JOURNAL FOR MALTESE AROUND THE WORLD
MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER
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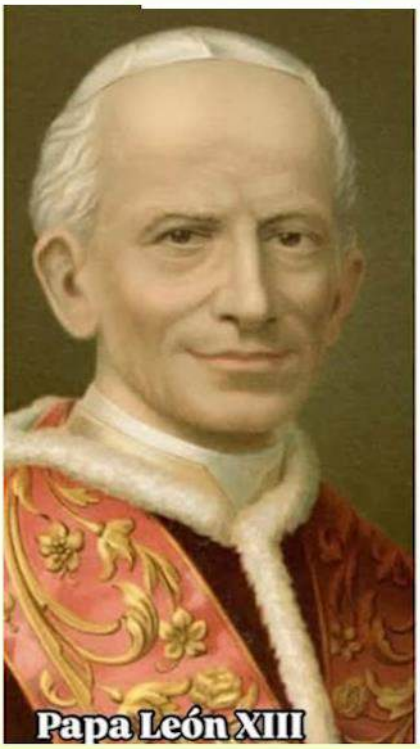
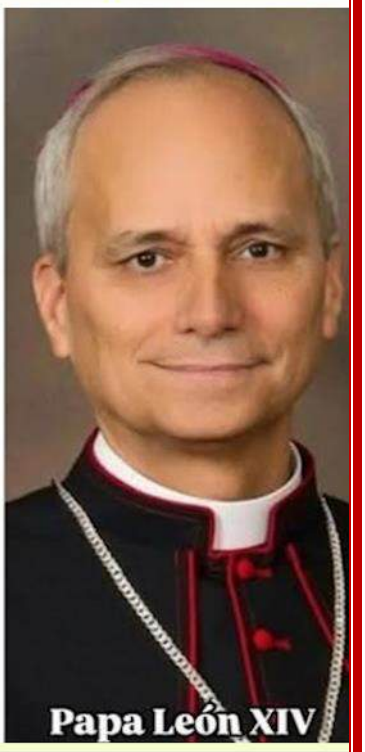




A SAD EPISODE
MIGRANT CHILDREN FROM MALTA TO AUSTRALIA 1952

MALTA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Heritage Malta

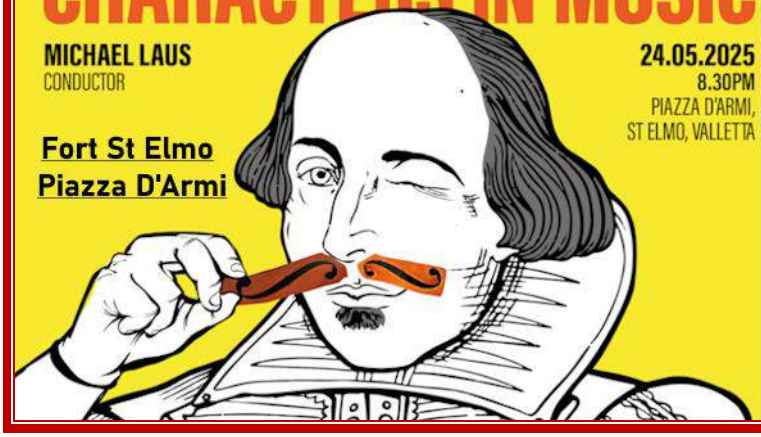
Heritage Malta

SHAKESPEARE'S CHARACTERS IN MUSIC

MICHAEL LAUS
CONDUCTOR

24.05.2025
8.30PM
PIAZZA D'ARMI,
ST ELMO, VALLETTA

Fort St Elmo
Piazza D'Armi



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MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM

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POPE LEO XIV

GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA WELCOMES THE NEW PONTIFF

"A moment of grace for the universal Church." With these words, the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Fra' John T. Dunlap, welcomed the election of Pope Leo XIV, 267th Pope and Bishop of Rome. The white smoke appeared after the 4th ballot and designated Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, 69, Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Chiclayo (Peru), as the successor of Saint Peter. Cardinal Protodeacon Dominique Mamberti pronounced the habemus papam. From the central loggia of St. Peter's Basilica Pope Leo XIV called for "a disarmed and disarming peace, a humble and preserving peace" and spoke of "a missionary Church, building bridges, dialogue, always open to receiving with open arms for everyone," and emphasised "a synodal Church, a Church on the move, a Church that always strives for peace, that always strives for charity, that always strives to be close, especially to those who suffer."

The Grand Master declared: "We welcome with gratitude the election of the new Holy Father, Successor of St. Peter and universal leader of the Catholic Church. In this moment of grace for the entire faithful community, I wish to express, on behalf of the Sovereign Order of Malta, our filial devotion and full adherence to Pope's new Magisterium. We are particularly honoured to have welcomed the then Cardinal as a member of the Order of Malta, seeing this as a sign of a deeper spiritual connection. We pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate his pontificate and give him strength and wisdom in his mission. From this moment, the Order, faithful to its religious vocation and humanitarian mission, assures the Holy Father of its constant support in defending human dignity, in serving the poor and promoting peace."

Pope Robert Francis Prevost, the first Pontiff from the United States, was born on 14 September, 1955 in Chicago. He entered the Order of Saint Augustine in 1977. An expert on social and cultural issues, he gained a deep understanding of the Church in Latin America. Created cardinal by Pope Francis in the Consistory of 30 September 2023, Pope Leo XIV repeatedly recalled his predecessor in the words he spoke from the Loggia of Benedictions.

19 JUNE 2025 7.00pm GMT (8.00pm MALTA)

A MEDIC'S VIEW OF THE TIES BETWEEN CHICHESTER/UK AND VALLETTA/MALTA BY HIS EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR STEPHEN MONTEFORT, MALTA HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE UK

You are warmly invited to a special talk by His Excellency Professor Stephen Montefort, Malta's High Commissioner to the UK, speaking in person at the Council Chamber in Chichester at 1900hrs (2000hrs Malta time), Thursday 19 June 2025.

The talk will also be transmitted on Zoom for those unable to attend in person. The Zoom session will open a few minutes beforehand. This talk is open to all, whether in the UK, in Malta or elsewhere: everyone is welcome.

