MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

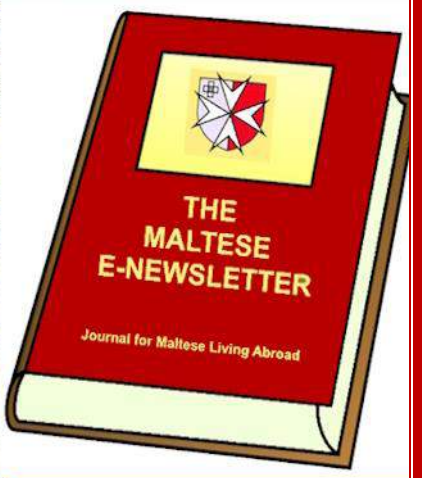
Editor: Frank Scicluna OAM MQR JP Email: maltesejournal@gmail.com
An Independent Journal for Maltese Living Abroad

11 YEARS

LOUISE BEZZINA
MACKAY - QLD

What's my Name?

Donald Trump appoints Maltese American Sergio Gor for personnel office director



THE MALTESE NEWSLETTERS IN A BOOK?

A MALTESE ICONIC LUZZU

ORDER OF MALTA AUSTRALIA

The Most Reverend CHARLES GAUCI Bishop of Darwin and Northern Territory

Last year the MostReverend Charles Gauci DD, Bishop of Darwin and the Northern Territory, Conventual Chaplain *Ad Honorem*, led Order of Malta members and aspirants in an online reflection upon "Intentional living".

Bishop Charles implored us to carve time in our busy lives to pause and reflect upon our 4 key relationships with:

God - Am I mindful that God loves me unconditionally and wishes the best for me?
Do I stop and pray, to share with God?
Do I find stillness to listen to God speaking with me? Perhaps through Adoration?
Can I find 5 minutes, or even 10 minutes, or longer, each day, to sit with God?

Self

Virtue is nurtured through healthy habits. What healthy habits can I prioritise more in my daily life?
What negative habits or ego-driven addictions do I need to 'weed out' of my day?

Others

Do I share the joy, mercy, and hope of God wherever I go, with all who I meet?
How do I serve the sick and poor, or engage people in need?
Is there someone who I need to reach out to and forgive?
Is there someone who I need to humbly seek forgiveness from?

Creation

God blessed us as Stewards of Creation. Do I take the time to appreciate creation as God's first revelation?
How can I nurture my natural environment?
When do I find time to walk or sit in nature, and reflect upon the miniature and the magnificent?
How can quiet time in nature help to restore my own perspective amid the stresses of life?

May intentional living through our journey help us to encounter the deeper reality of God's love. Inspired by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9, may we grow to see what no eye has seen, hear what no ear has heard, and experience what no mind has conceived. For as St Augustine reflected, our hearts are restless until we rest in Christ.

This was the second time this year that Bishop Charles generously led an online reflection for our Order. All members, candidates, volunteers, family, and friends are welcome to share this formation series, "An Hour of Reflection with a Chaplain" of the Order of Malta.

MALTESE LIVING ABROAD ARE MALTA IN THE WORLD

President Myriam Spiteri Debono had a private audience with Pope Francis in the Vatican. The Maltese President said that during the meeting, the Pope mentioned his visit in Malta and that he still cherishes the occasion. Pope Francis also recalled his youth memories during his studies in Buenos Aires to become a Jesuit and that two Gozitan students were studying with him.

He also mentioned his joy when he meets with women who occupy leadership posts. He also spoke about the great confidence he has in women even in certain recent positions within the Church. The last topic we spoke about was the need for more births.

President Myriam Spiteri Debono

During the private audience with the Pope, President Spiteri Debono was accompanied by her husband and members of her family, and by deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Ian Borg.

The Maltese President presented Pope Francis with a medical equipment to be used in a clinic which, on the Pope's initiative, offers free health services to patients in need. The President and her delegation visited the clinic and thanked its management for the opportunity given to medicine students from Malta, who each year carry out a working experience with patients.

The President also visited the Bambino Gesu' hospital which offers specialised treated to children, including Maltese children. Eighteen Maltese students also experienced the services offered by this Rome hospital which also assists various mothers of children born with serious medical conditions. TVM NEWS

ARE YOU A FOODIE WITH A PASSION FOR LOCAL FOOD AND HISTORY?

On Saturday, 29th March we are inviting you to join us for an unforgettable experience combining these passions, at the Inquisitor's Palace, in Birgu. From 10:00 am to 12:30 pm, you will be guided on a culinary journey into the rich traditions of Maltese and Gozitan cuisine. This session focuses on brağjoli, stuffed bundles of meat, typically slow-braised in a hearty stew, evoking a time when life unfolded at a gentler pace.

Explore how religious customs influenced eating habits, with giorni di magro (lean days) and giorni di grasso (rich days) shaping the diets of our ancestors. Discover the fascinating history behind these customs and experience hands-on experience preparing this traditional dish. This bilingual session is designed for adults and limited to 10 participants. Don't forget to bring a container to take home your delicious creation!

Book early online on Store - Heritage Malta or in person at any of our museums and sites to secure your place.

90% SUCCESS RATE THROUGH SEM APPLICATIONS

info.sem@gov.mt

Last year, Servizzi Ewropej Malta (SEM) submitted about 150 applications valued at €80 million, and of these, 90% were accepted after independent evaluation.

To TVMnews, the Executive Head of SEM Rodrick Zerafa, said the Agency offers free help to all those who wish to benefit from EU Funds to carry out their intended projects.

