Maltese eNewsletter

Journal for Maltese Living Abroad

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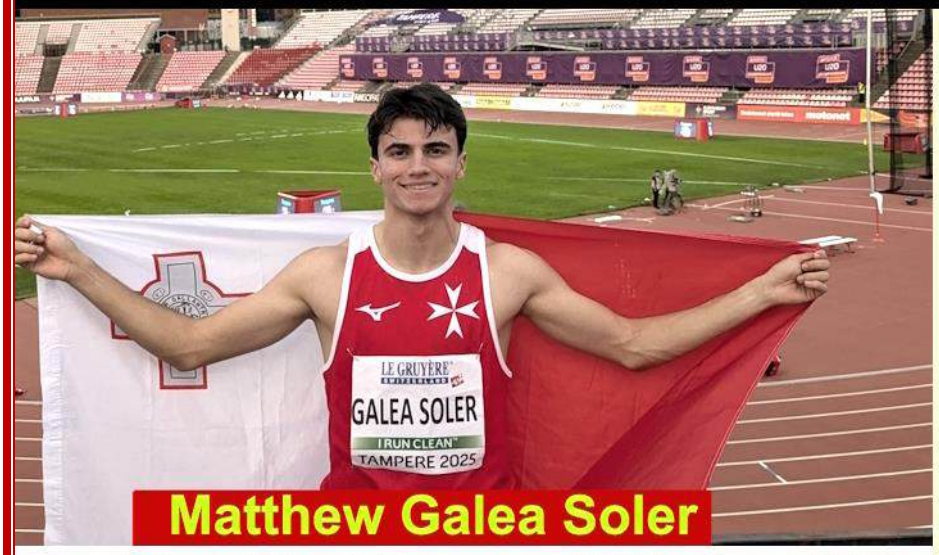
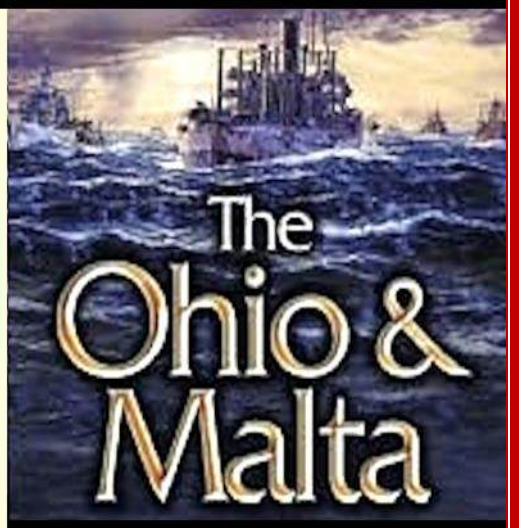
GAZA - Stop the Massacre of the Innocents



Matthew Galea Soler

5th at the European Athletics U20 Championships



The Legendary Tanker that Refused to Die

Maltese Baked Rice
Ross il-Forn

LAMPUKI SEASON IN MALTA STARTS SOON

A MESSAGE BY BISHOP JOSEPH GALEA-CURMI

ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA

The Gospel of Matthew recounts a heart-wrenching event that darkens the early pages of the New Testament: the Massacre of the Innocents. Herod, feeling threatened by the birth of "a new king", orders the killing of all male children under two in Bethlehem and its surroundings. It is a story of fear, power, and cruelty – and of the innocent caught in the crossfire of a tyrant's ambitions.

In the last months, the world has witnessed a chilling horror in Gaza, where thousands of innocent lives – many of them children – have been brutally extinguished. What has unfolded in Gaza is not a mere "conflict" between equals. It is a humanitarian catastrophe. Entire families have been wiped out by airstrikes. Schools, hospitals, refugee camps – supposedly protected under international law – have been turned into rubble. The cries of grieving parents, the silence of buried children, and the suffocating grief of those left behind, should shake the conscience of humanity.

No political justification, no security rationale, can excuse the mass killing of civilians. International law is unambiguous: the deliberate or reckless targeting of civilians is a war crime. Yet, in Gaza, the scale of destruction and the proportion of civilian casualties can, in no way, be considered collateral damage. They indicate a systemic disregard for innocent life.