Proceeds will support 'Puttinu Cares', a Maltese charity which helps many Maltese patients who receive specialist treatment in the UK, see https://puttinucares.org/about-us/ Please donate £5 or 5 euro, or more as you wish, to attend this talk. You can donate in person on the day, or online, either directly to Puttinu Cares, via https://puttinucares.org/your-donation/ , or to Friends of Valletta for us to forward on your behalf.

Our BACS details are as follows, Account: Friends of Valletta, Sort code: 60-03-08. Account number 81138695. Please add your name as reference, followed by '19 June', e.g. Smith-19 June.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM – MALTA CALLING ALL MALTESE LIVING ABROAD!

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Evening Course: Mon & Tues 1600-1900hrs CET (June 2 - Sept 9)

Apply here: https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx...

Deadline: 28th May 2025

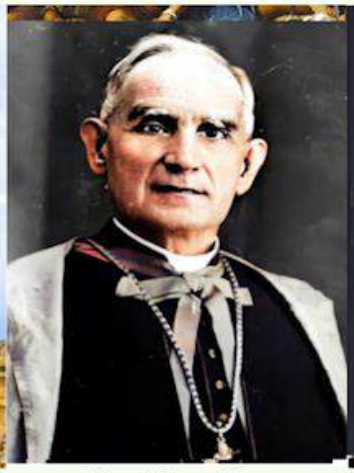
MALTA NATIONAL FEASTDAYS

Freedom Day
31st March 1979

Victory Day
8th September

Sette Giugno
7th June 1919

Independence Day
21st September 1964



Dun Karm Day
13th - 18th October

Republic Day
13th December 1974

Rememberance Day
11th November

Freedom Day Freedom Day is a Maltese national holiday celebrated annually on the 31st of March. This holiday marks the day when Malta officially became free from British occupation.

Sette Giugno The Sette Giugno is a national holiday celebrated annually on the 7th of June. This day commemorates the tragic historical event when six people were killed in the wake of a riot against the British administration.

Victory Day Victory Day is a national holiday celebrated annually on the 8th of September. The holiday commemorates Malta's three greatest victories: The Great Siege in 1565, The Siege of Valletta in 1800 and The Second World War in 1943

Independence Day Independence Day is an annually celebrated national holiday that marks the day Malta was granted its freedom from the British Empire's rule on the 21st of September 1964.

Dun Karm Day On this day, Malta celebrates the memory of Dun Karm Psaila, the author of the Maltese National Anthem and the island's National Poet.

Remembrance Day This event, usually held on the Sunday closest to the 11th of November (the day the Armistice was signed in 1918 bringing the end of the first world war),

Republic Day Republic Day is an annually celebrated national holiday that commemorates the day Malta became a Republic State on the 13th December 1974. This day marks the election of Malta's first ever president: Sir Anthony Mamo.

FESTIVALS MALTA LAUNCHES THE SUMMER FESTIVALS EVENTS PROGRAMME FOR 2025

Details have been announced regarding the festivals that will be organised by Festivals Malta between the months of May and July this year. These include the **Ritmu Roots Festival**, the **Malta International Arts Festival**, the **Malta Jazz Festival**, and **Dance Festival Malta**.

The Minister for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, Dr Owen Bonnici, said, "This coming summer, through Festivals Malta, our country will host four prestigious festivals that strengthen our cultural identity and provide a platform for both local and international artists. The programme announced today not only enriches the summer season with high-level events, but also attracts thousands of people to our country, with direct benefits on both an economic and social level. I congratulate Festivals Malta for their vision and ongoing commitment to keeping culture alive and accessible to all."

The Chairman of Festivals Malta, Aaron Zahra, said, "Every year, Festivals Malta presents a cultural calendar of the highest level for the summer months. The summer festivals not only offer a spectacle for local audiences during the summer days, but they also continue to strengthen our country's position as a cultural destination for various visitors who purposely travel here in the summer months. As Festivals Malta, we are committed to continuing to work and produce festivals that strive for artistic excellence, and I am eager to kick off this year's artistic calendar with the first festival starting this month – Ritmu Roots Festival."

The CEO of Festivals Malta, Frans Agius, said, "The summer festivals offer an opportunity for Festivals Malta to present different artistic genres through four distinct festivals. In this way, we continue to strengthen our aim to offer a variety of cultural events to reach different audiences and make culture more accessible. I encourage our audiences to attend these events and to enjoy the experiences we have prepared for them."

Ritmu Roots Festival will open the summer calendar of Festivals Malta with its third edition, taking place between **May 21 and 24**. The Artistic Director of Ritmu Roots Festival, Andrew Alamango, says that Ritmu is "a platform for the public where communities gather through music and participate in traditional community activities." This year, the festival will include projects such *as Il-Kummittiva, Għana* (traditional Maltese music)*, boċċi* (bowls), and international artists such as Tarta Relena, Pliri Ntaxei, and Vincent Moon.

The **Malta International Arts Festival** will return between **June 13 and 22** with ten days of multidisciplinary events including dance, music, theatre, and visual art exhibitions. Notable projects in this year's programme include a concert by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Underground Valletta, M.A.D. – Music and Dance, Music Painted by Caravaggio, and Boċċi the Musical in collaboration with Teatru Malta. "The Malta International Arts Festival delivers a dynamic

and contemporary programme staged in remarkable heritage sites, making Malta's rich cultural legacy an essential element of each event and ensuring a truly distinctive festival experience," concluded Artistic Director Ruben Zahra.

The **Malta Jazz Festiva**l will include an eclectic programme of events with a celebrated line-up including artists such as Michael Mayo, Rebecca Martin, Peter Bernstein, Knower, and many more. Artistic Director Sandro Zerafa explains, "With a lineup ranging from the swinging sounds of NY jazz icon Peter Bernstein to the explosive duo from LA, Knower to the folk-infused sounds of Rebecca Martin, the Malta Jazz Festival, now in its 35th year, keeps its promise of allying eclecticism, integrity and excellence." This festival will be held between **July 7 and 12**.

Dance Festival Malta, taking place between **July 24 and 27**, will connect local artists with various European artists by offering them a platform to discuss, share, and enhance their artistic work through masterclasses and specialised workshops. Additionally, the festival offers four days of dance performances that convey diverse messages through beautiful choreographies. "Dance Festival Malta is a vibrant meeting point of cultures, generations, and voices—where the power of movement celebrates difference, provokes dialogue, and connects us through shared humanity," explained Artistic Director Francesca Tranter.