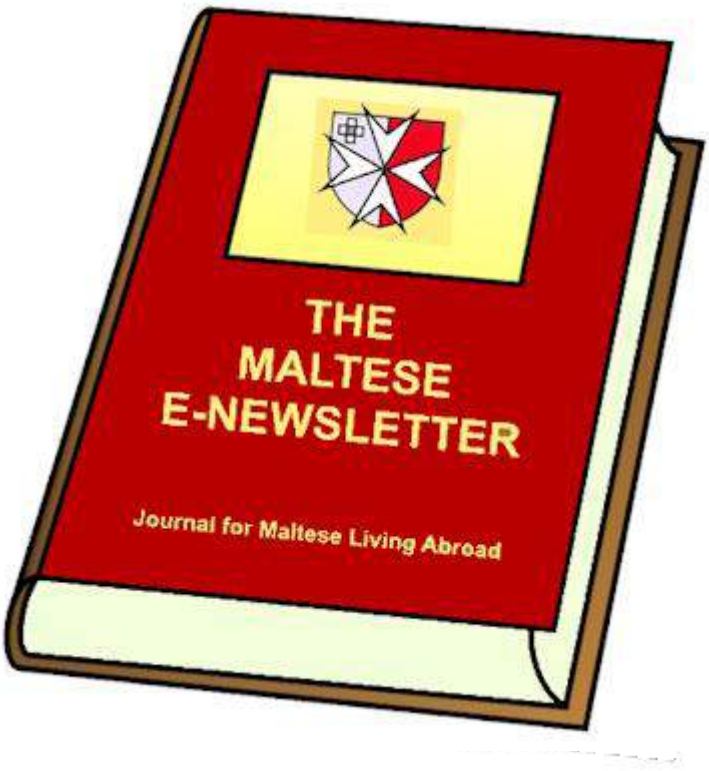
This financial process by the EU is complex and may take time but Servizzi Ewropej Malta simplifies this process by offering free help to those wishing to benefit.

Rodrick Zahra outlined the most common applications.

These included the programme Business Enhance which tries to simplify the operations of their enterprise if it is agricultural and farmers are helped to improve their operations. There are also many small programmes from NGOs without whom EU funding could not exist and this makes a difference.

He appealed to NGOs, enterprises, farmers and individuals who wanted to maintain a programme to contact the Agency to try and benefit from EU Funding.

Zerafa said the Agency makes contact within two days the request is sent to provide a shoulder for voluntary organisations.



THE MALTESE ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER, THE JOURNAL FOR MALTESE LIVING ABROAD

has been in circulation for over 11 years with nearly 550 editions. The editor, Staff and readers would like to see the main articles of the newsletters be published in a book to be preserved it for future generations. It is a mammoth, but fascinating project and it can be achieved.

Printing is expensive therefore we need financial assistance of agencies, associations, sponsors and individuals.

Any suggestions, ideas, contacts etc. will be appreciated. If you think you can help, please get in touch with the editor on **maltesejournal@gmail.com**

TRUMP PICKS SERGIO GOR FOR PERSONNEL OFFICE DIRECTOR

Congratulations to the Maltese American Sergio Gor on his appointment to a vital role in the Trump administration! Few have shown the loyalty & dedication that he has, and even fewer have worked as tirelessly to put President Trump back in the White House. Trump confirmed that Sergio Gor will join the White House as director of the presidential personnel office. Gor, an ally and business partner of Donald Trump Jr.'s, was in charge of the pro-Trump political action committee Right For America.

Sergio Gor born November 30, 1986) is a Maltese American businessman and political operative. He led Right for America, a super PAC supporting former president Donald Trump, during the 2024 United States presidential election.[1] During the election, he published *Our Journey Together*, *Letters to Trump* (2023),[2] and *Save America* (2024)[3] through Winning Team Publishing, a publishing house he operates with Trump's eldest son Donald Trump Jr. He served as a delegate at the 2024 Republican National Convention.

Gor wore a squirrel costume in a stunt against Barack Obama in 2008.[7] After graduating from university, he spent time with the Republican National Committee and worked for representatives Randy Forbes, Michele Bachmann and Steve King.

Gor also worked as a booker for Fox News, a spokesman for senator Rand Paul, and an officiant for former representative Matt Gaetz's wedding.

On November 13, 2024, *Semafor* reported that Trump had offered Gor a position during his second presidency as the director of the White House Presidential Personnel Office.

Gor was born in Malta on November 30, 1986. He grew up in the city of Cospicua, and emigrated to the United States along with his family in 1999 when he was 12 years old.[He attended high school in the suburbs of Los Angeles, and later studied at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He enrolled at university using his full surname Gorokhovsky, which he later shortened to Gor.

artscouncilmalta.gov.mt
ARTS COUNCIL MALTA
Arts Council Malta is the national agency for arts and culture in Malta

www.heritagemalta.mt
Heritage Malta

Four officials from CYTS XINYU (Beijing) Tourism Co.Ltd paid a courtesy call at the Embassy on 10th January 2025. They briefed H.E. John Busuttil, DHoM Kimberly Zammit and Consul Eugenie Megally about plans of their company to start organizing groups of Chinese tourists to travel to Malta in May 2025. Their Tourism company, one of the largest in China with offices in major Chinese cities, focuses on outbound Chinese travel and has been in business for 40 years. Their business covers more than 100 countries, with a special focus on high end Tourism, particularly European destinations. In the past they had tours which included Malta as part of a package with Southern Europe, but this year they will offer a visit to Malta as an individual tour. They also have specialization in educational tourism, which the Embassy will be exploring further especially in regard to the teaching of English for Chinese students in Malta.

MALTA'S SPEAKER IN SPAIN

maltaembassy.madrid@gov.mt

Hon Anglu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, addressing migration challenges at Mediterranean Parliamentary Meeting

On 27 January 2025, Speaker Farrugia participated in the Meeting of Speakers of Parliaments from Southern Europe and North Africa in Lanzarote, Spain. The event, hosted by the Spanish Parliament, focused on addressing the migratory situation in the Mediterranean.

During his intervention, Speaker Farrugia emphasised the need for long-term solutions to migration challenges, highlighting the importance of peace in conflict regions such as Gaza and the need for stronger solidarity among EU Member States. He proposed the creation of a structured Group of Speakers of Parliaments of the Mediterranean to enhance dialogue and collaboration on migration and other regional issues.

The meeting concluded with a Joint Declaration on addressing migration flows, and the Speakers visited the Montaña Mina Emergency Migration Reception Centre as part of the program

Lands Authority and Heritage Malta sign agreement to preserve Qolla l-Bajda battery

Qolla l-Bajda Battery in Qbajjar, Gozo. Camouflaged by its rocky surroundings, the battery was built in 1716 by the Order of St John and originally consisted of a gun platform on its seaward side, with a defense wall and a ditch. Its other side was guarded by two blockhouses, with entrance to the battery being via a drawbridge, making it virtually impenetrable to attackers. Armed with six guns, it was a force to be reckoned with indeed.

Though abandoned in the 18th century, the battery served as an observation post during World War ll. Converted into a disco during the 1980s, it has remained empty since 2000. A magnificent piece of Gozo's military history, this formidable battery is an architectural masterpiece!

An agreement has been signed between the Lands Authority and Heritage Malta to begin essential work to remove the danger posed by the Qolla l-Bajda Battery in Qbajjar, Gozo.