The world must confront this for what it is: the slaughter of the innocents. When bombs fall on sleeping families, when children are pulled lifeless from under the debris, when newborns die in incubators because of power cuts, when people die of starvation, we are not witnessing a tragedy of fate, but of choice. It is the choice of leaders who prefer vengeance over justice, domination over dialogue, and violence over peace.

We must say it plainly: the relentless killing of innocent people is evil. It cannot be softened by political language or silenced by diplomatic euphemisms. Every child killed is a universe annihilated. Every parent who buries their son or daughter joins the lamentation that once echoed in Ramah: "Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more" (Mt 2:18).

To condemn the massacre of innocents in Gaza is not to downplay the suffering of other innocent people. Israeli families, too, have experienced terrible violence by Hamas. The attacks of October 7 were atrocious. The harrowing plight of hostages was, and still is, a festering wound. All this should be condemned in the strongest terms. But no atrocity justifies another. Israel's retaliation that turns densely populated civilian areas into free-fire zones is not self-defence. It is collective punishment. And collective punishment is itself a crime.

In Gaza, we are witnessing a generation scarred by trauma, denied education, health, and safety – a generation buried under the rubble of war and indifference. If the world allows this to continue, we will not only have failed Gaza's children. We will have failed our own humanity.

Let us raise our voices, mourn those who are no more, and demand accountability for those who treat life so cheaply. Through our donations to Caritas, let us sustain and support the innocent civilians of Gaza. The dignity of every human life – Israeli, Palestinian, or otherwise – must be the starting point for justice and peace.

✠ **Joseph Galea-Curmi** Auxiliary Bishop of Malta

This article was also published on The Sunday Times of Malta on 10th August 2025.

ORDER OF MALTA

Pope Leo XIV tells Order of Malta there is no charity without evangelization

Pope Leo XIV meets with the Order of Malta's grand master, Fra' John Dunlap, at the Vatican on June 23, 2025. Credit: Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV meets with the Order of Malta's grand master, Fra' John Dunlap, and members of the Order of Malta on June 23, 2025, at the Vatican.

Pope Leo XIV in a message to the Order of Malta underlined the order's religious character, stressing that without evangelization, the knights' service to the poor is merely philanthropy.

"Do not limit yourself to helping the needs of the poor, but announce to them the love of God with words and testimony. If this were to be lacking, the order would lose its religious character and would be reduced to being an organization with philanthropic purposes," Leo wrote in a message to the order on the feast of its patron saint, St. John the Baptist.

The pope also met for the first time with the order's grand master, Fra' John Dunlap, at the Vatican on June 23.

In his June 24 message, Leo pointed multiple times to the order's important dual purpose of "tuitio fidei and obsequium pauperum." (Latin for "protection of faith" and "service to the poor.")

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is both a lay religious order of the Catholic Church and a sovereign state subject to international law.

The order adopted a new constitution in 2022, after a long reform process, initiated by Pope Francis in 2017 and fraught by concerns of threat to the group's sovereignty.

Pope Leo addressed the Order of Malta's "path of renewal," stressing that it "cannot be simply institutional, normative: It must first of all be interior, spiritual, because this gives meaning to changes in the rules."

He supported changes to the order's constitutional charter and law as "necessary, as several things needed to be clarified, especially the nature of the religious order."

The Holy Father's message also talked about the means — economic and personnel that the order relies on in order to carry out its charitable work — and the importance of these aligning with the group's mission.

"To achieve a good goal the means must be good; but in this field temptation can easily present itself under the guise of good, as an illusion of being able to achieve the good goals that one sets out with means that could later prove not to be in accordance with the will of God," he said.

The order's international importance and position as a sovereign body, Leo continued, must never be a pretext for succumbing to temptations to worldliness.

THE AMAZING SS OHIO THAT SAVED THE MEDITERRANEAN THE CAPTAIN WAS AWARDED THE GEORGE CROSS – 15 AUGUST 1942

Joseph O'Brien, Guest Author

The Mediterranean theatre during World War II witnessed many dramatic operations—none more so than Operation Pedestal in August 1942. It came about because the island fortress of Malta, Great Britain's last remaining base in the Mediterranean after the fall of Crete and Greece, was under siege.

