be employed as professionals (16%), technicians and associate professionals (15%) and craft and trade workers (14%). Women, meanwhile, were mainly employed as service and sales workers (26%), professionals (24%) and in clerical support positions (14%).

As employment grew, the number of people staying at home or taking care of family shrunk by around a quarter. While 23% (over 80,000) of those aged 15 or older were staying at home in 2011, this had reduced to around 13% (more than 60,000) ten years later.



Administrative Assistant

High Commission of Malta Sydney NSW
Administrative Assistants (Administration & Office Support)
Full time \$55,000 – \$56,000 per year

Administrative Assistant (Consular officer) vacancy post

The Consulate General of Malta in Sydney has a vacant position for an Administrative Assistant (Consular officer).

This is a customer-facing role which includes back-end processing. The successful candidate would be entrusted to carry out general clerical and

administrative duties in a busy working environment. Experience in customer care and relevant office administration qualifications are highly regarded.

The successful applicant will be responsible for general administrative duties and consular activities. The duties will include the following but not limited to:

- Responding to consular enquires from members of the public, including counter, telephone and written enquiries;
- Checking and processing of passport and citizenship applications and life certificate registration processes;
- Checking and processing of visa application process;
- Assessing eligibility of applicants and requesting supporting documents;
- Interviewing applicants face to face or over the telephone;
- Maintain consular databases, including financials;
- Any other related duties as assigned by the Consul General and the High Commissioner.

To be considered suitable for the post, the applicant must possess the following:

- A clean national police certificate;
- Post-secondary education level;
- Be punctual, reliable and trustworthy;
- A high level of interpersonal skills;
- Ability to prioritise tasks and manage workload;
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills in English;
- A good knowledge of computers especially Microsoft Office applications;
- Prior experience working in a consular or similar professional front line customer service will be considered an asset;
- Knowledge and good conversation skills in the Maltese language, alongside English, would also be considered an asset.

Interested applicants must send a covering letter together with their resume to highcommission.canberra@gov.mt by not later than 31 January 2024.





HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE VELLA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA PAID A VISIT TO THE VICTORIA SCOUT GROUP

The President of Malta Dr George Vella visits the Victoria

Scout Group

On Thursday 18th January, the President of Malta, Dr George Vella paid an official visit to the Victoria Scout Group headquarters. This was part of the concluding celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Group.

A guard of honour by the Cubs, Scouts, Ventures, Rovers, leaders and Council members in front of headquarters welcomed him on his arrival. Dr Vella first met the Council members in the board room and then was taken around the various rooms at headquarters.

The entire group then met in the Ġorġa Grech Hall. Group Council Chairman Michael Grech and the Group Scout Leader Jesmond Scerri delivered their welcoming speeches.

In his reply, the President thanked the Group for the invitation and congratulated it on its 60th anniversary. He described how impressed he was with the headquarters and the number of Scouts present. He commented that the competencies,

skills and values imparted through Scouting will help in one's character formation. Being loyal to the Scout Law and Promise, to the country and to one's Scout Group and the leaders all contribute to Scouts becoming responsible local and global citizens. Though sometimes it is difficult to stick to one's principles, the President urged the Scouts to do their best. He thanked the Council members and the leaders for their commitment and said he hoped this inspired present members to become future leaders.

Group Council Treasurer, Gino Mizzi presented a cheque from the Group towards the Malta Community Chest Fund. Group Chairman presented the President with a copy of the book narrating the history of the first 50 years of the Group.

A reception followed during which the President could mingle with those present, answer their questions and in turn ask them questions.

The Group would like to thank Dr George Vella for this visit and for his message.

www.facebook.com/VictoriaScoutGroup



The Maltese e-Newsletter acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and recognises their continuous connection to country, community and culture.

On Australia Day we, Australians, celebrate all the things we love about Australia: land, sense of fair go, lifestyle, democracy, the freedoms we enjoy but particularly our people.

Australia Day is about acknowledging the contribution every Australian makes to our contemporary and dynamic nation. From our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been here for more than

65,000 years, to those who have lived here for generations, to those who have come from all corners of the globe to call our country home.



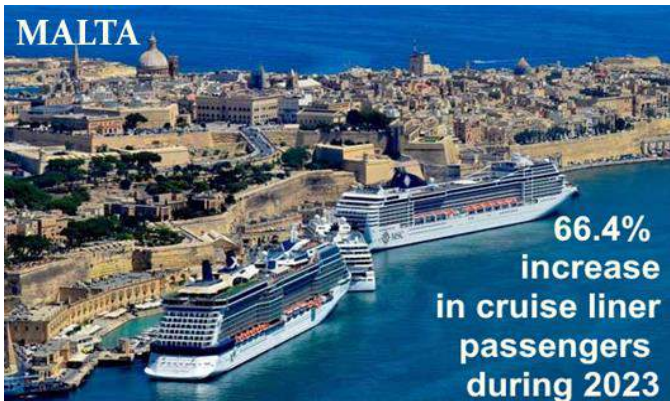
The 26 January is an important date in Australia's history that has evolved over time. Starting as a celebration for emancipated convicts, today it is a day to acknowledge past wrongs and show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' survival, resilience and enduring culture.

It is also a day we pay respect to the stories, histories and contributions of the Australians who lived, worked and fought for the values and freedoms we often take for granted.

And it is a day we celebrate the diversity of this nation's people with our various cultures, traditions and belief systems.

Australia Day continues to be hugely popular, with 3 in 4 Australians believing it has a bigger meaning beyond being just a day off.





National Statistics Office figures show that 169,036 cruise passengers visited Malta between October and December 2023 – an increase of over 63% on the same period last year.

Cruise liners passengers

October 2023	–	December 2022
169,036		103,553
+65,483 or +63.2%		

SOURCE: NSO

NSO stated that almost 52% of passengers arrived in Malta from EU countries, with the major market being the Italian tourists with 19.7% of all passengers, while 9.9% were German tourists. More than 81,000

passengers arrived from the UK and the United States.

The passengers arrived in Malta aboard 82 ships – an increase of 21 cruise liners compared to the same period last year.

During 2023, the number of cruise liners passengers surpassed 814,000, representing a strong increase of over 325,000 over the previous year.