Under the agreement, Heritage Malta will immediately assign an architect to handle the necessary applications with the Planning Authority to address the current safety concerns.

The Lands Authority, for its part, will be responsible for publishing the tenders and securing the necessary services to carry out the works.

Following this phase, discussions will continue to determine the additional works required for the battery, with decisions guided by a strong commitment to the preservation and respect of cultural heritage.

The Qolla l-Bajda Battery dates back to the early 18th century and was part of a series of fortifications constructed by the Knights of St. John.

It is the last remaining battery of its kind in Gozo, having been abandoned by the British Forces in the 19th century.

In recent months, the Ministry for Lands and the Implementation of the Electoral Program has been in discussions with the Ministry for National Heritage, Arts and Local Government.

These talks facilitated discussions between the Lands Authority, which administers the site, and Heritage Malta about the future of the Qolla l-Bajda Battery. These discussions culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the two entities.

WE THANK ALL THOSE WHO SENT A DONATION

If you want to send a donation to continue publishing this journal here are my bank details

Bank - Commonwealth (Australia) BSB - 065106
Account No. - 00502597 Name - Frank Scicluna

Filipinos in Malta celebrate the feast of Santo Nino at 'Wied il-Għajn

On this third Sunday in January, the Philippines Roman Catholic community in Malta takes to the streets and in great spirits celebrate the feast of Santo Niño, known also as Sinulog.

The proper title of the saint is Señor Santo Niño de Cebu, and the feast was officially declared in 1565.

TVM visited the celebrations held in Wied il-Ghajn.

The statue of Santo Niño shows a youthful Jesus Christ with a smile and dressed as a King, with a crown on his head, holding a sceptre, a globe and a cross in his hands.

In April of 1521, the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan presented a wooden statue of Santo Niño to Rajah Humabon as a gift and as Governor of the island of Cebu in the Philippines.

The celebration once more at the invitation of the parish of Wied il-Għajn reached its highlight in a procession full of coloured clothing, singing and traditional dancing to pay respects to Jesus Christ.

"Sinulog, as we know it in the Philippines, is a very important feast for us Filipinos, especially in Cebu, because it symbolises our faith. It is the first time that Magellan brought this devotion, the Santo Niño, and it's a symbol of our faith and being a community" said one of the celebrants. "It's traditional Filipino music and basically we use bass drums and other instruments to make this music." We also met a woman actually from Cebu who explained this was the first time she was attending celebrations in Malta.

"So originally, we are from Cebu, and this is what we celebrate, Sinulog, in Cebu City, this comes from a Spanish who went to the Philippines and gave us this one."

In Malta it is estimated the Philippines community consists of 13,000 persons.

Grazzi mill-qalb u Prosit li kull darba żżomm l-appuntament ma' tant qarrejja minn madwar il-globu dwar din il-biċċa blata li tissejjaħ Malta (u Għawdex). Ibqa' ċert li xogħol bħala dan huwa apprezzat ħafna għax jiġbor fih ftit minn kollox. Variety is the spice of life! Kompli hekk sakemm il-Mulej iżommok f'sikktek. Mank li kien dan il-materjal kollu xi darba jinġabar fi ktieb! Scripta manent, verba volant! Tislijiet u awguri! Kav. Joe Attard - Ghawdex

DONALD TRUMP – PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICAN ANNOUNCES NEW AMBASSADOR

- **I am pleased to announce that Somers Farkas will serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Malta**.

Somers is a model, philanthropist, documentary producer, and very successful businesswoman. She previously served on my President's Commission on White House Fellowships, and has raised Millions of Dollars for charity, including for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Alzheimer's Associate, Lighthouse Guild, the New York Women's Foundation and, as a Trustee of the New York City Police Foundation where she has always BACKED THE BLUE.

Somers Farkas has worn many hats throughout her career. She has consulted for both non-profit and for-profit organizations, fostering strategic relationships and spearheading brand-enhancing initiatives. Her work spans from developing International business,

to demonstrating her versatility and innovative mindset.

Farkas's dedication to public service is equally noteworthy. In 2017, she was appointed to the President's Commission on White House Fellowships, where she contributed to cultivating the next generation of American leaders. Her philanthropic efforts have raised millions for organizations such as the ASPCA, the Alzheimer's Association, and the New York Women's Foundation.

Farkas, from Virginia, will be the 21st American ambassador to Malta, and will replace Constance J Milstein, who was appointed in 2022.

Her company, SW FARKAS, "creates and produces brand-enhancing events and cross-promotion opportunities that differentiate and generate goodwill" according to its website. In an interview with luxury lifestyle website KDHamptons, Farkas listed sailing and sunbathing among her hobbies. She is married to Jonathan Farkas, heir to New York's Alexander's department store chain.

CONSTANCE MILSTEIN LEAVING MALTA

The American Ambassador to Malta, Constance Milstein, described her tenure as a privilege, expressing gratitude for the warm hospitality shown by the Maltese people during her two-year stay. In a post on the American Embassy's social media, Milstein thanked the people of Malta for their kindness towards both her and her husband, Said.

She announced that Ken Toko, the Deputy Head of the American Mission in Malta, will assume the role of Chargé d'Affaires until the arrival of the new ambassador.

THE ENIGMA MACHINE, SAFE IN MALTESE HANDS

A Maltese Sailor with the fate of the world in his hands.

SEAN RICHARDSON **<seanrichardsonwriter@gmail.com>**

'Guard the secret paraphernalia with your life, and don't let the papers get wet, they're made to dissolve in water.'

In May 1941, Leading Steward Anthony Buhagiar, followed the above order issued by Commander Cresswell. In Buhagiar's hands he held the fate of the war with Germany. On board the Royal navy's HMS Bulldog, the Maltese seaman was standing in the wardroom with other Maltese servicemen, entrusted to protect a newly recovered Enigma machine.

Having withstood an earlier attack while sailing in a convoy traversing the Atlantic Ocean, South of Iceland, a boarding party from HMS Bulldog went aboard the damaged German U Boat U-110 and retrieved an Enigma Machine, along with the associated secret code books.

On the 9th May U110 attacked the convoy, sinking two ships, but in the midst of launching further attacks U110 itself became damaged.

As Buhagiar looked over the haul captured by the boarding team he would not have known that he was part of an historic event which King George VI would describe as "the most important single event in the whole war at sea."