Malta sits in the Mediterranean Sea almost midway between Italy and North Africa. Its location was perfect for intercepting supply convoys to Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and Italian forces in North Africa.

This was not the island's first time being beseiged with overwhelming force. Most famously, during the Crusades a religious order known as the Knights of Malta successfully fought off an invasion by Muslim troops. This tiny band of fewer than 500 men successfully held off an invasion force 20 times their size.

Now in the 20th century Malta's small garrison of troops, planes, and guns would be forced to hold off the combined might of the German Luftwaffe and Italian Air Force. British Naval forces that were initially based at Malta were forced back to the relative safety of the port of Alexandria in Egypt by German air raids. Alexandria was out of range of almost all German aircraft. Malta was not so lucky.

Malta's air defences consisted initially of only four antiquated Gloster Gladiator biplanes which were easily outclassed by everything in the German and Italian arsenal. These were later reinforced by newer aircraft such as Hurricanes and Spitfire fighter aircraft as well as light and medium bombers.

During the siege, Great Britain would try to fly in or ship in all the aircraft and men it could to reinforce Malta's defences and help them keep fighting back. The population and defenders of Malta dug in to weather the storm.

Planes sortied daily from the island to harass German supply convoys as well as defend against incoming air raids. Malta essentially functioned like an unsinkable aircraft carrier. Daily, German and Italian air raids attempted to knock out Malta's air power.

Spitfire Vc (trop) in North Africa. The Spitfire arrived in Malta in March 1942, becoming the main RAF fighter. In fact, Germany and Italy were getting close to succeeding. Supplies on Malta, especially aviation fuel, were running low. The Allies, as the United States was now involved in the war, quickly hatched a plan to reinforce Malta's garrison. Codenamed Operation Pedestal, it was a convoy composed of supply ships, aircraft carriers to deliver more planes, and most importantly, tankers carrying precious aviation and diesel fuels.

Among these ships was the one that would later be the saviour of Malta: the SS *Ohio*. An unlikely saviour, this large oil tanker was almost defenceless. Built in the U.S. for the Texas Oil Company (now Texaco) and launched in 1940, she was unceremoniously requisitioned and loaned to Great Britain earlier in 1942 to support the war effort. Manned by a brave British crew, she joined the relief efforts of Operation Pedestal.

The damaged tanker OHIO finally enters Valletta on the morning of the 15th supported by Royal Navy destroyers, after an epic voyage across the Mediterranean as part of convoy WS21S.

The operation's convoy was escorted and very heavily defended with heavy and light cruisers, destroyers, and multiple aircraft carriers. It was hoped with such a large escort, most of the precious supplies would get through to keep Malta alive.

The mighty escort force fought bravely to bring as much of the convoy through as they could. *Ohio* was particularly important as she carried vital kerosene and diesel fuels.

Ohio discharges her cargo in the Grand Harbour.

Even though the escorts fought hard, they could not protect the convoy from being attacked. Numerous supply ships were hit and sunk as were several of the heavily armed escorts. As for the *Ohio*, she was quickly torpedoed and heavily damaged. Ohio nursed by a flotilla of destroyers and minesweepers.

This was not the end for her though. She was further damaged by multiple bomb hits and even two German planes which crashed onto her. Her brave crew refused to abandon ship and refused to abandon Malta. Putting out the fires and getting the situation back under control, they continued sailing the half-crippled ship.

Another bomb then knocked out her engines, forcing the *Ohio* to be taken under tow. With the aid of other ships she slowly but successfully made her way into the harbor at Valletta, where she proceeded to start to sink at the dock.

The British however were ready for this and more than willing to send salvage crews down to pump out her lifeblood of oil. Working nonstop and sometimes while under aerial attack, they were able to create connections to the swiftly sinking tanker. The salvage workers managed to transfer the precious fuel out of *Ohio*'s tanks and into an undamaged fleet auxiliary tanker.