Cruise liners passengers

January – December 2023	814,603	2022	489,571	+325,032
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These passengers arrived in Malta on 309 ships, carrying an average of 2,636 passenger – an increase of 26 cruise liners over 2022.



HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE FACT THAT JESUS WAS SOMETIMES HOMELESS?

Jesus told those who wanted to follow him, *"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head"*.

Indeed, as Luke records the teachings of Jesus, he casually mentions that Jesus slept outside. *"Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple"*. It's more than simply a metaphorical picture. Jesus didn't have a home.

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'".

So, when you look at people who are homeless, see Jesus. Respond to them as you would respond to Jesus. Give to them as you would give to Jesus.

The 'Ruota' – the Foudling Wheel

ADAM RASMI *I suppose as strange as the Ruota sounds, it has saved the lives of countless children in Malta and around the world...*



The 'Ruota' – the Foudling Wheel

A foundling wheel is a small crib set within an opening on the outside wall of a church or hospital, similar to a revolving door.

An unwanted baby was laid in the crib through the opening, and the wheel would be turned so as to place the baby safely inside the building.

In medieval times, child abandonment was fairly common. In 1198, Pope Innocent III was distressed by the number of infants that were drowned in the Tiber River, and he declared that foundling wheels should be installed so women could anonymously leave their unwanted child in the care of a church or hospital, instead of killing it.

At first, Foundling wheels were used in Italy; then the practice spread throughout

Europe.

Father Vincent de Paul, a Roman Catholic priest, canonized in June of 1737, instituted the first foundling home in 1638 in Paris. After a royal decree, the wheels were legalized in 1811 for Paris hospitals.

Although in many cases, abandoned babies were often left on the steps of a church, so that they could easily be found and delivered to the church's care, with time, different methods started to be introduced to facilitate the process and ensure secrecy, but primarily to safeguard the health of the new-born baby.

Probably the most well-known of these methods was the "*ruota degli esposti*" - a rotating wheel, installed to remain half inside the building and half outside on the road.

A woman on the inside, alerted by a crying baby or the ringing of a bell, would turn the wheel, bringing the baby inside, where it could be cared for while the mother slipped away without being seen.



The Ruota in Malta

A similar contraption was to be found at the rear of the Valletta Sacra Infermeria, enabling local mothers to leave their children to the care of the authorities without revealing their own identity.

The English philanthropist John Howard, who saw this contraption with his own eyes on a visit to the hospital in 1786, claimed that the Latin words "*infantium incolumitati*" were inscribed on a nearby wall - a reminder of the noble intentions behind the provision of these services.

The Staff

At the Infirmary, the *Ospedaliera* had the duty of caring for the foundlings as soon as they were removed from the "*ruota*".

A lead counter bearing the seal of the Holy Infirmary and placed around the neck of each foundling helped identify the baby from the rest.

The *Ospedaliera* was also charged with the supervision of the wet-nurses and foster mothers, as well as to inspect the babies every Easter to make sure that they were being well-fed and looked after.

The wet nurses resided in the part of the hospital known as the *Casa dei Figlioli e Figliole* and were thus available at all times to breastfeed the babies, although in the event that there were too many foundlings, and it became impossible for these wet nurses to cope with them, goat's milk was also used.



(A. ACHINI) La ruota degli esposti all'Ospizio di Santa Caterina.
(Da un disegno originale di Francesco Craxi).

Before being employed at the Sacra Infermeria, the wet nurses were examined by hospital physicians to ensure that they were free of disease, and they were constantly supervised by the *Ospedaliera* to make sure that they were not failing in their duties.

By 1779, it was also customary for the Infirmary to provide breastfeeding services to the legitimate offspring of mothers who suffered from insufficiency of their breast milk.

In addition to the hospital staff, by 1574 it was also customary to engage foster mothers, or extra-mural wet nurses.

These women, who were required to be honest Christians and persons of integrity, were appointed by the Infirmary, and were required to periodically bring the infants back to the hospital for inspection by the Grand Hospitaller.

Some of the babies taken in by the hospital would eventually be given up for adoption, but those for whom a new home could not be found were brought up by the *Ospedaliera* in the hospital building until they reached the required age to be transferred to other institutions. Girls were usually sent to stay with the cloistered nuns in Mdina as soon as they turned 3 years old, and remained at the convent until they reached

'the age of marriage'. Boys, on the other hand, stayed on at the Sacra Infermeria until they turned 7, when they would be apprenticed to learn a trade of their choice.

The Treasury of the Order met all expenses in both cases.

Clearly, this subject was considered as a very important part of the charitable work of the Order of St. John. It is true that critics of the system might have claimed that it facilitated, and possibly encouraged, the abandonment of children, but as far as the authorities were concerned, it also after all surely reduced the rate of infanticide, whilst also saving the souls of babies who would otherwise have died without receiving baptism.



The Socio-Religious channel, UTV, starts broadcasting

The UTV channel will be broadcasting again with Socio-Religious programs, most of which used to be broadcast on the Xejk Television channel and will now begin to be on UTV which is currently being broadcast on the GO platform. UTV

took its name from the very name of the U Foundation.

The emphasis on the letter U is precisely because this station will be FOR YOU - a station where YOU come first and therefore the emphasis on the letter U (You). As it did in the past years on Xejk TV, the U Foundation will continue to broadcast now on UTV Masses from the Sanctuary of Pinu in Gozo and the Rosary.

This together with other broadcasts with a religious theme such as a daily thought by Mons. George Frendo OP, Archbishop Emeritus of Tirana in Albania, the Angel.

Socio-Religious News and Community Notices will also be broadcast daily which include events such as births, birthdays, anniversaries and deaths. News from abroad is also delivered to people's homes, always focused on religious themes.

In the evening hours live programs on Holidays on Mondays, a program inspired by the Bible on Tuesdays, a current affairs discussion program on Wednesdays, a Catholic News program on Thursdays, and a presented program stand out. by Fr Ray Toleno on Fridays.

On Saturday we deliver a program about the Mission and, afterwards, a musical concert. On Sundays, a religious program, Mass for Children and repetitions of some programs during the week stand out.