Until this point in the war, the allied navy had been suffering terrible losses of personnel and machinery as the German naval command was able to send encrypted instructions to its packs of U Boats. The British code breakers had tried but had been unable to break the enigma coding of communications amongst the German navy.

The Bulldog landing party had not realised the importance of the 'peculiar' typewriter they had found. It was the first fully functioning naval Enigma machine which the genius mathematician Alan Turing and his team at Bletchley Park could now use to understand how the Enigma machine worked and attempt to break the German naval codes.

It was critical that Buhagiar followed the instructions to not let the papers get wet, they were written in soluble ink made to dissolve in water. British strategists had sent out an instruction that it was imperative to capture and safeguard the code books, to ensure they could be handed to the scientific teams in-tact. Capturing the Enigma machine was not enough, the cryptanalysts needed the code books to allow the Enigma codes to be decoded and read.

Buhagiar had enjoyed a distinguished naval career from the time he joined the Royal navy in 1934. This included being awarded the Dunkirk medal for his role in the Dunkirk evacuation. It is likely that at the time Buhagiar did not know how important his role in ensuring the safe delivery of an intact Enigma machine to the scientists of Bletchley Park would become in the efforts to fight the German navy.

Buhagiar continued his distinguished career and saw action while serving in the Royal Navy during the second World War in the North Atlantic, the Denmark straits and the Mediterranean until the war ended. After WW2 he continued to serve in various theatres of conflict and in support roles until he retired from the navy in 1957, while he was stationed at HMS St Angelo in Malta.

For all his various commendations and medals, undoubtedly the most significant action he took was protecting the Enigma machine. In those moments he held the fate of the British Navy in his hands and by safeguarding the machine and books, the course of the Second World War was altered.

History in Malta – THE JEWS

Jewish roots in Malta date back to the 4th and 5th Century during the Roman period as evidenced by several Jewish Catacombs with drawings depicting the Jewish Menorah (candelabra) that can be found at the St. Paul's Catacomb site near Rabat.

St. Paul's Catacomb site near Rabat

The long Jewish history includes periods of enrichment as well as slavery, depending on who was ruling Malta at the time.

Points of special Jewish heritage interest on Malta include old landmarks and street signs. In the walled city of Mdina, where the Jews made up almost one third of the population, there is a "Jewish Silk Market" and a "Jews' Gate"; and in Valletta, Malta's capital and European Capital of Culture 2018 there is a sign "Jews Sally Port".Even the Island of Comino, almost uninhabited today but famous for the Blue Lagoon, has Jewish roots. Comino is where the well-known Jewish Mystic Avraham Abulafia lived from 1285 until his death in the 1290s. During this period, he compiled his Sefer ha Ot "Book of the Sign" as well as his last, and perhaps his most intelligible, work, the meditation manual Imrei Shefer "Words of Beauty".

Jews from Turkey and other places who were captured by the Hospitaller knights that ruled the island from 1530 till 1798, and were unable to redeem them, established a new Jewish community in Malta. The island became open to unimpaired settlement of Jews after Napoleon conquered it and expelled the knights. In 1798. During the British rule on the island, which began with the expulsion of the French in 1800, there began a limited immigration of Jews to Malta, but the community never numbered more than several dozen and there wasn't always a Rabbi. During WW2 the Jews of Malta were unaffected as the planned invasion of Malta never took place. Some German Jews even found refuge on the island during the thirties.

There are three Jewish cemeteries in Malta which can be visited through prior arrangements with the local Jewish Community leader. The stories gleaned from the tombstone inscriptions, are a rich narrative which includes Jewish soldiers who fought in WWI and were buried in Malta.

In 1979 the old synagogue of the community in the capital city , Valetta, was destroyed, and in 2000 a new synagogue was dedicated. Today there are about 250 Jews under the President Mr. Reuven Ochayon and the Rabbi of the community Rabbi Chaim Shalom Segal.

In 2013 a Chabad Center was established in Malta by Rabbi Chaim Shalom and Mrs. Chaya Mushka Segel. The Chabad Center of Malta runs a variety of activities for the local Jewish community and tourists including "L'Chaim" the only strictly kosher restaurant in all of Malta. The Chabad Foundation along with local Jewish community work to strengthen Judaism and make it flourish.

The Synagogue:

The synagogue located in a residential building at Ta'Xbiex city, The synagogue serves the Jewish community on the Sabbath and holidays.

On the Sabbath there is a morning minyan (prayer service) at 10:00.

Address: Florida Mansions #1 Enrico Mizzi Street Ta'Xbiex

MATTEO AND VALENTINA – MOST POPULAR NAMES IN THE YEAR 2024

During the year 2024, 4,107 babies were born; which means 97 (-2.3%) fewer children registered in 2024 compared to the previous year. Of these 4,107 babies, 2,076 were boys and 2,031 were girls.

Last year also saw a decrease in the number of deaths registered in the Malta Public Registry . In total, during 2024 a total of 3,764 deaths were recorded in Malta which means 151 (-3.9%) fewer deaths compared to the previous year. Although the total death toll in Malta decreased, the number of men registered dead in 2024 was slightly higher than in 2023, while there was a decrease in the number of women registered dead. Of the total deaths recorded in 2024, 1,951 were men which means an increase of eight men over the previous year, while 1,813 were women, which means adecrease of 159 compared to 2023.

The most popular baby names registered during 2024 were Matteo, Noah and Liam for boys and Valentina, Emma and Ella for girls. For the third year in a row Ġanni and Luċija remained the most popular names with Maltese diacolour letters.

The statistics collected by the Malta Public Registry clearly show that the service offered by the Identity branch at Mater Dei remains the most sought after by the general public. In fact, around 90% of all births in Malta and almost 60% of deaths during 2024 were notified at this office.

2024 saw 1,994 couples join the marriage, which means 40 fewer marriages on the previous year. Unlike in 2023 where no Civil Union was registered, during 2024 two Civil Unions and 51 Cohabitation were registered, an increase of 15 over 2023.

During 2024 the Public Registry issued a total of 73,764 Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates, an increase of 4,777 on the previous year, and 811 Free Status certificates. In total, 42,425 were ordered online and 31,339 from the Public Registry office in Marsa. Of this total, 1,724 were multilingual certificates.

HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN JOSEPH AQUILINA AMBASSADOR FOR MALTA IN BRAZIL

John is an avid reader of the Maltese Journal.