For more information about the summer festivals by Festivals Malta, visit www.festivals.mt.

MANOEL ISLAND

FROM ABANDONED TO RESTORED AND MAGNIFICENT

MIDI's €43 million investment will ensure the preservation of Manoel Island's previously neglected buildings

POLVERISTA AFTER

Once left to decay, the historic buildings of Manoel Island are being transformed through a remarkable restoration effort led by MIDI plc. With an initial €13 million investment, the company is ensuring the long-term preservation of structures that form an essential part of Malta's cultural legacy.

Over the past 20 years, a comprehensive programme of studies, planning, and conservation has been underway on Manoel Island, making it one of Malta's largest privately funded heritage restoration projects. At the heart of this initiative is the iconic Fort Manoel, which following the departure of the British was left in a state of neglect for many years and subsequently damaged by vandalism, pilferage and neglect. This magnificent Fort is today fully restored, and the public can enjoy the

beauty of the meticulous restoration undertaken by MIDI.
New life was also breathed into Couvre Porte, the parade grounds and the Polverista. Renovation works on the Chapel of St Anthony of Padua are also complete, since it was partly destroyed following a direct hit during World War II. Works were also carried out on the counterscarps which form part of the outer fortifications of the Fort Manoel.

ST ANTHONY'S CHAPEL AFTER RESTORATION

St George's funerary chapel has also been meticulously restored. During the restoration process, two fragmented but original tombstones which were found strewn inside the chapel and have been restored and mounted within. Interestingly, this ancient chapel formed part of the Lazzaretto quarantine hospital on Manoel Island, along with the recently restored cattle shed where livestock used to be kept in quarantine.

MIDI's revised masterplan also expands its heritage commitment to include other significant sites such as the Lazzaretto, the Customs House, the Admiralty Canteen, and the Rempec Building, a structure which was not officially scheduled for protection but recognised for its unique architectural value. This second phase of restoration of heritage buildings on Manoel Island will see an additional investment of €30 million.

BARRACKS AFTER RESTORATION

Retaining, preserving and breathing new life into our heritage

The decision by MIDI to preserve and breathe new life into these heritage buildings, while seamlessly incorporating them in the new masterplan for Manoel Island, will now form part of a heritage trail which will link the whole of Manoel Island.

MIDI's vision is not only about preserving the past but also about integrating heritage into the future of Manoel Island. These historic structures will sit prominently within the public open spaces which together with the heritage buildings occupy more than 80% of MIDI's concession.

The revised masterplan creates a living link across the island —one that honours Malta's rich history while offering a unique destination for future generations.

The Megalithic Temples of Malta Were Built by Stone Age Overachievers

Imagine standing on a sun-drenched Mediterranean island, your shadow stretching across ancient stones that have witnessed more than 5,000 years of history. Malta's megalithic temples rise from the earth like silent sentinels, mysterious and awe-inspiring. These prehistoric structures are so massive, so intricate, that even today, scientists and visitors alike are left breathless by the question: how did Stone Age people, without wheels or metal tools, build something so extraordinary? The answer is a tale of human brilliance, determination, and the unbreakable bond between people and their land.

The megalithic temples of Malta are among the oldest free-standing monuments in the world, predating even the Egyptian pyramids and Stonehenge. Built between 3600 and 2500 BCE, these structures are a testament to a civilization lost in time, yet leagues ahead in ingenuity. The sheer size of the stones used—some weighing over 20 tons—raises eyebrows and ignites imaginations. Unlike other ancient cultures, the builders of Malta left no written records, so each stone, each carving, is a puzzle piece in a grand archaeological mystery. The more we learn, the more we are amazed by the skills and vision of these Stone Age overachievers.

One of Malta's crowning jewels is Ġgantija, a temple complex on the island of Gozo. The name itself means "giant's tower" in Maltese, fueled by local legends that giants must have built these structures. But there were no giants—only determined humans with a dream. The temple's massive limestone blocks, stacked and fitted with astonishing precision, form winding corridors and ceremonial rooms. Even today, you can see the ancient post holes, altars, and mysterious spiral carvings that hint at rituals long forgotten. Walking through Ġgantija, you can almost feel the presence of the builders, their sweat and hope frozen in stone.

Perched on a cliff overlooking the deep blue Mediterranean, the twin temples of Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra are wonders of both architecture and astronomy. Scholars have discovered that Mnajdra's doorway aligns with the rising sun on the spring and autumn equinoxes, a Stone Age calendar built from rock. It's hard not to be moved by the thought of ancient people, watching the sky, marking the seasons, and weaving their lives around the celestial dance. The precision of these alignments speaks to a sophisticated understanding of nature, one that fills us with respect for our distant ancestors.

It's almost unbelievable: the Maltese megaliths were constructed before the invention of the wheel or the use of metal tools on the islands. Yet, these builders managed to quarry, transport, and shape enormous limestone blocks, sometimes moving them across rough, hilly terrain. Archaeologists believe they used round stones as primitive rollers and simple levers to shift the megaliths. Imagine

the teamwork, the patience, and the backbreaking labor required. The absence of advanced tools makes their achievement all the more staggering—a testament to human determination and creativity in the face of daunting obstacles.

The Maltese temples are not just impressive for their size and age—they are also richly decorated, reflecting a culture that valued beauty and symbolism. Inside, you'll find intricate carvings of spirals, plants, and animals, as well as mysterious "fat lady" figurines that are believed to represent fertility. These artistic touches suggest that the temples were more than mere shelters or tombs. They were sacred spaces, filled with music, rituals, and perhaps laughter. The art left behind is a whisper from the past, reminding us that the builders were not just engineers but also dreamers and artists.

From corbelled roofs to precisely balanced stones, the engineering techniques used in Malta's megaliths still baffle modern experts. The structures have survived thousands of years of wind, rain, and even earthquakes. Some scholars marvel at the three-lobed layouts, the careful orientation to the sun and stars, and the use of interlocking stones that ensured stability. The temples' durability isn't accidental—it's the result of careful planning and trial-and-error experimentation. These ancient engineers understood their materials and environment in ways that continue to inspire today's architects and builders.