The Terramaxka in Malta

building his own improved version of this music organ in 1920s. Frei made couple of important inventions that made his 'magical machine' louder, more distinct and easier to maintain. This is 72 key organ, the biggest street version of this organ has 90 keys and the 'Carl Frei Traveling Concert Organ' that consists of 112 keys is considered to be the largest traveling fair organ in the world.

The proud owner of this Terramaxka is Mari Van Rooy, a Dutchman married to a Maltese who has been living in Malta for over 25 years. It was always his dream to own one of these magical instruments and this is actually

the only one of its kind in Malta!

Terramaxka is basically an organ which plays music via stenciled pieces of cardboard. Here you can see Mr. Rooy manually operating the card feed mechanism. These exclusive stenciled cards are made in Holland.

Mr. Rooy got even some special Maltese tunes, which weren't easy to get. He had to send the musical compositions of such pieces to a company in Holland, which would have them played by a band, recorded them and produced the stencils.

And how is the music actually created? It's basically air passing. The music notes manually control how long will air pass through certain pipes. Terramaxka can play any sort of music. It all depends on the 'music notes' you have. I put a sample of Mr Rooy library. To this day he has made stencils for about 275 tunes that could be played by the Terramaxka! These range from melodies to band marches. To name a few artists: Lady Gaga, Rolling Stones, Beatles, Michael Jackson, Frank Sinatra and many others! And of course many Christmas melodies and Maltese music. It's also important to mention, to really appreciate Mr Rooy's efforts, how much this 'hobby' costs. He pays about 10 euro per meter for a song book. One song is between 10 to 15 meters!

When you look closer you can admire the precise craftsmanship. Terramaxka is entirely made of wood, both the decorations and the instruments. Behind all the Christmas decorations and statues you can see the actual instruments that transform the cardboard stencils into beautiful tunes.

The terramaxka is an old instrument which was very popular in the Maltese Islands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It formed an integral part of the Maltese Traditional Festas, Carnivals, and everyday life. This form of entertainment was much sought after since there were no radios back then.

The word terramaxka comes from the Maltese words kitarra magica, which means, magical guitar. In English, this instrument, is given a variety of names including, street organ, crank organ, barrel organ, fair organ and so forth. Street organs were imported in Malta from European countries such as France and Switzerland during the late nineteenth century.

Terramaxka is an important part of Maltese folklore. It was a popular feature in town squares in Malta towards the end of the 19th century. It was also an essential means of entertainment during the village 'festa' especially when there was no band playing. If you want to know more about the history of this magical invention, how it works and where you can see it, just continue reading.

You're looking at 72 Key Carl Frei music organ dating back to the 1929. You might be familiar with Terramaxka ancestors – smaller, easily portable street organs. These were played by organ grinders in the European streets as early as the late 18th century. This barrel organ was basically a small pipe organ played by turning a handle, which rotates a cylinder studded with pegs that open the valves to produce a preset tune.

This Terramaxka was built by Carl Frei, who started his career repairing Dutch Street Organs. He began



CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BOSCO FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Dear Friends of Don Bosco - Salesian Oratory Sliema,
On **Sunday 28th January 2024**, the Salesian Family in Malta will come together to **celebrate the feast of St. John Bosco**. Mass will be celebrated by the Salesian

Community at **Savio College, Dingli, at 11.30 am**. This will be followed by lunch and leisure activities for all ages. I would like to encourage all Friends of Don Bosco Salesian Oratory Sliema members to attend and participate in this annual event organised for the Maltese Province. We look forward to having your active members of the Salesian Family including parents, students, children and young people to celebrate this special occasion. We appreciate your efforts to encourage all the Salesian groups to be present for this occasion.

This year the Friends of Don Bosco will be organizing Don Bosco's feast with the Salesian Youth Movement. This group empowers the animation and the work of young people within the Salesian community. We believe that this feast is truly for all the Salesian family and we would like to welcome all members of all ages of the Salesian community to this celebration.

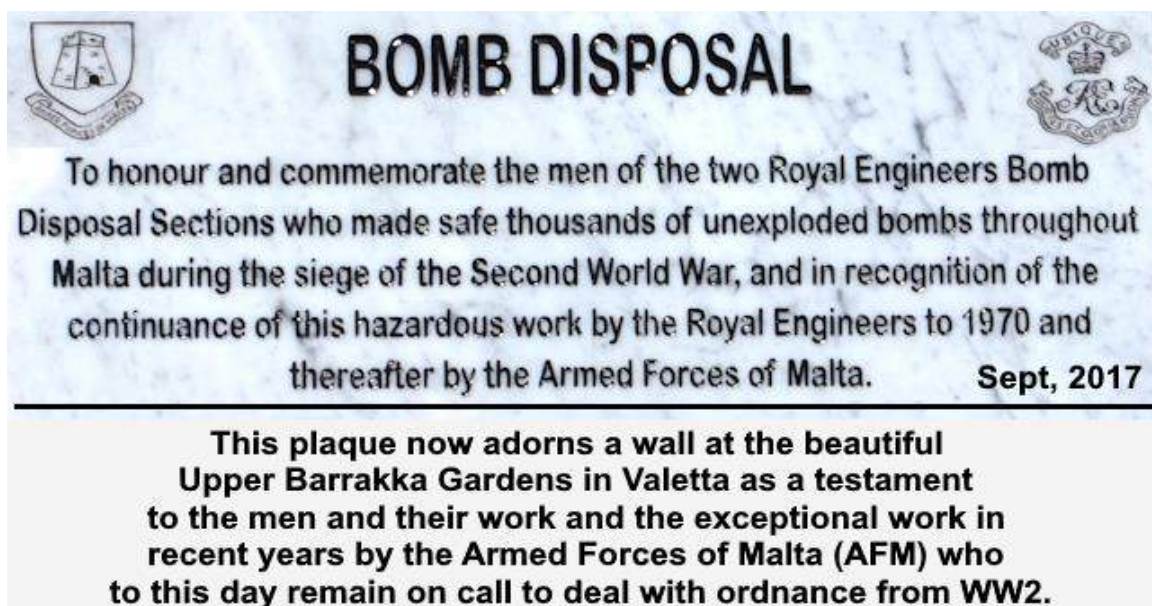
Lunch will be served by the Salesian Brigade after the Mass in Savio College. One can choose between **baked rice (€5), timpana (€5), and 'ftira biz-zejt' (€4)**. Following lunch, we will have a moment of leisure where one can meet old friends, build new friendships, and have some fun in a game of football or bingo.