John Joseph Aquilina AM (born 12 March 1950, in Malta), a former Australian politician, is a former member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Blacktown between 1981 and 1991 and the electorate of Riverstone between 1991 and 2011 for the Labor Party. Between 1986 and 1988 and again between 1995 and 2003, he served in a range of ministerial portfolios including Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Youth and Community Services in the Wran and Unsworth Labor governments and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation in the Carr Labor government. From 2003 to 2007, he was Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly and was Leader of the House from 2007 until his retirement in 2011. From November 2013 till December 2015, he was engaged as Malta's High Commissioner to India, Bangladesh and as Ambassador to Nepal. In 2015 to date, he has been engaged as Malta's Ambassador to the Republic of China and currently Malta’s ambassador in Brazil..

HISTORY OF MALTA

Anthony Mamo

The Emperor Charles V granted the Maltese islands to the Order of St John (Hospitallers) in 1530. The Order's two main purposes were: - caring for sick people and fighting the Ottomans. Over the next two and a half centuries the Hospitallers transformed "plain, bare, naked Malta" into a relatively prosperous principality. The transformation of Malta started after the Great Siege of 1565.

The Hospitallers built a new fortified capital city (Valletta). The Hospitallers wanted Valletta to be an architectural gem as can be seen by the edifices in its neat grid of streets: the Conventual Church of St John, the Grandmaster's Palace, the churches, the auberges or residences of the Hospitallers, the Manoel Theatre, the Bibliotheca or National Library, la Sacra Imfermeria or main hospital. Mindful of Ottoman threats, the Hospitallers continued to strengthen the island's defences by building the Floriana and Cottonera fortifications, Fort Manoel, Fort Ricasoli and Fort Tigne and coastal watch towers. They also built aqueducts to supply water to their new city and silos for the storage of grain (il-fosos tal-Furjana).

In addition to military matters, the Hospitallers wanted to develop the economy. They encouraged commerce, shipbuilding, cotton (the island's main commodity), and agriculture. They minted their own coins and established the Monte di Pieta` (a loan making body), they made laws (the De Rohan Code) and established courts of law and they founded a university of studies. Maltese-grown cotton was spun and weaved into yarn for export to Spain and France. In 1797 cotton exports were valued at 1,711,180 scudi.

Despite the efforts of the Hospitallers to expand agricultural output, the Maltese islands depended on imported food mainly from Sicily. The Hospitallers were worried that this could led to food shortages and social unrest. They assumed control of the importation of essential food which they tried to sell at constant prices to protect the population from inflation. This paternalistic policy worked provided (i) relations between Malta and Sicily were cordial (ii) Sicily had good harvests and (iii) the Hospitallers had the money to pay for the grain imports.

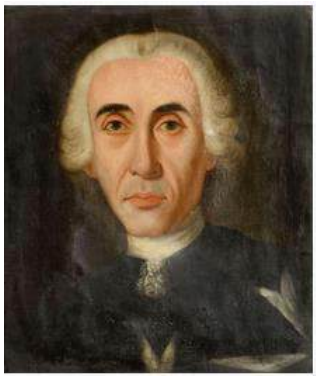
During the realm of the Hospitallers, the population of the islands increased from around 20,000 in 1530 to about 100,000 in 1798. The harbour cities (Valletta, Birgu and Senglea) attracted most people because of the availability of work, but new villages and suburbs were established and existing ones enlarged.

The Hospitallers had a small fleet and army which were inadequate to defend the Maltese islands against modern armies and navies.

Judge Giovanni Bonello wrote that: "Malta was generally perceived to be a relatively affluent country ... gracious, well-organised, civilised, with little if any discontent or aggressive poverty in whatever stratum of the population".

How did the Hospitallers pay for all these things? Their main income came from their estates (commanderies) in Europe. These estates included mines, woodlands, agricultural land etc which the Hospitallers had accumulated from donations, inheritance (spogli) and acquisitions. The surplus from working these estates was transferred to the Hospitallers' Treasury in Malta. Other sources of

income were the dues collected on commerce, taxes and the spoils from corsairing against Ottoman shipping. A reasonable estimate of the Hospitaller's income would be around 1,600,000 scudi.
This state of affairs was not sustainable. For a start the Hospitallers were despotic rulers so that the Maltese did not participate in decision-making processes. The Hospitaller's military purpose was no longer relevant as the Ottoman power was in decline. France, the main political and economic benefactor of the Hospitallers, had commercial ties with the Ottomans and did not want the Hospitallers to attack Ottoman's shipping. Then in 1789 the revolution broke out in France and on 19th September 1792, the French Government confiscated the Hospitallers' possessions and declared the Order extinct. Similar actions were taken by the Kings of Spain and Portugal. With the loss of so much revenue, the **"Island's finances were plunged into a grave and irredeemable deficit"** so that, the Hospitallers' rule in Malta was no longer sustainable.



Grandmaster De Rohan (1775 – 1797) attempted to plug these revenue losses by negotiating military-economic agreements with Britain and Russia. His diplomatic efforts failed.
Meanwhile in Malta, a pro-French party comprising French knights and enlightened Maltese like Gian Mikiel Vassalli (1764 – 1829) was laying the ground for the French occupation of Malta. Malta was seen as a critical step in the French military strategy to conquer Egypt and to launch an attack on British India.
In June 1798 a large French fleet carrying an army of some 40,000 soldiers led by Napoleon Bonaparte appeared off Malta and demanded its surrender. The Hospitallers under Grandmaster Von Hompesch (see painting on the left) were too weak and divided to reject this demand and capitulated without hardly fighting a shoot. The rule of the Hospital had come to an end but thankfully their legacy still lives off.

PRESIDENT MEETS GRAND MASTER OF SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

President of Malta Myriam Spiteri Debono is continuing with her official visit to Italy and the Vatican state, where she met with the Grand Master of the Sovereign order of Malta, Fra' John Dunlap, at the Order's headquarters at Palazzo Magistrale in Rome.
They discussed the historical links between Malta and the Order, which date back many years. President Spiteri Debono expressed her wish that these friendship and cultural ties translate into a tangible project which serves as a living monument to the relationship between Malta and the Order.
The President and the Grand Master also discussed various topics of common interest, especially the values and aspirations of young people, as well as the need for work in favour of peace at a global level.
Meanwhile, tomorrow the President of Malta will have a private audience with Pope Francis and the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. For these meetings, the Maltese delegation will also include the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Ian Borg.