Despite decades of excavation, Malta's megaliths continue to guard their secrets. What inspired these Stone Age people to build on such a scale? What rituals did they perform within the shadowy chambers? Some archaeologists believe the temples were dedicated to a mother-goddess cult, while others suspect they served as astronomical observatories or healing centers. New discoveries, like ancient animal bones, carved idols, and mysterious underground chambers, regularly challenge our assumptions. The sense of mystery keeps the world's scientists and curious travelers coming back for more.

Maltese Australian Gold Coast Association

The Maltese Community in Queensland
A Snapshot Across Generations

Sandra Alexandra Micallef

Here'✨s something interesting from the latest data:

While 80% of Maltese-born residents in Queensland are over 60 years of age, A remarkable 80% of people with Maltese ancestry are under 60!

With over 18,000 people identifying with Maltese heritage in Queensland, it's clear that our community is not only strong—but also growing younger.

As Honorary Consul for Malta in Queensland, this tells me one thing: We must continue to honour and support our elders, while also expanding consular services, cultural programs, and engagement efforts for the younger generations who proudly carry their Maltese identity forward.

Whether you were born in Malta or have Maltese roots, your connection matters. Let's continue to support one another and build a vibrant future for our community here in Queensland. Feel free to share your family story or tell us how you stay connected to Malta!

ART AND CULTURE IN MALTA: UNVEILING A MEDITERRANEAN GEM

Explore art and culture in Malta, from ancient sites to vibrant street art, festivals, and famous Maltese artists. A treasured cultural gem!

Malta has a rich artistic history, influenced by its location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean. Notable examples include architectural styles like the Classical and Baroque, and the work of Italian artists like Caravaggio and Mattia Preti. In the 20th century, Maltese artists like Alfred Chircop, Luciano Micallef, and Gabriel Caruana contributed to the country's cultural heritage.

Here's a more detailed look at Malta's art:

Key Periods and Influences:

- **Ancient Temples:**

Malta is home to unique Neolithic temples, showcasing early artistic and architectural skills.

- **17th and 18th Centuries:**

Malta's architecture flourished, with Classical styles and Baroque decorations, influenced by Italian artists like Caravaggio and Mattia Preti.

- **20th Century:**

Maltese artists and scholars enriched the country's cultural heritage in various fields, including architecture, music, painting, sculpture, literature, and theatre.

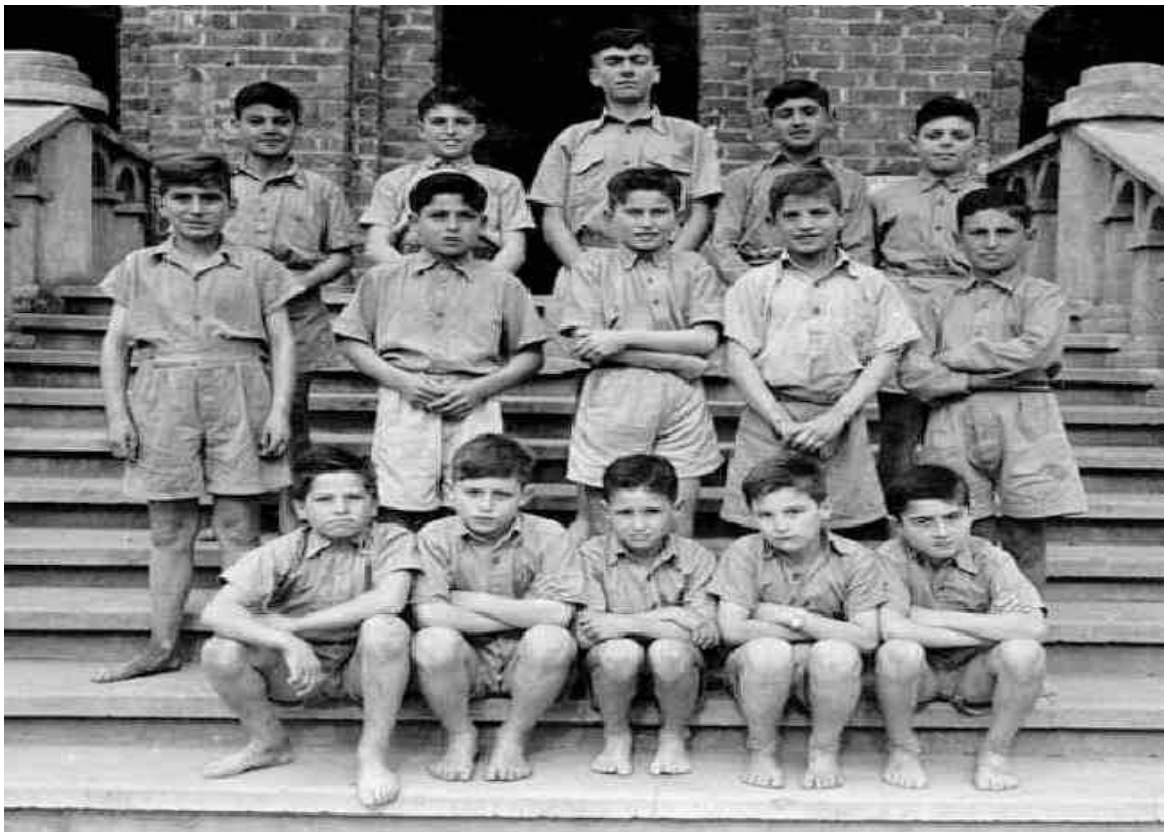
Notable Artists and Works:

- **Caravaggio:** His "The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist" is a masterpiece located in St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta.
- **Mattia Preti:** His paintings adorn many of Malta's churches.
- **Alfred Chircop and Luciano Micallef:** Renowned for their abstract paintings.
- **Gabriel Caruana:** A notable ceramicist.
- **Anton Agius:** A renowned sculptor.
- **Other Notable Maltese Artists:** Charles Camilleri (composer), Dun Karm (poet), and John Schranz (theatrical leader).

Where to Experience Maltese Art:

- **St. John's Co-Cathedral:** Home to Caravaggio's "The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist" and other notable works.
- **Grandmaster's Palace:** Features tapestries and portraits of Grand Masters.
- **Malta Postal Museum & Arts Hub:** Offers a glimpse into Malta's history through art.
- **MUZA - The Malta National Community Art Museum:** Showcases paintings, sculptures, and furniture.
- **Various Art Galleries:** Explore galleries like George Fenech Art Museum & Gallery and Iris Art Malta.
- **HTTPS://artscouncilmalta.gov.mt/**

A SAD CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF MALTESE EMIGRATION



Here is a photograph of immigrant Maltese children in Western Australia. It was taken at Bindoon Boys Town in 1952. The children were pupils of Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon, a Christian Brothers' school for day and residential students that is known as Bindoon Boys' Town. They were not allowed to wear shoes or speak Maltese. They were forced to work in fields and some of them abused instead of given the proper education as they were promised.