There is the possibility of organising transport from Salesian Houses if there are enough people who request this service. Please let us know if there is interest from your organisation.

As in recent years, the National Federation of Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco will be honouring members who have been a true witness and service to others in the Salesian Family.

If you are interested in attending the event, we kindly ask you to contact our Secretary Ms. Amanda Cachia by calling 99215843 or by sending an email to manda.cachia@gmail.com or Marica Aquilina at +35699375669 or the following email marica@friendsofdonbosco.com. The closing date is Wednesday 24th January 2023 and as places are limited, you should book early to avoid disappointment.

The National Federation of Past Pupils and Friends is looking forward to meeting you to celebrate together the feast of St. John Bosco. Yours in Don Bosco, **Bryan Magro** **President of the National Federation**



IN MEMORY OF THE MALTESE ANZACS

WORLD WAR 1

1914 - 1918

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

AGIUS ALBERT	MOSTA	1401	FARRUGIA WILLIAM WALTER	MATTLAND, NSW	2632
AQUILLINA CARMELO	NAXXAR	1052	FERRES JOSEPH	VALLETTA	36
ATTARD EMANUEL	GOZO, QALA	4991	GALEA JOHN	SLIEMA	4123
ATTARD PAUL	ZEITUN	3592	GAUCI FRANK	NAXXAR	1659
ATTARD VINCENT	QJRAH	3005	GAUCI JOE	ATTARD	7590
AZZOPARDI ANTHONY	MELLIEHA	7352	HENRY HUGH	SLIEMA	38346
BALDACCHINO GEORGE	SIGGIEWI	7599	MATTEI CHARLES	VALLETTA	MD
BARTOLO CHARLES	MELLIEHA	6402	MICALLEF PAUL	MOSTA	1393
† BARTOLO FRANCESCO	MELLIEHA	823	MICALLEF SALVATORE	BIRKIRKARA	3876
BARUN JOSEPH	VITTORIOSA	227	MIFSUD JOSEPH	GHARGHUR	1382
† BECK WALDEMAR	MSIDA	6969	MIRUZZI ANTHONY	VALLETTA	373
† BELLIA FRANCIS	FLORIANA	7209	PACE JOSEPH	VALLETTA	646
† BONAVIA CHARLES	SLIEMA	157	PALMIER JOSEPH	MSIDA	4262
BORG LORENZO	VALLETTA	2130	PALMIER VINCENT	MSIDA	1106
† BROWN FRANK	VALLETTA	31803	† RIZZO ANTONIO THOMAS	MELBOURNE, VIC	5084
BUSUTTIN BASIL CHARLES	Ayr, QLD	3260	RIZZO CHARLES	SENGLEA	7543
CAMILLERI ANDREW	MCABBA	7212	SCHEMBRI CHARLES	NAXXAR	4617
† CAMILLERI BENEDETTO	RABAT	2145	SCHEMBRI FIDELE	1178 / 85821	
CAMILLERI PAOLO	NAXXAR	4753	SCIBERRAS JOHN	COSPICUA	2868
CASTALDI ELIGIO	SLIEMA	3615	SCOTT JOSEPH	VALLETTA	94
DALLI JOHN	VALLETTA	1823	VASSALLO CARMELO	ATTARD	2267
DARMANIN GIUSEPPE	COSPICUA	6730	WEST ALFRED	COSPICUA	3517
DEBONO ANDREW	BIRKIRKARA	2160	XUEREB ANTHONY	ATTARD	1055
DEBONO PAUL	BIRKIRKARA	4695	ZAMMIT MICHAEL	MOSTA	1645



NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

CAMILLERI CHARLES	MOSTA	57364
CREMONA LOUIS	GOZO, RABAT	5923
MALLIA CHARLES	SENGLEA	10 / 3343
PILLOW JOHN RICHARD	SLIEMA	15 / 74
VELLA FRANK VICTOR	INVERCARGILL, NZ	35930

† SUPREME SACRIFICE

LEST WE FORGET

MALTESE EX-SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, NSW SUB BRANCH
RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

MALTESE ANZACS FIRST WORLD WAR HONOUR ROLL – GCFCC - CRINGILA NSW

This memorial is an aluminium plaque, attached to a limestone-block pillar. The plaque is inscribed with an honour roll of servicemen from the First World War, who were of Maltese descent. The roll is divided into two sections, for those who served in the Australian Imperial Force or the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Each name is accompanied by their service number and their city or town of birth, in either Malta or Australia.

The plaque also contains three photographs of veterans, one of which includes a name. It is of Private Waldemar Beck, service number 6969, and is dated 23 December 1916. On this same day, Beck sailed for Devonport in England from Fremantle in Western Australia, on board HMAT A35 *Berrima*. He died of wounds in France on 6 July 1918.

The memorial stands on a paved area, under a covered awning, in the garden of the George Cross Falcons Community Centre in Cringila, NSW, near Wollongong. It is positioned alongside two other pillars, which have

interpretative plaques attached. It was designed by Louis Parnis, President of the community centre. He collaborated with the RSL archives and was assisted by South Australian historian Frank Scicluna.

The memorial was dedicated on 17 April 2021, by the President of the Wollongong RSL sub-Branch. Members from the Maltese Ex-Servicemen's Association RSL sub-Branch also attended the ceremony.

The memorial is the first of its kind in the area and is expected to attract local visitors, as well as those from further away. It is intended annual Anzac Day services will be held on the site.

INSCRIPTION

In memory of the Maltese Anzacs World War 1 1914-1918 Australian Imperial and New Zealand Expeditionary Forces † Supreme Sacrifice Lest We Forget Maltese Ex-Servicemen's Association NSW Sub Branch Returned and Services League of Australia



Roberta Metsola is the youngest ever President of the European Parliament; the first from Malta and the first woman in two decades.

Roberta Metsola has plenty of superlatives to her name. She is the youngest ever President of the European Parliament; the first from Malta, the bloc's smallest country; and the first woman in two decades. But there's one thing that landed her in the history books that she never expected. On Dec. 10, 2022, Metsola became the first President of the European Parliament to join a police raid against a fellow lawmaker. "It was sad," Metsola, who turns 45 in January, tells TIME from her office in Brussels. It was like "a punch in the stomach."