LOUISE BEZZINA FROM MACKAY

Louise Bezzina is the Artistic Director of Brisbane Festival, Brisbane's international arts festival and Queensland's largest annual arts and cultural event. An innovative and visionary arts leader, Louise is renowned for her significant contribution to the Queensland arts industry over the past 20 years. In 2020, Louise defied all the odds and delivered one of the only live performing arts events to take place globally in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 Brisbane Festival program was curated under the banner of Boldly Brisbane and saw the commissioning of 28 new works, a record number of local artists employed and a Festival that reached all 190 suburbs of Brisbane.

After leading the Mackay Festival of Arts and producing work for the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Queensland Music Festival and Brisbane Festival, Louise founded Bleach* Festival on the Gold Coast in 2011 which she Directed until 2019. Under her strategic and artistic vision, Bleach* became a maker of contemporary Australian art and a major annual event.

The Festival commissioned more than 50 new and site-specific works across all art forms and scales, including the 2018 Helpmann-Award winning TIDE by the Farm. Other career highlights from Bleach* were co-producing the inaugural Opera on the Beach by Opera Australia and curating Hotelling, a ground-breaking cultural tourism initiative of the City of Gold Coast. In her role as Artistic Director for Bleach*, Louise was also part of the creative lead team for Festival 2018.

This work saw her named as one of 11 inspiring women of the Commonwealth Games. In recognition of Louise's considerable and overall role in transforming the Gold Coast's cultural scene, she has been heralded with several awards, most notably in 2023, Louise was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Griffith University for her significant contribution to the arts in Queensland. In 2019 Louise won Gold Coast Woman of the Year Award and the 2019 Young Alumnus Award for Griffith University. In 2018 Louise completed the Australia Council for the Arts' Arts Leaders Program.

Louise remains deeply committed to presenting a bold local and international program for audiences and artists. An innovative and visionary arts leader, Louise is renowned for her significant contribution to the Queensland arts industry over the past 20 years. In 2020, Louise defied all the odds and delivered one of the only live performing arts events to take place globally in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 Brisbane Festival program was curated under the banner of Boldly Brisbane where Louise created the much-loved Street Serenades program travelling to 190 suburbs of Brisbane. Louise founded Bleach* Festival on the Gold Coast in 2011 which she Directed until 2019. Under her strategic and artistic vision, Bleach Festival became a maker of contemporary Australian art and a major annual event. Louise was part of the creative lead team for Commonwealth Games Cultural Program, Festival 2018. Louise was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Griffith University for her significant contribution to the arts in Queensland in 2023.

SKOLA MALTIJA MACKAY

MALTESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL MACKAY, QUEENSLAND

2025 - Skola Maltija Mackay - Maltese Language Classes will begin Wednesday 5th February 2025. Beginners 5:30pm, Advanced 6:30pm at Ooralea. If you are interested in learning Maltese and want to give it a go please contact me for more information. veronica.gauci@bigpond.com or 0418108464.

The incredible secret life of Mackay's Louis Bezzina

Cyclist Louis Bezzina at home in his workshop. Picture: Tony Martin 2017

He has cut hair in Mackay for 34 years but many may not know this local's fascinating history.

He talked to **TONY MARTIN**

Where did you grow up? In a village called Mosta in Malta.

What was your childhood like? It was tough. There were eight children in the family. My mum died young. I was the third youngest and I was only seven at the time, so it was hard. My dad was a barber so I became a barber. I went from school to the barber shop. I was eight years old sweeping the floor. I would finish school at three and go straight to the shop. It wasn't easy. I wasn't allowed to run around you know.

Tell me about your cycling I always wanted to be a cyclist, but I never had a bike, only patch-up bikes. When I was 14 I started to cut hair and my dad bought me one. My cousin, John Magri was a Maltese champion and I started training with him and I got real keen. I used to train with him about two and half hours, four times a week and ride on a Sunday.

And it turned into a successful cycling career I made the Malta Cycling team and I went to the pre-Olympic trials, the Mediterranean Games in Turkey and then the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. I also won two big Maltese 90 mile races while riding for the Mosta team. I was good at long distance, not so good at short distance. Even now, if I don't start out too fast I can do the distance.

What do you remember from the 1972 Olympics? It was good and bad times. That's when they had the massacre. The Palestinians killed 11 Israelis and we were staying in the same block. They came and killed 11 people. I had become friends with one of the Israeli weightlifters and he was killed. Our team had left the day before to go to Rome when we heard about it and we were in shock.

You came to Mackay in 1974, why? I won two of the biggest races in Malta in 1972 and 1973 and then I came here in 1974. My dad had lots of cousins living here. Bezzinas have been in the Mackay area for more than 100 years. My dad's cousin Sam Bezzina was very good to me and 43 years later I'm still here. My first job was at North Eton Mill. My hands didn't like it very much. I got stronger and stayed there for a few years. I was 22 when I came to Mackay and there wasn't much money in cycling. The door opened to come here and I said that's it, I'm coming.

When did you open your own barber business? In 1983, my wife Joan was pregnant at the time. We have two daughters, Louise and Natalie. I really appreciate the Aussie way. It doesn't matter who you are, if you are nice to people they are nice back to you. I have met a lot of good people. I enjoy the people and I made a good living. About five years ago I had two bad accidents in the space of six weeks, the first accident I was riding in a group of cyclists near Wollingford and there was a pothole and I had the three biggest blokes in the group fall on top of me. The second accident, I was riding out near the airport and a lady didn't see me in her car and hit me from behind. I was pretty badly injured so I decided to sell the business. I thought I'd never ride again, it took me 2-3 months to get back on the bike and I was terrified, but as they say if you fall off the horse you get back on. Hameed Ali is the owner of Louis Barber Shop now and he's a very good bloke. I still help out there when I can.

How often do you get out on the bike now? Usually about three or four times a week. I buy a few old bikes as well and fix them up. It's something I really enjoy and it keeps my mind busy.

Chapel of Saint Jacob, Luqa

http://www.snapshotsofmalta.com/ Paul Grech: Writer

Every day, on my way to work, I pass by a chapel in Luqa and wonder. What is its history? To whom is it dedicated? When was it built?

These are all fleeting questions that come to mind but are then quickly forgotten; swept away by the tidal wave that is everyday life. They quickly become a memory, one that is briefly remembered the following day, along with the internal promise to one day take the time to find an answer to them. One day.

Well, that day came. The chapel, I found out, is dedicated to Saint Jacob and can be dated back to 1550 even though it seems that, at the time, it stood somewhere else.