Rear-Admiral H M Burrough, CB, who commanded the close escort, shaking hands with Captain Dudley Mason of SS Ohio

As the last drops were pulled out of the *Ohio* her keel settled on the bottom where she lay with her back broken, splitting in two. Later salvaged off the bottom, the two pieces of her hull were used first as storage and later as barracks facilities. They were then towed out to sea and scuttled after the war, leaving only some small pieces in Maltese museums to remember her by.

Captain of the Ohio, Dudley Mason, awarded the George Cross for bringing the tanker into Malta.

The *Ohio* may have had a short career, but she and her cargo are credited with enabling Malta to survive the siege, which some people credit as a turning point in the war effort in the Mediterranean.

MOTORCYCLE PILGRIMAGE FROM MĠARR TO ĦAD-DINGLI ON THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

Photo: Times of Malta

The parishes of Dingli and Mġarr are inviting motorcyclists to take part in the annual pilgrimage from Mġarr to Ħad-Dingli on Friday, 15th August 2025.

Now in its eighth edition, this event is organised by the two parishes, both dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, in celebration of her solemn feast day.

Participants are asked to gather in front of Mġarr Parish Church at 9:15 a.m. The pilgrimage will begin at 9:45 a.m., making its way to Ħad-Dingli. Upon arrival near Ħad-Dingli Church, the motorcycles will be blessed, and each rider will receive a commemorative souvenir. Mass will follow at 11:00 a.m. at Ħad-Dingli Church, and all participants are welcome to attend.

This year's pilgrimage also aims to support Caritas Malta and its ongoing work in addressing social challenges and assisting those in need.

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION (SANTA MARIJA) IS CELEBRATED IN SEVEN DIFFERENT LOCALITIES IN MALTA AND GOZO, NAMELY MQABBA, QRENDI, MOSTA, ATTARD, GUDJA, GĦAXAQ AND GOZO'S VICTORIA

QRENDI

The Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, also known as Santa Marija, is a significant public holiday in Malta, and Qrendi is one of the seven towns that celebrates it with particular fervour. Celebrations in Qrendi include religious ceremonies, processions, and vibrant festivities organized by the town's two band clubs: the St. Mary's Band and the Lourdes Band. The feast is observed on August 15th, commemorating the belief that Mary was taken body and soul into heaven.

Here's a more detailed look at the celebrations:

Religious Significance: The Feast of the Assumption celebrates the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken up to heaven, body and soul, after her death. This is a central tenet of Catholic faith.

Qrendi's Celebrations: Qrendi is one of the seven Maltese towns that mark this feast with special festivities. The celebrations are organized by the two band clubs in the town.

St. Mary's Band and Lourdes Band:

These band clubs play a central role in the festivities, preparing decorations, fireworks, and entertainment.

Fireworks: Fireworks displays are a prominent feature of the celebrations in Qrendi, with three fireworks factories in the area known for their displays.

Historical Context: Qrendi became a separate parish centuries ago, with celebrations of the Assumption predating its establishment as a parish. The feast was traditionally marked with a special breakfast, a custom that was common in the area during the Middle Ages.

Historical Events: The Feast of the Assumption also coincides with the anniversary of the SS Ohio's heroic arrival in Grand Harbour in 1942, a crucial event during World War II.

MOSTA

The Mosta feast of the Assumption, also known as Santa Marija, is celebrated annually on August 15th in Mosta, Malta. This feast commemorates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. The festivities in Mosta are a major event, with the town decorated for weeks leading up to the 15th.

Here's a more detailed look:

Significance:

The Feast of the Assumption is a public holiday in Malta and is one of the most important religious and cultural celebrations in Mosta.

Duration:

While the main feast day is August 15th, the celebrations often extend for the two weeks leading up to the 15th, known as the "kwindiċina".

Activities: The celebrations include:

Decorations: The town is adorned with lights, drapes, statues, and festoons.

Bands: Both local band clubs participate with musical programs and marches.

Fireworks: Spectacles of ground and aerial fireworks are a highlight, with two fireworks societies competing.