Earlier that day, Belgian authorities had notified Metsola that to comply with local law, she had to join police by 9 p.m. for a raid against lawmaker Marc Tarabella as part of a corruption probe. So Metsola hopped on a three-hour flight from Malta to Brussels, then rushed some 70 miles into the Belgian countryside. With armed police at her side,

she knocked at Tarabella's door with minutes to spare.

The bust happened to come during the FIFA World Cup quarterfinals. "There was France and England playing in a bar next door," Metsola recalls, "and I just remember hearing the cheers and thinking, Look at what I'm doing." The coincidence was not a happy one. A day earlier, police began carrying out raids and arrests across Brussels, where the European Parliament does most of its work, amid an investigation into whether World Cup host Qatar had bribed European Parliament officials. Bags of cash totaling some €1.5 million (\$1.65 million) were seized during raids in homes and offices in Belgium, Italy, and Greece in the days that followed, in a scandal that ripped through not only the European Parliament but also the E.U. at large. Dubbed Qatargate, it was one of the biggest corruption scandals to hit the bloc in decades.

Metsola, who had campaigned against corruption in Malta and had a reputation as strong on the rule of law, saw the scandal as a threat to the institution and its credibility. "This is something that I could very easily have done nothing about and said, 'These allegations could have surfaced anywhere. Look at that country ... look at the U.S. Congress,'" she says. "But I refused."

That may be because the European Parliament cannot afford such controversy. Though Metsola has expanded its presence on the world stage—she was the first top E.U. official to travel to Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion—the European Parliament remains far weaker than the E.U.'s executive branch. Its role has traditionally been relegated mostly to amending or adopting E.U. legislation and budgets put forward by the European Commission—helmed by Ursula von der Leyen—based on the political direction and priorities laid out by the European Council, made up of the leaders of the E.U.'s 27 member states.

Metsola wants Europe's Parliament to have the power its name implies, and generate laws itself. The Qatargate scandal, seized on by prominent Euroskeptic figures like Nigel Farage and Viktor Orbán, did not help. "[People were] saying, 'Well, all corrupt in the European Parliament, we need to abolish the institution,'" says Daniel Freund, a German Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and outspoken anticorruption advocate. It's a sore point for a reason. A 2006 internal audit, which the institution tried to suppress, documented abuses, including wildly inflated MEP expenses. Another scandal in 2011 saw four lawmakers agree to accept up to €100,000 (\$104,000 at the time) per year from journalists posing as lobbyists in exchange for introducing amendments to E.U. legislation.

Metsola's response to Qatargate was to announce a 14-point reform plan in January 2023 to tighten anticorruption rules and shore up credibility. That process culminated with a set of amendments to the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure that took effect in November. Both Metsola and her handlers are keen to emphasize that these reforms are part of a wider pitch to modernize and improve the European Parliament, the only E.U. body that is directly elected by the bloc's 450 million people. But not everyone is sure the post-Qatargate reforms are enough to stave off future scandals—or whether the bigger job of structural change can get done.

Resting against a spotless window in Metsola's ninth-floor office, as we spend 45 minutes chatting this past fall, is a framed newspaper clipping from Ireland's *Business Post* headlined THE MALTESE BROKER. It's an apt moniker for a politician who has spent her career balancing the competing demands of Europe's left and right.

Born in the seaside town of St. Julian's in 1979, Metsola was only in her early 20s when in 2003 Malta held a tense referendum on whether to join the E.U. A Europhile at heart, she became a campaigner for "yes" in a vote that went 53.65% in favor to 46.35% against, one of the narrowest margins of any E.U. country. Her efforts in the campaign were noticed. The country's then Prime Minister, Lawrence Gonzi, encouraged her to run for the European Parliament in the 2004 elections. After two failed attempts, in 2013 by-elections she and two others became the first cohort of women MEPs from Malta. "Third time's a charm," Metsola says.

Waiting for Metsola outside her office in Brussels, her deputy spokesperson, Antti Timonen, tells TIME that many have characterized the European Parliament under her leadership as like going from a "black-and-white to color TV." And it's true that Metsola has won praise from across the political spectrum for her push to take on a more visible public role and to strengthen the institution's influence within the E.U.

That is apparent when it comes to Ukraine. With at least €132 billion (\$144 billion) pledged in aid commitments, the E.U. is by far Ukraine's largest financial backer. "We decide on that here, together with the European Commission," Metsola says. She was also an early advocate for Ukraine's E.U. membership bid, a move she says colleagues across the road in Brussels "were not very happy about." They would get on board, with Ukraine winning candidate status in June.

But there's reason to believe the European Parliament's powers will continue to grow, even if the more sweeping proposals don't come to pass. A lot has changed since the days when Metsola first got involved in European politics some two decades ago, when the institution's work was more easily dismissed. "Now, [MEPs] are called legislators, in all areas," she says. "And if we are not, we fight for it."

Emigration and immigration

"Emigration" means moving out of a country. "Immigration" means moving into a country.

Malt's population is shaped by emigration and immigration. More and more Maltese nationals are choosing to live abroad. At the same time, a quarter of the total population of Malta are foreigners.

Immigration into Malta Malta's location in the centre of the Mediterranean has historically given it great strategic importance as a naval base, with a succession of powers having contested and ruled the islands, including the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Normans, Aragonese, Knights of St. John, French, and British.

Malta became a **British colony** in 1813, serving as a way station for ships and the headquarters for the British Mediterranean Fleet. Some 22,000 British servicemen posted in Malta from 1807 to 1979, as well as other British and Irish that settled in Malta over the decades.

Between 1915 and 1918, during the First World War, Malta became known as the **Nurse of the Mediterranean** due to the large number of wounded soldiers who were accommodated in Malta.

Malta achieved its independence as the State of Malta on 21 September 1964. A defence agreement was signed soon after independence, and after being re-negotiated in 1972, expired on 31 March 1979. Upon its expiry, Malta became a republic and the British base closed down and all lands formerly controlled by the British on the island were given up to the Maltese government.