As was often the case with these wayside chapels, its fortunes ebbed and flowed depending on the presence or not of a benefactor. It fell into disrepair on a number of occasions until someone new stepped forward to help in its upkeep. There is even the theory that it might have been destroyed during the Great Siege by the invading corsairs, which is why it didn't feature in a pastoral visit that took place in 1575. That it has survived is, in itself, a huge feat.

That happened also because of a definite change in fortune at the turn of the last century when the chapel was turned over to the Fiott family and was then effectively rebuilt. That is when the statues of St Peter and St Paul were added, both of which still guard it on top till this day, along with other embellishments both on the outside and on the in.

Having wondered for so long about the chapel, when the opportunity came I tried to take in as much detail as possible, even looking to find any graffiti on the façade or side walls. The fact that so much work was done to it "recently" probably explains why there seems to be an absence of such markings yet it wasn't all in vain as an engraving bearing the words PG, which rather delighted me as those are my own initials.

Other than that there is a faintly visible coat of arms near the main door. It is difficult to make out the full details and, so, it is difficult to identify the family to whom it belongs which consequently would indicate who made it.

Which means that there is another question for me to ponder every time I pass by the chapel. And one day I will find an answer to that too. One day. One day.

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER
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THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
https://foreign.gov.mt/
https://malteselivingabroad.gov.mt/documentaries-and-archives/e-newsletters/

Pope Francis delivered "Spes Non Confundit," ("Hope Does Not Disappoint") papal bull on May 9, 2024 in front of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. This decree states that the year 2025 will be a year of Jubilee. The doors where opened on Dec. 24, 2024, and closed on Jan. 6, 2026. The theme is centered around pilgrimage, as Francis states "travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches."

What is a year of Jubilee? Where did it start?

Also known as a "Holy year", a year of Jubilee is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon. It is a time of spiritual renewal, pilgrimage, and reconciliation that occurs every 25 years. In special cases, the Pope has called for extraordinary years of Jubilee. This can be seen in the case of the 2016, when the pope called for a year of mercy and for the faithful to know the face of God's mercy - Jesus Christ.

The concept is rooted in the biblical tradition found in the Old Testament, where a jubilee year occurred every 50 years, and was marked by the forgiveness of debts, liberation of slaves, and the return of land to its original owners. The occasion is set by counting off “seven Sabbaths of years,” or seven times seven years. The fiftieth year, then, is to be the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-10). Christian Jubilee formally began in the Roman Catholic church in 1300, instituted by Pope Boniface VIII. 2025 is a Year of Jubilee! The word ‘Jubilee’ comes from the Hebrew word for a ram’s horn, which was blown to announce the start of a Jubilee Year in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, the Jubilee Year was a time of renewal and celebration. Debts were cancelled, people could rest, and because crops weren’t planted even the land was able to rest. It was also a time of freedom: prisoners and slaves were freed, and land was given to those who didn’t have any. It was known as the year of the Lord’s favour.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Jesus makes it clear that his mission is to bring the justice and freedom of the Jubilee. Inspired by his example, we can share in his mission to create a world of justice, peace and love.

Now we celebrate a Jubilee every 25 years. It’s still a very special, holy year of forgiveness and mercy, a time to reset, to renew our relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation.

Pope Francis has called this Jubilee Year ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. It is an invitation to renew our hope, a hope which comes from knowing that God loves each one of us, whoever we are. Pope Francis says: “Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life.” Even if we can’t travel far away, the Jubilee Year will still be a journey for all of us - a journey of hope.

Pope Francis asks us to be signs of hope for others, by putting Catholic Social Teaching into action through caring for our common home and supporting our sisters and brothers who are experiencing war, hunger or poverty.

Pilgrims of hope

Pope Francis has declared that the theme for this Jubilee Year will be "pilgrims of hope". Let's think a little bit more about what this means.The gift of hope is greatly needed in our world, where we are daily faced with the challenges of poverty, injustice, violence and the destruction of the environment. Hope is transformative. It widens our vision and fills our hearts, inspires our imagination and creativity, strengthens our resolve and helps us to live differently.

But what does it mean to be a pilgrim? The difference between a pilgrim and a traveller is openness to God. A pilgrim seeks God not just in their ultimate destination but in all that they encounter along the way.

So in this Jubilee Year, we are called to our own journey – a journey in which we become "tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind."

We know that the world is facing many of these challenges... but you are one of millions of people who are joining together in the Jubilee Year to bring the light of hope and the message of God's love to every part of the world! We can all be Pilgrims of Hope, so let's start our journey righr now! Pope Francis says: "By our actions, our words, the decisions we make each day, our patient efforts to sow seeds of beauty and kindness wherever we find ourselves, we want to sing of hope... and reawaken in every heart the joy and courage to embrace life to the full."

Chapel of St Agatha, Zurrieq

Sometimes, you go past a building that piques your interest but not enough for you to stop and really look at it. Perhaps it is because you happen to be in a hurry. Or else because it is somewhere that you can get to easily so there seems to be no urgency to make the effort of finding some time to absorb it all in. "It'll be for another day," you tell yourself. Only that other day never seems to come.

How many people have done that with St. Agatha's Chapel? Certainly many pass by it daily, seeing that it guards a pretty busy side-road that links Zurrieq to Hal Far. Perhaps they do so because it isn't a particularly pretentious building but, in doing so, they're ignoring the links that it has to their roots.

St Agatha is actually one of Malta's patron saints. Legend has it that she came to the island as she was fleeing from her native Sicily and the Roman persecution of Christians. Regardless of how much (or how little) truth there is in this story, it certainly looks as if there was quite a following for this Saint in Malta. Indeed, in 1551 her intercession through a reported apparition to a Benedictine nun is said to have saved Malta from Turkish invasion.

The devotion of St. Agatha in Zurrieq dates earlier than that. By 1428, there already was a chapel built dedicated to her and this was popular enough for the area to become known as Ta' Sant' Agatha (of St. Agatha). By the start of the seventeenth century there even was a small cemetery next to it and the feast was celebrated on the 5th of February.

Eventually, however, it fell into disrepair and the current chapel was built in 1854 by a local patron. The two small front windows are kept open so that any devotees passing by can stop to say a prayer to St. Agatha even if the chapel happens to be closed. A reminder that there was a time that people used to stop here to think, rather than rush by.