Processions: The main procession takes place on August 15th, involving the statue of Santa Marija.

Historical Context: The Feast of the Assumption also has a historical connection to the SS Ohio convoy during World War II, which brought crucial supplies to Malta on August 15, 1942.

Popularity: The feast attracts both locals and tourists, who come to witness the vibrant celebrations and experience the unique Maltese festa atmosphere.

Mosta Rotunda: The celebrations are centred around the Mosta Rotunda (Church of the Assumption), a stunning church known for its impressive dome.

MGARR

The Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady is celebrated in Mgarr, Malta, with a grand festa that includes decorations, a solemn procession, religious services, and vibrant street festivities. This year, the feast will be celebrated on August 15th, which is a public holiday in Malta. The festivities typically last for several days leading up to the 15th, with the main celebrations culminating on the actual feast day. Here's a more detailed look at what you can expect:

Decorations: Mgarr is transformed with colorful lights, statues, and festoons.

Religious Services: The parish church hosts liturgical events and a procession with the statue of the Assumption. **Street Festivities:** Traditional food stalls, music, and fireworks displays are a highlight of the celebration.

Fireworks: Spectacular ground and aerial fireworks displays light up the night sky.

Public Holiday: The Feast of the Assumption is a public holiday in Malta, so many people will be out enjoying the festivities. The Feast of the Assumption is a significant event in Maltese culture, showcasing the strong religious and community spirit of the island.

ATTARD

The feast of the Assumption of Our Lady is celebrated on August 15th in Attard, Malta, and is a significant national holiday. This feast is one of the most important religious and cultural celebrations in Malta, and Attard is one of the towns that hosts a large celebration. The festivities

typically include ground and aerial fireworks displays, traditional food stalls, and a festive atmosphere with people in a celebratory mood.

Key aspects of the Attard celebration:

Religious Significance: The feast commemorates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven.

Festivities: Expect fireworks, food stalls, and a lively atmosphere.

Community Spirit: The celebration often involves decorating homes and welcoming visitors.

MQABBA

The Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, also known as Santa Marija, is celebrated in Mqabba, Malta on August 15th. It's a major public holiday and is celebrated with great enthusiasm, featuring traditional food stalls, fireworks, and decorations. The feast also commemorates the historic Santa Maria Convoy that brought much-needed supplies to Malta during World War II.

Here's a more detailed look at the celebrations:

Religious Significance:

The feast celebrates the belief that the Virgin Mary was taken body and soul into heaven.

Traditional Festivities: Mqabba's celebrations include a week of events leading up to the 15th, with street decorations, religious processions, and the display of the titular statue of the Assumption.

Fireworks: A highlight of the feast is the spectacular fireworks displays, with the St. Mary's Fireworks Factory of Mqabba renowned for its impressive shows.

Community Involvement: The feast is a community-wide celebration, with participation from all ages and social backgrounds, showcasing Maltese culture and traditions.

Food and Drink: Traditional food stalls offer local delicacies like Maltese nougat, date fritters, and other treats.

GUDJA

This feast is one of the most popular in Malta, with celebrations taking place in several towns and villages including Gudja. The feast commemorates the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken body and soul into heaven.

The celebration in Gudja, and other towns, includes religious processions, fireworks, and traditional Maltese food stalls. Many families decorate their homes with lights and banners, and the churches are adorned with decorations.

The feast of the Assumption also has historical significance in Malta, particularly regarding the Santa Marija Convoy of 1942, where a British convoy brought much-needed supplies to the island during World War II. This event is celebrated alongside the religious aspect of the feast.

VICTORIA – RABAT – GOZO

The Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady is a major religious and public AND IS ALSO celebrated in Victoria, Gozo. This feast is particularly significant in Victoria, where it's celebrated with great enthusiasm and is a highlight of the Gozitan summer.

Here's why the Feast of the Assumption is important in Victoria, Gozo:

Religious Significance: The Feast of the Assumption celebrates the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken body and soul into heaven.

Community Celebration: The feast is a major cultural event in Victoria, with processions, fireworks, and other festivities organized by the Leone Philharmonic Society.