Emigration From Malta Emigration from Malta was an important demographic phenomenon throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leading to the creation of large Maltese communities in English-speaking countries abroad.

Malta has always been a maritime nation, and for centuries, there has been extensive interaction between Maltese sailors and fishermen and their counterparts around the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic Ocean. More significantly, by the mid-19th century the Maltese already had a long history of migration to various places, including **Egypt, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria, Cyprus, the Ionian Islands, Greece, Sicily and Lampedusa**. Inter-marriage with other nationals (especially **Italians and Sicilians**) was not uncommon. Migrants would periodically return to Malta, bringing with them new customs and traditions that over time have been absorbed into mainstream Maltese culture.

Mass emigration picked up in the 19th century. Migration was initially to north African countries (particularly **Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt**). By 1900, for example, British consular estimates suggest that there were 15,326 Maltese in **Tunisia**.

There is little trace left of the Maltese communities in north Africa, most of them having been displaced, after the rise of independence movements, to places like **Marseille, the United Kingdom or Australia**. In the years preceding Tunisia's declaration of independence in 1956, most of the Maltese community left the country to settle in **Marseille, France**, which retains the biggest Maltese community in France.

Later Maltese migrants headed towards the **United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia**. Over 10,000 Maltese settled in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States between 1918 and 1920, followed by another 90,000 – or 30 percent of the population of Malta – between 1948 and 1967. By 1996, the net emigration from Malta during the 20th century exceeded 120,000, or 33.5% of the population of Malta.

After World War II, Malta's Emigration Department would assist emigrants with the cost of their travel. Between 1948 and 1967, 30 per cent of the population emigrated. Between 1946 and the late 1970s, over 140,000 people left Malta on the assisted passage scheme, with 57.6 per cent migrating to Australia, 22 per cent to the United Kingdom, 13 per cent to Canada and 7 per cent to the United States. Since Malta joined the EU in 2004 expatriate communities emerged in a number of European countries particularly in **Belgium and Luxembourg**.

The Emigrants Commission was established in 1950 due to the large exodus of Maltese to foreign lands because of overpopulation and unemployment. The purpose of the commission was to offer

help to those who intended to settle abroad. Now its services cover all those affected by migration including immigrants, refugees, and tourists.

A growing proportion of Maltese citizens live abroad – currently more than one in ten. Between the 15th and 18th centuries, people left Malta to work as mercenaries or to escape poverty and sectarian conflicts. Today, those leaving include employees, students, researchers and artists who tend to leave Switzerland only temporarily in order to study or to broaden their professional experience – or pensioners who choose to spend their retirement abroad. Three quarters of the emigrants have multiple nationalities.

Two thirds of Maltese nationals living abroad choose to do so in another European country – most of them in France and Germany. Outside Europe, most are drawn to the United States, Canada and Australia.

Malta has a high proportion of foreign nationals – a full quarter of the population do not have a Maltese passport. The high proportion of foreign nationals reinforces the country's already multicultural character.

With just over the Indians and Italian residents are the largest foreign communities in Malta followed by Philippines, Nepal and UK citizens. To date, more than three quarters of immigrants have come from other European countries. However, the proportion of people with non-European passports is increasing year on year.

Underground life during the war: Malta's air raid shelters

Adriana Bishop

vassallohistory.files.wordpress.com - a public shelter in the disused railway tunnel in Valletta

"...the air was filled with the crash of masonry and the uncanny swirl of blast. The building above was hit. Clouds of dust penetrated the shelter, smothering and half-choking the shelterers with dust, mostly women with babies and young children. Some of the children were terrified and cried, but their mothers open-eyed and stupefied, calmly dipped their handkerchiefs in a pail of water kept in the shelter for the purpose and put them over the mouths and noses of the babies. Then hugging their youngest to their bosom they muttered a silent prayer." - Foreign Correspondent, Reuters 1942



This was a typical scene at the height of the Siege of Malta during World War II. Fear and hope mixed with noise and dust, discomfort and disease and above all darkness down the underground shelters, as enemy bombs rained relentlessly overhead, destroying lives and flattening the island.

Over 70 years have passed since then, but for those who lived through those days of untold horror, the memories never fade. The network of air raid shelters that were hewn out of the rock remain today a testament to Malta's resilience and fighting spirit. Some are open to the public not just as a

quirky tourist attraction, but also to educate the post-war generation who grew up in an era of peace about the legacy of World War II.

At the start of the war there were very few shelters, and people were advised to seek refuge in basements, under the stairs or even beneath sturdy tables cushioned with layers of mattresses. As the conflict intensified, the excavation of rock-cut shelters gained momentum, and by June 1941 there were 473 public rock shelters with a further 382 under construction, providing protection for 138,000 people. Thousands more also sought refuge in concrete or private shelters. By the end of that year, Government gave permission for private cubicles to be excavated within public shelters, a job which was often undertaken by women and children.

The Malta at War Museum at Cuvre Porte in Birgu (Vittoriosa) documents the ordeal of the Maltese and the Allies during the blitz between 1940 and 1943. Situated within the strategic Dockyard Creek off Grand Harbour, Birgu was one of the most heavily bombed places of the conflict, and almost half of it was destroyed. The museum is housed within 18th century army barracks, and sits on top of an extensive network of rock-cut air raid shelters which gave refuge to hundreds of people.

Visitors today are offered the luxury of wearing protective hair-nets and hard hats before descending to the shelters, but in those dark days of war, people were lucky if they got away with their lives. My own parents spent part of their childhood in such shelters and I wanted to experience it firsthand, albeit for an hour and with enemy bombs merely an audio recording.



To say it was a sobering experience would be putting it mildly. As the sounds of people reciting the rosary echoed in the corridors of the rabbit-warren network, I got a sense of the fear and claustrophobia that must have engulfed the shelterers at the time. Efforts were made to retain a sense of order and decorum amidst the chaos of war. Shelter Supervisors and Air Raid Wardens were employed to oversee the day-to-day running of the shelters, Government workmen were paid to clean the shelters and a private cubicle was set aside to be used as a makeshift maternity ward for women to give birth in privacy. Notices were printed on all the walls reminding shelterers not to spit, "commit nuisances" or smoke, but diseases such as scabies, dysentery and tuberculosis were rife.