The Malta International Arts Festival 20252

The Malta International Arts Festival (MIAF) blends innovation with accessibility - curating a programme of artistic excellence with strong contemporary aesthetics, accessible to a wide audience. MIAF goes beyond the conventional performance by hosting most of the programme within unique heritage sites. Every festival can programme a concert recital ... but this year MIAF is proposing concerts inside the subterranean 16th century cistern built by the Knights ... and invites audiences on a beautiful two-masted vessel to experience a theatre production set within the unique panoramic views of Grand Harbour. MIAF isn't just a festival ... it is an "experience" where Malta becomes the stage and the backdrop.

Open Call for Dancers M.A.D. (Music and Dance) Dance Choreographic Residency | June 2nd – 16th, 2025

The Malta International Arts Festival (MIAF) invites applications from dancers and apprentices..

Call for Applications - Youth Dance Platform

A unique opportunity for young local dancers to explore professional performing arts in a supportive, inclusive, and non-competitive environ

Residency Details

- Dates: June 2nd – 16th, 2025
- Performance Dates: June 15th & 16th, 2025
- Venue: Valletta Campus Theatre (performing venue)
- Residency venue: to be confirmed Hours: 09:00 – 18:00

Audition Details

- Audition Date: March 16th, 2025 (by application and invitation only)
- Time: 10:00 – 13:00 Venue: Moveo Dance Studios, 112 Triq Nazju Ellul Street, Gzira
- Application Deadline: February 21st, 2025 (12:00 pm)
- Audition & Residency Fees: Free

Application Process

To apply (ages 18+), please email Neil Zerafa (festival manager) at neil.zerafa@festivals.mt and Francesca Tranter at francescatranter@gmail.com with "Dance Residency - M.A.D. (Music and Dance)" in the subject line.

Include the following:

- Full-body photo, Brief CV and bio and Video link (up to 3 minutes) showcasing your dance skills

Additional Information

Participation requires full commitment to the full residency and performance dates.

Selected dancers will receive:

- €500 remuneration
- Two complimentary tickets to M.A.D. and to another performance within the festival
- Certification of participation (upon request)

We look forward to welcoming passionate, skilled dancers ready to immerse themselves in this creative journey!

MALTESE OCTOPUS STEW
STUFFAT TAL -QARNIT

The recipes we published regularly in the newsletter are very popular among the readers. Several readers asked me to include in the Maltese Journal a recipe of an octopus stew.

Slow-cooked, octopus stew (*stuffat tal-qarnit* in Maltese) is easily one of Malta's tastiest dishes. Octopus has and still is quite easily found off Maltese shores, and the other typically Mediterranean ingredients – onions, garlic, tomatoes, olives, capers and wine - make this a truly native dish. Sometimes, the rich flavoursome tomato sauce of the stew is served with pasta as a first course, eaten with potatoes as a main, or simply served with crusty bread.

This month, we are sharing this easy recipe of octopus stew from the island of Malta, I hope you enoy ccoking , eating and sharing it:

***Ingredients* serves 4**

- **2 pounds baby octopus**
- **1 onion, peeled and diced**
- **2 Tablespoon olive oil**
- **3 to 4 cloves garlic**
- **1-1/2 cups tomato sauce**
- **3/4 cup red wine**
- **1/2 cup black olives**
- **2 tablespoons capers**
- **zest and juice from 1 organic lemon**
- **1 Tablespoon each thyme, mint, basil and parsley**
- **salt and pepper to taste**

Method

Fill a large pot with water and bring it to a boil. Drop the baby octopus into the boiling water and remove it from the heat immediately. Let stand for 1 minute, then drain and set aside.

In an another pot, heat olive oil and add in diced onions. Cook until the onions are translucent and softened, approximately 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until aromatic, approximately 1 to 2 minutes.

Pour in the tomato sauce and red wine. Bring to a simmer and fold in the olives, capers, and lemon zest. Stir in the blanched baby octopus, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes. Uncover and stir in the lemon juice. Simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in your fresh herbs. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve immediately with crusty bread or over pasta if you prefer.

HERITAGE MALTA TO BEGIN WORK TO REMOVE THE DANGER FROM QBAJJAR BATTERY – LANDS MINISTRY by Gozo News ·

The Lands Ministry in a statement on Tuesday, said that a "collaboration between two government entities will lead to the removal of the danger from the Qbajjar,Battery in Qbajjar, Gozo."

As **reported back in December,** the Zebbug Gozo Local Council said that it had repeatedly spoken out over the last years urging that immediate action should be taken to save the Qbajjar Battery on the outskirts of Marsalforn, Gozo, which, it warned, is in a "very bad state of repair and in imminent danger of collapsing."

The Council went on to say, "despite the fact that the Council made an agreement with NGO Din l-Art Helwa, and jointly requested that this Battery be handed over to them for restoration. The Government, with its Agencies and Authorities, has not given any definitive answer despite many promises that it will be delivered in a short time."

In December the Council said that through its Lawyer, it had written to the Minister responsible for Lands to give a clear answer as to what is happening, and up to that date, "despite the passage of time, the Council has not received any answer."

However, today the Lands Ministry statement has confirmed that "an agreement has been signed between the Lands Authority and Heritage Malta to begin the necessary work to remove the danger from the Qbajjar Battery in Qbajjar, Gozo." However, there is no mention of the involvement of the NGO Din l-Art Helwa.

The Ministry said that the agreement signed by the two entities provides for Heritage Malta to immediately allocate an architect with the aim of making all the necessary applications with the Planning Authority to address the current danger.

The Lands Authority will then be publishing the tenders and obtaining the services needed to carry out the works. "After this phase, discussions will continue to establish all the works needed in the battery with a decision driven by the obligation to respect and conserve cultural heritage," the Ministry said.

This battery dates back to the early 18th century and was one of a series of fortifications built by the Knights of St. John. The Qolla l-Bajda Battery is the last of its kind remaining in Gozo. The battery was abandoned by the British Forces in the 19th century.

The Ministry for Lands and the Implementation of the Electoral Programme said that it has in "recent months been in contact with the Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government so that talks could begin between the Lands Authority, under whose administration this site is located, and Heritage Malta regarding the future of this battery and these talks led to the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the two entities."

We are recruiting new members#

The Maltese Queen of Victories Band of South Australia Inc rehearses every Wednesday night from 7:30-9:30 at Christ the King Lockleys Parish Hall
456 Henley BeachRd, **Lockleys**, South Australia, 5032.
Contact 0420966835

WARNING

ONCE YOU READ THE MALTESE JOURNAL YOU BECOME ADDICTED TO IT

VOLUNTEERS - CARING FOR THE SICK AND PEOPLE IN NEED

ORDER OF MALTA