Gozo Cathedral: The Gozo Cathedral in Victoria is dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, and its statue of Santa Marija, made in Rome in 1897, is a focal point of the celebrations.

Music Bliss Events ARE ORGANISING THE Żurrieq Summer Fest in aid of DAR Bjorn

The press conference was held at Dar Bjorn, and we were honoured to be joined by the Minister for Culture, President of Soċjeta Mużikali Santa Katarina V.M. and Maria Formosa as well as the incredible team behind this cause.

Taking place on 29 August 2025, the concert will feature Regina and Nathalie Aarts from The Soundlovers, alongside some of Malta's finest — DJ Ryan Spiteri , DJ Pierre Cordina, and DJ Commander Here are some highlights from the press conference

Kultura Stepin Dine & Drink by GG Water Services Corporation Elbros Homes Visit Malta Act Fx Malta Ltd MFCC Malta Fairs and Conventions CentrE Malta Daily Firetech Unitech Baldacchino Group

Qatt smajt bis-sunett miktub bl-idejn mill-qawwiet Maltin bi tħejjija għar-rebħa tagħhom kontra l-Franċiżi fl-imblokk tal-1798-1800? Skopri aktar dwaru, u bosta spunti interessanti oħrajn mill-ġrajja missielta ta' pajjiżna, fil-wirja ġdida 'It-8 ta' Settembru: L-Ewwel Jum Nazzjonali', li tiftaħ fis-Sala tat-Tron fil-Palazz tal-Gran Mastru, il-Belt Valletta, il-Ġimgħa 29 ta' Awwissu u tibqa' għaddejja sal-Ħadd 14 ta' Settembru 2025.

Proprju fis-sena tal-460 anniversarju mir-rebħa tal-Assedju l-Kbir, din il-wirja tistieden lill-viżitaturi jirriflettu fuq tliet avvenimenti storiċi formattivi għall-ġens Malti: it-tmiem tal-Assedju fl-1565, iċ-ċediment tal-Franċiżi fl-1800, u d-dikjarazzjoni ta' armistizju mill-Italja fit-Tieni Gwerra Dinjija fl-1943. Il-wirja tiġbor fiha numru mdaqqas ta' artefatti mill-kollezzjoni nazzjonali li se jiġu esebiti flimkien għal din l-okkażjoni. Fost oħrajn, dawn jinkludu medalji u muniti miż-żmien madwar l-Assedju l-

Kbir, inċiżjonijiet u affreski dwar din it-tqatigħa storika minn Perez d'Aleccio, medalji ppreżentati lill-eroj Maltin wara l-imblokk tal-Franċiżi, sunett oriġinali miktub bl-idejn mill-qawwiet Maltin kontra l-Franċiżi, u ġabra ta' oġġetti marbutin mal-armistizju tal-Italja waqt it-Tieni Gwerra Dinjija. Id-dħul għall-wirja huwa inkluż fil-biljett regolari tal-Palazz tal-Gran Mastru, li jista' jinqata' kemm mal-bieb kif ukoll online: Grand Master's Palace - Heritage Malta.