Malta was a source of immigrant boys in Australia. Some groups, all boys, came from Malta during and after World War II. Malta was one of the most heavily bombed places during the War. The Island was near starvation when the Allies finally broke the Axis blockade. Both the Italians and Germans battered the Island for nearly 2 years. I am not sure who organized the migrant groups to Australia. The Axis bombing killed many civilians. The Island was terribly battered, adversely affecting the local economy. I assume that the migrant boys lost their parents during the bombing. Here is a photograph of immigrant Maltese children in Western Australia. The children are at the Bindoon Boys Town in 1952. The children were pupils of Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon, a Christian Brothers' school for day and residential students that is known as Bindoon Boys' Town. Bindoon is a small town located 87 km north of Perth. The school began with a group of about 32 boys who were transferred from Clontarf to Bindoon in 1942 during World War II. After the War, Bindoon became home for many migrant boys from both the United Kingdom and Malta. Migration from the UK ceased in 1957 and from Malta in 1965.

TRAFFIC JAM

Maltese living abroad who visit Malta regularly confess that the traffics situation in Malta is getting from bad to worse. They all say the that Malta experiences significant traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours and in urban areas. This is due to a combination of factors, including a high number of vehicles on the road, limited road infrastructure, and challenges in improving public transportation.
Key issues and challenges:

- **Congestion:**
  Malta has a high traffic density, especially during peak hours (6:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-7:00 PM) on weekdays and 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM on Saturdays, leading to delays and frustration for drivers.
- **Infrastructure limitations:**
  The road network in Malta is relatively small and was not designed to accommodate the current level of traffic, leading to bottlenecks and delays.
- **Lack of public transport:**
  While Malta is actively trying to improve its public transportation system, it still lags behind many other European countries, with a high reliance on private vehicles.
- **Driving culture:**
  Some reports suggest that Maltese drivers are known for their chaotic driving style, which contributes to the overall congestion.
- **Cost:**
  The cost of traffic congestion in Malta is substantial, estimated at millions of euros annually due to wasted time and fuel, as well as potential impacts on the environment.

In summary: Malta's traffic problem is a complex one, with a variety of factors contributing to the congestion. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive, long-term approach that involves improving public transport, expanding road infrastructure, and encouraging alternative modes of transportation, according to an article on The Malta Independent.

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DONATE AND KEEP THE JOURNAL ALIVE

Meet Adrian Muscat ..... I have received an email from Mr. Adrian Muscat, who is currently reading for a Ph.D. within the University of Malta. He is researching on 'The Survival of the Maltese Language in Australia' for his thesis. As part of his research, he is launching an online questionnaire intended for anyone in Australia who is of Maltese background. He asked me to complete the questionnaire and to disseminate this request amongst the readers of the Journal for Maltese Diaspora.

I am a PhD student and am researching Maltese language retention amongst the Maltese diaspora in Australia. I would appreciate if you can disseminate the link to the online questionnaire to any contacts that you have residing in Australia. It would also be a very good idea if you include the link in the Maltese Journal.

I am a teacher of Maltese by profession and author of several textbooks. Since 2018 I have been researching the Maltese diaspora in Australia, especially in relation to Maltese language retention. I visited Melbourne and Sydney for my Master's degree dissertation 'The Survival of the Maltese Language in Australia'. Consequently, I started my doctoral studies on the same subject. In 2023 I visited Melbourne where I interviewed 66 persons of Maltese background on the subject. Now I launched this questionnaire which is based on the responses gathered from the interviews.

In the meantime, I have published several papers about the subject:

1. The Role of the Catholic Church in the Maltese Australian Community and Its Impact on Language Maintenance
2. The Teaching of Maltese Amongst the Maltese-Australian Diaspora: Perseverance, Challenges, and the Way Forward
3. Three Women, Three Generations: An In-Depth Case Study of Language Retention and Shift in One Family from the Maltese Australian Community in Melbourne
4. Il-lingwa Maltija fost il-komunità Maltija Awstraljana

The link to the survey is here: https://forms.gle/7Spsztw35WnATvsQ7Thanks & regards,
Adrian Muscat - **adrianmuscat77@gmail.com**

Chartered Ships which carried Maltese Migrants to Australia and Canada

The final adieu, November 1950

Regular shipping for migrants to Australia really began in April 1948 when the **ASTURIAS** left Malta ,on April 23. In fact she had made a previous trip, on November 20, 1947, when one hundred emigrants had left on her, but many of them were returning emigrants who had paid anything from £58 to £80 to get as far as Melbourne. However from April 1948 to August 1952 the Asturias made fifteen trips to Australia thus earning for herself the sixth place among those ships which made most trips from Malta to Australia.

The undisputed primacy goes to the aptly named **SYDNEY** which between December 15, 1951, and February 13, 1966, made thirty-nine trips between Malta and Australia. When the **COLUMBIA** carried on her 1,075 migrants, that was considered then as the largest group ever carried to Australia in one voyage. The Columbia left on November 21, 1949. On that day Mr Cole

The beginning of a new wave of Maltese migration to Canada
The Maltese emigrants on the Vulcania's deck
as it entered Gibraltar Harbour on June 19, 1948.
Photo: Frank and Yvonne Gatt

expressed his obvious satisfaction at practically solving the problem of providing a reliable shipping service for emigrants.

This is not to say that Mr Cole had solved the shipping problem to the satisfaction of everybody. While it was true that the Maltese Government had successfully obtained enough ships to carry those who wished to emigrate, there were complaints about some ships and about their sea worthiness and the kind of accommodation provided on board. Complaints appeared in the Maltese press about the Columbia. Although during question time in the Legislative Assembly Mr Cole had stated that the Columbia's trip was normal he did admit that during her journey three babies, only a few months old,had died at sea.