Electricity was still a novelty in the early 1940s, and Malta's one and only power station in Floriana was repeatedly bombed. Some shelters were provided with free electricity, but wiring and fixtures were installed voluntarily by the shelterers themselves. Other shelters were simply lit by crude homemade oil lamps.

Those enterprising few who managed to excavate their own private cubicle would furnish it with some personal belongings and home comforts, but the majority had only a bench to sit on or perhaps a primitive bunk bed, as long as they brought their own bedding. Some clearly went to great lengths to ensure their stay in the shelter was as comfortable and civilised as possible, going as far as laying down tiles in their cubicle.

Ancient catacombs dating back to pre-Roman era were also used as air raid shelters, and the Wignacourt Museum in Rabat includes a complex of shelters with two main corridors and about 50 rooms within a network of Punic, Roman and Christian hypogea.

Many inhabitants of the harbour cities were evacuated to rural areas away from the main enemy action to places like Rabat or further away to Mellieha. Today, a popular resort with Malta's largest sandy beach, Mellieha still bears witness to World War II. Of the 46 air raid shelters in the town, two located near the parish church are open to the public. They feature a small exhibition of tools used to dig the shelters as well as gas masks and ammunition.

Valletta, meanwhile, has a veritable underground city of tunnels and disused wells running beneath the buildings, and many were used as shelters.



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L-ARKIVJI NAZZJONALI TA'MALTA



Meet the Cillas: 100 years ago, this family fled to Malta in search of a better life

The Greco-Turkish War was probably one of the reasons the Cillas came to Malta. - Benjamin Abela

In commemoration of World Refugee Day, celebrated globally on 20th June, The National Archives of Malta dug up an interesting piece of Maltese history...

As it turns out, foreigners were turning to the Maltese islands for help as early as 1922 – and this historic photo is proof of just that.

"Today is World Refugee Day. We recall baker John Cilia, his wife Kirioki, and their children Liberata, Marcos, Mary, and Francis," the National Archives of Malta wrote on social media.

"100 years ago, on 18th September 1922, they arrived in Malta from Smyrna as refugees, together with many others. John, like many of the other refugees, was of Maltese ancestry," it continued.

Smyrna was ruled over by Greece between 1919 and 1922, until it was taken over by Turkey at the end of the Greco-Turkish War. Shortly after this, a fire broke out in the Greek and Armenian quarters of Smyrna – an event known as the Great Fire of Smyrna – claiming tens of thousands of lives.

"Two years [after 1922], the [Cilia] family settled in Greece. In 1932 they were facing hardships and asked for assistance from Malta. Their request was denied," The National Archives of Malta concluded.

Izmir has come a long way since its rocky past, nowadays being known as the third most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara, and the second largest urban agglomeration on the Aegean Sea after Athens.

These factors most probably contributed to the Cillas' decision to come to Malta.

Smyrna is nowadays a part of Turkey and known as Izmir.

FAREWELL MARUKKA



The singer Ludwig Galea announced the death of his grandmother Maria, known as Marukka. She was 93 years old.

Marukka was a grandmother and a great-grandmother of four. She used to say: "I love my grandchildren they are the apple of my eyes. I live for them so they can enjoy me and pray for them. They do not turn to me, but I turn to them".

Among those who missed Marukka was the councillor as well as singer and author of many songs Mark Spiteri Lucas who described Ludwig Galea's grandmother as "a humble and best woman who loved me as if I was one of her grandchildren". Her funeral and last farewell to Marukka will be held on Monday 22 January at 8.30am in the church of

Santu Augustin in Valletta. Condolences to all relatives. Marukka, rest in peace!



Gudja: a small village in the South of Malta

Gudja is a village located on a small hill close to the Malta International Airport and almost forms part of the village of Zejtun. Gudja has 2,901 inhabitants living in an area of 2.3 km² and the village dates back to the 14th century. The medieval church St Mary Ta' Bir Miftuh, which is one of the first twelve parishes in Malta, and the narrow winding streets of Gudja bear witness just how old the village is. The Gudja parish church is the only church in Malta with three bell towers and is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The oldest procession statue in Malta can be found in this church.

Gerolamo Cassar, an architect of many of Valletta's buildings during the Knights of St. John period was born in Gudja. The famous pop singer Madonna chose to reside in Gudja during her visit to Malta.

PARISH CHURCH: DEDICATED TO THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY, this church holds a titular painting by the Italian painter Pietro Gagliardi, and other interesting pieces of art, such as the painting "The Death of Saint Joseph" by Domenico Bruschi. In this church one can find a wooden sculpture from 1807 by Maltese Vincenzo Dimech, which is the most important sculpture in the church. It is the titular statue of the Assumption of Our Lady and is the oldest procession statue in Malta featuring the Assumption of Our Lady.



CHAPEL OF SANTA MARIJA OF BIR MIFTUH:

This medieval chapel dates back to 1435 and contains unique medieval fresco fragments of the Last Judgement. It is open to the public only on the first Sunday of the month, from 09:30 to 12:00

CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF LORETO, GUDJA

The beauty of trying to document things that have been around for hundreds of years is the stories that you come across. Scratch away at the surface and you find a richness of cultural heritage

that would otherwise have been lost to you.

Anyone who has been to or passed by the Malta International Airport will probably have noticed the chapel that lies a little bit down the road. It is a chapel that is dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto and it has a backstory that reflects the struggles of earlier generations. This chapel was built in 1676 as a way of offering thanks after the nearby village of Gudja had escaped largely untouched by the plague that had hit the islands that year. Out of the 11,000 fatalities of that plague only twenty four hailed from the village. It is a symbol of the helplessness that the villagers must have felt when confronted by this incurable sickness. It was built in the place of an older church that had been previously erected around the medieval hamlet of Casal Qadi, which is a fascinating little fact in itself when you think about it; a place where people called home and for whom it was the world not only no longer exists but is effectively forgotten. The Loreto chapel's story took another twist in the Second World War when it was taken over by the military who in turn connected the well that is situated beneath this chapel to a nearby shelter.

Against all odds our journal survived and still growing strong



Palazzo Dorell – Bettina Palace -
oldhousesmalta.com/palazzo-dorell/

A magnificent Palazzo, Palladian style in architecture located in this totally reflects in the symmetrical, almost rigid façade, set back from street level by means of a large forecourt.

The arched doorway is reached through a flight of steps and adorned with decorated corbels, supporting the overlying balcony. The balcony's and all first-floor level apertures are

all aligned symmetrically with the ones at ground floor level.

Just a sneak peak through the gates of Palazzo D'Aurelin Gudja Also known as Bettina Palace. A magnificent Palladian style palace named after Lady Bettina Testaferrata D'Aurel.

The gate in the forecourt has a semi-circular headed portal, flanked by two smaller flat-headed doorways, and surmounted by spherical ornaments similar to those on the wings of the main building. At the back of the Palazzo there is an open, wall enclosed courtyard with an archway that centres on a temple-like building at the far end.

The Xlejli Tower The Xlejli Tower stands in the gardens of Palazzo Dorell. The age of the tower is not known, it could date back to Roman or medieval periods.

According to Louis de Boisgelin, the historian of the Order of St. John, an urn full of Roman copper medals was found at the tower. The tower also has a round shape, similar to other Punic-Roman towers in Malta.

The oldest reference to the tower dates back to 1570. It was described as a lookout tower built in the 12th or 13th century. The tower was almost definitely built as a watchtower, since it has views of the southern part of Malta, stretching from Benghajsa to the Grand Harbour.

Palazzo Dorell was built years later close to the tower, and the latter was included in its grounds within a large walled garden. Since then, the tower has been closed for the public.

Lady Bettina took pride in restoring the tower and decorating its interior. Due to this, it also became known as Bettina Tower after her. She had actually named it as Xulliela Tower, which has a literal meaning of "tacked together" in old Maltese.

The tower consists of three rooms on top of each other, with access through an external spiral staircase.

The lowest room on first floor is decorated in a neo-classical taste. Walls all adorned with Chintz, two plaster figures of Sapho (a greek poet) and Vesta (roman goddess), facing each other across the room. In the middle of the room, one finds an empty plinth upon which once stood a third statue, that was shattered by a bomb blast during the war.

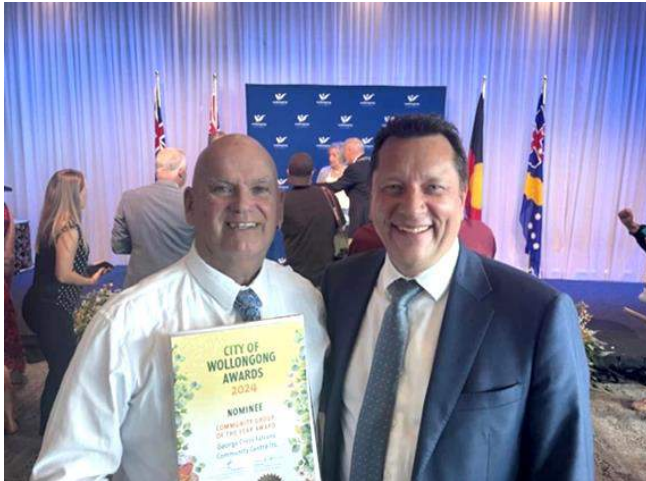
The room on the middle floor is dominated by a large circular table, covered with a Chintz cloth, and small benches set against the painted walls.

The top room is empty except for an elderly telescope on its stand. The walls are wonderfully painted in oil on plaster, an imaginary landscape filled with strange buildings, cities and villages. Although not alien to Maltese landscape, it bears no direct geological relation to the surrounding countryside. Unfortunately, the artist is unknown. The beams of all the ceilings in the tower are beautifully and delicately painted with bands and garlands.

Lady Bettina

Marquise Bettina D'Aurel had been a lady in waiting to the Queen of Naples, and therefore a woman of considerable social consequence on the island. It is said that she was much given to entertaining a number of guests at her residence.

"She began to lead a life of gaiety and merry-making. She kept no female servants, and only men were allowed to enter her house." Cassar Pullicino in his publication *The Order Of St. John In Maltese Folk Memory* Today, this outstanding Palazzo serves as a private residence to the Barons of San Marciano. Presently home for Baron Gino Trapani Galea Feriol. The structure is scheduled as a grade 1 property by the MEPA. It is also listed on the National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands.



This year Wollongong City Council Awards was held at City Beach Function Centre. It was an afternoon event where Council hosting a high tea. There were 13 categories and the George Cross Falcons Community Centre Inc. Cringila was nominated for Community Group of the Year. The President Louis Parnis and wife Michelle represented the association.

The afternoon was a good opportunity for Mr. Parnis to meet up with numerous leaders including State and Federal members of

parliament to assure more funding for projects already in the pipeline. All the nominations were recognised on the day but the Award went to the Yearly organization where a Convoy of trucks drive through the City of the Illawarra raising millions for sick kids in the area, a worth fund raiser.

The opportunity the Cringila Centre received by being nominated and receiving a certificate shows that the committee and volunteers are appreciated for their volunteering.



Natalie Suleyman MP State Labor Member for St Albans-Victoria attends the St. Sebastian Annual Dinner Dance

Natie Suleyman MP was the special guest at the St Sebastian Seniors Association Annual Dinner Dance. Thank you to President Patrick and committee for their ongoing commitment since 1990.

Providing support and social events for our local multicultural communities!

Dr. Gioconda Schembri, Consul General for Victoria and the MMG Concert Band of Victoria were also in attendance.

“Should distance separate us from Malta? No. If I am Maltese and living abroad – be it in Australia, Canada, USA or UK – I am still Maltese and love the culture. – member of the Maltese Diaspora



Feast of Saint Paul Richmond NSW - AUSTRALIA

On Sunday 21 January the Maltese community celebrated the 2024 St Paul Feast at St Monica's Richmond, NSW.

Thank you to all the St Paul Feast Committee members for organising successfully the 2024 The festa of St Paul, the patron saint of the Maltese Islands. Thank you also to all the volunteers that helped before, during and after the Feast.

The Maltese Concert Band NSW Inc. provided entertainment and played Maltese marches. Also thank you to everyone who attended the feast and was able to celebrate with us all.

We hope to see you all again next year.

**MALTESE
eNEWSLETTER**

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**I thank all those who sent a small donation towards the
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