On April 26, 1949, the ship called **MISR** took to Australia seven hundred Maltese passengers. The ship had been built in the U.S.A. only six years before and was now owned by the Soc. Misr de Navigation Maritime of Alexandria, Egypt. In 1947 the Misr had embarked on her first voyage to Australia carrying on board a number of passengers who had originated from the Middle East. When the Maltese arrived on the Misr and disembarked first in Melbourne then in Sydney, some sections of the Australian Press had taken them for Levantines. Once on dry land the Maltese themselves complained about the accommodation they had been given in common dormitories. Complaints reached Malta about the ship **OCEAN VICTORY** which had left on February 26, 1950. On her were 1,024 emigrants and these included forty-two babies, one hundred and sixty children between the ages of one and five years, and one hundred and eighteen between five and eleven years. Three qualified nurses were in charge of the child n. Labour representatives in the Legislative Assembly asked for a discussion on the accommodation provided on some of the ships being chartered by Mr Cole's department.

Labour politician, Mr N. Laiviera, claimed that he had received letters from emigrants he knew who had bitterly complained about conditions on board the Ocean Victoyy. Mr Laiviera did admit that better accommodation meant more expensive fares. His colleague, Mr D. Mintoff, wanted to know if there was any truth in the rumour that a child had died. (9) Mr Mintoff quoted from the Australian newspaper, The Daily Telegraph of April 3, 1950, which said that customs officials had described the Ocean Victory as a hell-ship. The captain himself admitted that a baby boy of ten months had died and so did another of sixteen months. Many of the passengers claimed they had suffered from dysentery while their linen was changed only once. Mr Anthony Cassar said that rain seeped into their sleeping quarters and Mrs Mary Grech, a mother with three girls and a boy, said that they lived on boiled potatoes and spaghetti. (10)

Complaints were also raised about the ship **FLORENTIA** which made three trips from Malta to Australia between December 15, 1950, and August 21, 1951. She had been built in Dunbarton, Scotland, in 1914. Some of those who travelled on t e ren felt that the ship was not fit to cross the Indian Ocean, especially between May and September when the monsoons were likely to occur. One trip created quite a stir. The Florentia was expected in Grand Harbour, Valletta, on April. She was to carry 1,039 passengers but these were kept waiting for a number of days until she finally made port eleven days later.

The trip to Australia was uneventful, but chaos was let loose when she finally berthed at North Wharf, Melbourne, on May 31. Many relatives had been anxiously waiting for a very long time and tempers were short. On disembarking, one immigrant decided to run towards his relatives while his luggage was still being inspected by immigration officials. He was soon caught, but other waiting relatives and friends joined the fray. In the fracas that ensued three immigration officials were hurt and so were two Maltese. Five were arrested. One was accused of causing bodily to an immigration official while the other cases deferred.

An official comment from the Maltese Department of Emigration said about the incident "The man in question was only trying to kiss his mother before customs formalities had been finished. He had been already warned to wait, but he insisted on rushing to his mother. The other Maltese were all waiting on the quay. None of the arriving immigrants were involved".

It was obvious that the Maltese Government could not ignore the criticism in Malta and abroad about some of the chartered ships, particularly the **OCEAN VICTORY AND THE OCEAN TRIUMPH..** that if the decision to hire both ships had been solely on his own he would have never decided in favour of were made to him during the voyage. He had sent a telegram to Malta expressing his favourable impression about the behaviour of the Maltese and that he thought that they would make good settlers.

Paul Borg

served the Maltese Community Council of Victoria as the Treasurer for many years passed away at Rosary Homes We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Pauline and Family during this difficult time .

Lil Għawdex Tiegħi

Din il-gżira li wellditni
Ma nibdilha żgur ma' ħadd,
U sakemm in-nifs dlonk nieħu
Li niċħadha ma jkun qatt.

Għax għalkemm hi gżira ċkejkna
Issaħħar lil min iżurha,
U fl-aħħar minn tal-ġurnata
Lilha żgur jibda jadura.

Għaliex lil dir-roqgħa art tagħna
Alla ħabbha żgur bi sħiħ,
Ma ngħidx illi ppreferiha
Imma għolliha wisq, qatigħ!

Ma tiġix ġurnata waħda
Li x-xemx ma ssaħħanhiex;
Ma nistgħux ingemgmu, ngergru,
Li lilha ma xxarrabhiex!

Għoljiet sbieħ lilha jżejnu
U ma' dawn widien ħadrana
W hekk kif ir-rebbiegħa tasal
Magħhom niġru żgur tarana.

U kif Gunju jsellmilna
Ċuff fil-baħar naqbżu żgur
Ġewwa l-ilma ċar u safi
Qalb il-ħut minn kull kulur.

Fis-sajf erħilna ngawdu
Festi sbieħ kollha kulur
Ngħid għalija kollha nħobbhom -
Lil kull raħal jiena nżur.

Imma kemm tingħafas qalbi
Meta tant spekulaturi
'Flats' bl-addoċċ jibnu bla rażan
U addio siġar, fjuri!

Hemm bżonn nieqfu waħda sewwa
Ma nħallux dan ir-rigress
F'niesna joħloq niket, dwejjaq –
Dan mhux il-veru progress!

Dan il-poplu żgur jixraqlu
Li jgħix hieni fl-armonija
F'din il-gżira Għawdxija tagħna
Mżejna b'paċi u bżulija!

Kav Joe M Attard
Rabat – Għawdex
2025

I'm sharing these two photos which I was given while in Malta in 1980 or maybe 1985. They are labelled on the back: 'School for Craftsmen Targa Gap Mosta pottery class' and 'Trade School for Boys Bighi first year students Basic Electrical Installation'. You might find them interesting or, indeed, you might be in them or know someone who is!

Dr. Barry York

A MALTESE WEDDING BUS

Keeping Malta's transport heritage alive!

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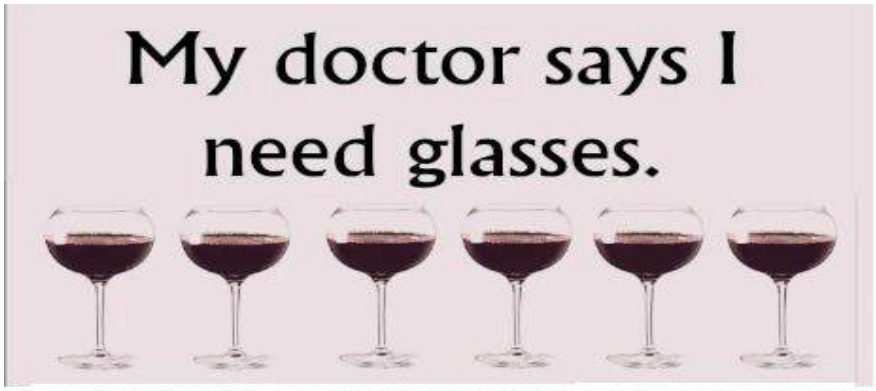


A GLASS OF WINE EVERY DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY

I only drink one glass of wine per day

Nisa, Jgħannu - Women, Chanting

Since the early 20th century, and particularly in post-war Malta, the public practice of traditional chant, *għana* (Maltese traditional folk singing), has been dominated by men. This context is mainly reserved to male-dominated environments such as bars, tea shops and *każini* or social clubs, where *għannejja* (traditional Maltese folk singers) would get together at the end of the day to verbalise and process the events of their daily life.

Typically improvised four-line stanzas, traditional singing is usually accompanied by the sound of guitars, where words and sung poetry serve as a catharsis; both individual and collective. Saying what needs to be said, *għannejja* would gather in public and sing their hearts out to express themselves.

Troubadours of renown are surrounded by *dilettanti* (aficionados) who document, record and transmit their verses, passing on the legacy of their bravado. Furthermore, from the middle of the 20th century, male singers and guitarists were extensively recorded on the national radio *Rediffusion* forging their words on magnetic tape for posterity. By the eighties, *għana* became more and more associated with male gatherings with short-fused practitioners who would often engage in scuffles.

Performances of *għana* by women, on the other hand, are hard to come by, as it would mainly take place behind closed doors, at home, or occasionally allowed within these male-dominated contexts. Therefore, female singing is associated with domestic chores like clothes washing, where supposedly women traded verses from roof to roof. Women's voices are conspicuously absent when it comes to recorded material from the 20th century.

Nisa, Jgħannu proposes a fresh encounter with **għana through women's perspective**. It aims to encourage women of different ages to come together and express themselves using the traditional format, contributing by way of musicality, creative use of words and poetry, and choreography for the delivery of self-expression and social catharsis. ***Nisa, Jgħannu* is being proposed as an ongoing collective where female individuals can bring their forte to the table and contribute to a collective project.**

Artistic Direction & Research Facilitation Florinda Camilleri

Core Artistic Team Fatima A.M., Rachelle Deguara, Yasmin Kuymizakis, Nicole Mangion, Ella Pullicino

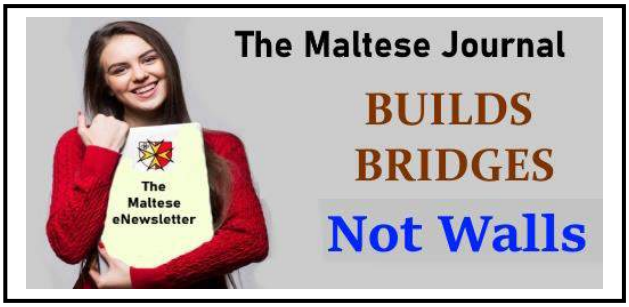
Guest Artists Rose Spagnol, Denise Vella, supported by Żeppi Spagnol tal-Kelba and Johnny Tal-Belt

Production & Research Assistant Abigail Agius **Special Thanks** Francesco Sultana

Day 24/05/25

Location Argotti Gardens **Floriana** Time 21:00

Price EUR10 (Day Ticket) or EUR15 (Two-Day Ticket)



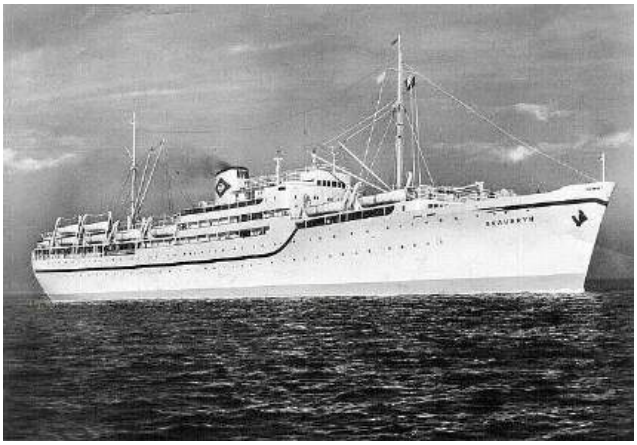
HISTORY OF MALTESE EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

SS SKAUBRYN - THE LAST VOYAGE TO AUSTRALIA FROM MALTA

The day the ship caught fire

1958-2014

67th anniversary of a dream trip gone wrong



The crossing to Australia was an emotional time for the 1,100 passengers -169 of them Maltese - on the Norwegian migrant ship, the Skaubryn. They were excited about the opportunities in their new homes, tearful about the lives they had left behind. And for many of them, it was also a frightening experience, their first long sea journey. Who could have imagined that it would end in disaster. On March 31, 1958, the Skaubryn caught fire in the Indian Ocean and issued an SOS at 11.30 p.m.

Maltese survivors in Aden, April 1958

Fate was kind. There was a vessel nearby, the City of Sydney, which rushed to assist the stricken vessel, getting there within two hours and saving all the passengers and 180 crew. It took four terrifying hours to get all of them off the burning ship. It later transferred the survivors to a liner, the Roma, which dropped them off in Aden, where they stayed till transport could be organised to Australia. On board with the migrants was Fr Spiru Tabone, now nearly 90, who was asked to accompany the Maltese contingent as their spiritual advisor by Fr Philip Calleja, head of the Emigrants' Commission.

"He knew that I yearned to go to Australia to see my family - although my roots in Malta were too deep to tempt me to emigrate. No one else was keen so I got the opportunity," Fr Tabone said, his cloudy eyes turned away, as though trying to glimpse his faded memories. "I had travelled before but never to Australia. I was not afraid of the sea. The sea was very rough at times but that is what you have to expect. I was brought up in Kalkara, near the sea so I know its fury." He paused for a long time, his hands shaking slightly, trying to remember life on board. "My duties on board were not too onerous. All I used to have to do was celebrate Mass, really. I tended to keep to myself. I did not socialise very much," he said. It is not clear whether he has forgotten the dramatic events of 50 years ago - or whether he prefers not to remember them. He talks about that night without any emotion. "I remember that we were all woken up by the crew. We were in the middle of nowhere. We were taken off the boat onto the City of Sydney. I don't remember being scared. We were not even aware of the fire until we left the vessel," he shrugged.

They were lucky to escape with their lives but once the survivors got over their shock - and gratitude at being alive - they had to face the grim reality that they had lost everything they owned. They arrived in Australia with nothing but the clothes in which they stood. The stories in the newspapers of the time captured the extent of the human drama: One of the survivors was Carmel Calleja, who had left Gudja with his wife and 10 children. They arrived without even a toy between them.

The Herald

MIGRANT SHIP BURNS, SINKS

She was built for safety

1300 saved— ocean drama

CONVICTS

The plight of the Skaubryn survivors touched many hearts. The Maltese government promptly sent £50 to each survivor aged over 20, £25 to those aged between 14 and 20, and £10 to those under 14. The Australian government helped all the survivors, providing AS$20,000 in all, while other philanthropic organisations also pitched in with food, clothes and money. It was not only physical goods they need but also spiritual support. The Emigrants' Commission, through Mgr Calleja, organised recording sessions so that relatives in Malta could send messages to Australia, also keeping those in Malta up to date with what was happening there.

The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEDM) organised a free cable for each family as well as free aerogram forms to be sent to relatives. It also organised free transportation from Germany of personal belongings from relatives and friends. Fr Tabone stayed in Australia until June 1958, returning on the MS Flaminia, much against his better wishes.... "I was obviously reluctant to travel by ship again and I asked to return by air but the ICEM could not accommodate my request as the contract only provided passage by air. I had no choice... "I have been back to Australia eight times since then to visit my siblings ... but always by air," he smiled.

Once back in Malta, Fr Tabone went back to parish work. The years sped by, one of the highlights being a visit to Rome in 1996 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Pope John Paul II, during which the Pope invited other priests from around the world ordained in 1946. He has been at the Dar Tal-Kleru in Birkirkara for over a decade. He politely ends the interview, apologising that he was not able to remember more and ambles back to the chapel, where a shaft of sunlight pierces the silence. A door opens and shuts and the aroma of food wafts down the corridor. Life goes on.

The story of the Maltese bound for Australia on board the Norwegian ship SS Skaubryn occupies a unique place since it was the only occasion when a number of emigrants were for a time in great danger. This ship was built in 1951 and made six journeys between Malta and Australia from 1952 to her last journey in 1958. On that fateful journey the ship carried 169 passengers from Malta while in all she had on her 1,082 passengers with 208 members of the crew. Among the passengers were 200 children and 40 babies.The Maltese had their own chaplain with them, Fr S. Tabone from Kalkara. He was going to visit his two brothers who had left Malta eight years before. The Skaubryn left Grand Harbour on March 22, 1958, and after a short stop at Port Said the ship passed Aden to enter the vastness of the Indian Ocean. That ocean was incredibly calm and the ship continued on her way in a very relaxed atmosphere.On Monday, March 31, captain Alf Haakon Feste ordered his crew and passengers to meet on deck at 2.30 pm for an emergency drill. Some of the people on board complained at this interference as they preferred their siesta at that time.

Once the drill was over some of the passengers went to the hall where a band was playing with a few dancers on the floor. It was very calm and very hot. As darkness fell many went to their cabins for the night's sleep. All one could hear was the regular humming of the ship's engines.Fr Tabone decided that he too needed a good sleep because he had to be up by 5.00 am. But suddenly the lights in his cabin

dimmed and then there was complete darkness. The priest could hear people moving excitedly. His first thought was that some passengers had decided to go on deck to watch the Soviet satellite Sputnik as they had been told that there was a good chance of seeing the satellite from their position in the ocean. The reason for the commotion was that.the engine room was on fire. According to the report given by Captain Feste the fire was caused by a misunderstanding between two members of the crew when they caused oil from an open line in the engine room to spurt on hot exhaust pipes. In a very short time all passengers on board were told which lifeboats they had to take. This efficiency saved the lives of all concerned except for an elderly German who died of a heart attack.

Some of the Maltese male survivors of the MV Skaubryn the wharf in Aden.

The ship caught fire on its way Australia not long after comin of the Suez Canal and into the Indian Ocean

1951-58 - - Number of voyage 4 Number of Maltese Passengers - 2576

The Skaubryn left Malta on the last day of March1958, having embarked 169 men, women and children at Valletta. About 3 days out of Aden, in the Indian Ocean, fire swept the decks from the direction of the engine room and soon the vessel was engulfed in flames. Passengers were assisted lifeboats, the ship was abandoned and soon sank. Some passengers were rescued by the 'CITY OF SYDNEY', a tanker and a tug.

Returned to Aden, the passengers completed their journey to Australia on "Roma" and "Orsova!'. N one lost their life in direct consequence of the fire.

Mrs Mary Borg and her nine children pictured after their journey from Malta to Australia on the liner Achille Lauro, 3 May 1971. Photo: Fairfax Archives

Although the Maltese Islands never had more than 400,000 native inhabitants, it is estimated that the number of Maltese livings around the world is many hundreds of thousands higher. That is because over the past two centuries thousands of Maltese left their homeland in search of a better future elsewhere.

In today's terms, they would have been 'economic migrants' and surely not 'illegal immigrants' because their mass migration from Malta was not only organised but also encouraged, especially in the 1960's when it was a handy solution to Malta's economic problems at its dawn of Independence in 1964. Many of these went to English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia. A century earlier they had just ventured in the Mediterranean and Maltese communities can today be traced in Tunisia, Gibraltar, Libya and Egypt. When pondering on issues related to the wave of illegal immigrants hitting the Maltese shores, the Maltese people surely know what it feels like to have to leave your mother country in search of a better life far away.

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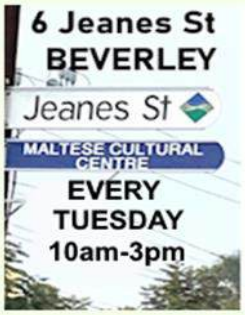

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MISS MALTA BALL 1970

AN EARLY FUNCTION OF THE MALTESE COMMUNITY OF ADELAIDE

These handsome guys and pretty girls were at the Miss Malta Ball in the 70's. Can somebody supply me with the names?