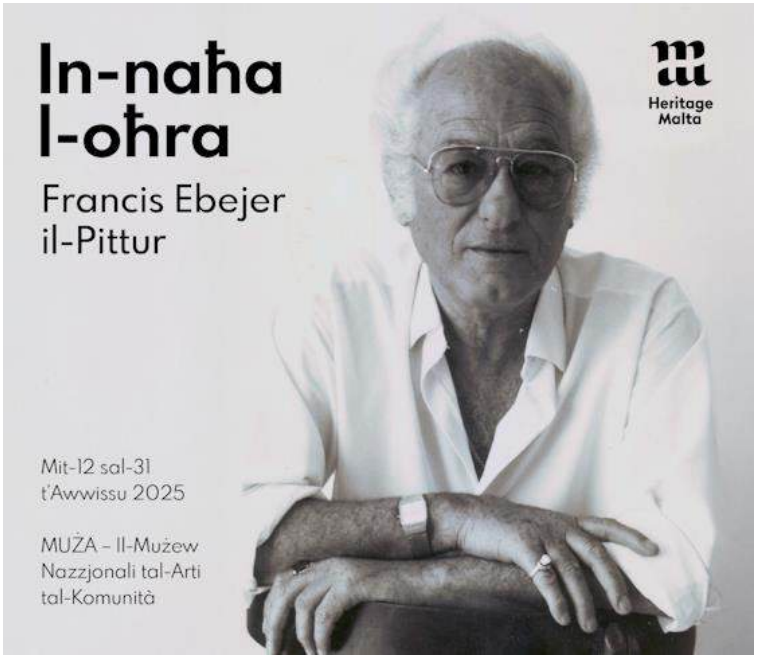
English Version

Have you ever heard of the handwritten sonnet by the Maltese forces in preparation for their victory against the French in the blockade of 1798-1800? Find out more about it, and many other interesting insights into Malta's embattled history, in the new exhibition '8 September: The First National Day', which opens in the Throne Room of the Grand Master's Palace, Valletta, on Friday 29th August and runs until Sunday 14th September 2025.

In the year of the 460th anniversary of the victory of the Great Siege, this exhibition invites visitors to reflect on three formative historical events for the Maltese nation: the end of the Siege in 1565, the capitulation of the French in 1800, and the declaration of an armistice by Italy in the Second World War in 1943.

The exhibition brings together an astounding number of artefacts from the national collection that will be exhibited together for the occasion. These include medals and coins from the time around the Great Siege, engravings and frescoes of this epic battle by Perez d'Aleccio, medals presented to Maltese heroes after the French blockade, a handwritten sonnet by the Maltese forces against the French, and a collection of items related to Italy's armistice during the Second World War.

Admission to the exhibition is included in the regular Grand Master's Palace ticket, which can be purchased both at the door and online: Grand Master's Palace - Heritage Malta.



HERITAGE MALTA

The exhibition 'In-Naħa l-Oħra: Francis Ebejer il-Pittur', held in a new exhibition space at MUŻA from the 12th till the 31st of August 2025, has been organised to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Francis Ebejer's birth. He was the most prominent local playwright in the years following the 1960s and he remains recognised as a leading reformer of 20th-century Maltese theatre and as a major voice representing Maltese identity. He needs no introduction as a writer, as he is among the foremost Maltese authors. As a painter, however, he is not as well known. This is his other side – which is where this exhibition takes its name from – and above all, it now offers us a more complete picture of Francis Ebejer.

IS VALLETTA'S WORLD HERITAGE STATUS UNDER THREAT?

By our correspondent Sean Richardson

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has officially reaffirmed Valletta's designation as a World Heritage Site. However, in its latest review, the committee warned that the historic city remains at risk, stating that existing regulations "do not sufficiently safeguard" Valletta's heritage value.

The primary concern centres on urban development in and around Valletta, with the committee urging Malta to do more to manage both the indirect and cumulative effects of ongoing and future construction, whether within the city itself or in its designated buffer zone. While progress has been made, UNESCO made it clear that stronger measures are needed to preserve the integrity of the site.

Valletta, known locally as *il-Belt*, is more than a historic capital. It is a living, breathing city that plays a central role in Malta's political, administrative, and cultural life. It also draws in thousands of tourists every year who come to admire its grand baroque architecture, cobbled streets, and harbourside charm. Recognised by UNESCO in 1980, Valletta was inscribed as a World Heritage Site satisfying two primary criteria:

1. **A Fortified Renaissance City**: Valletta is a late Renaissance masterpiece. Its grid street layout, bastioned walls, and carefully planned monuments reflects an architectural philosophy that merges beauty with military functionality.
2. A City of the Knights: Valletta is intrinsically linked to the Knights of St John, who founded it in 1566 following the Great Siege of 1565. For over 250 years, the Order ruled and shaped the city, making Valletta not just a strategic fortress, but a cultural and religious beacon of early modern Europe. Valletta is thus associated with the history of one of the greatest military and moral forces of modern Europe.

UNESCO has praised Valletta as "an example of a city planned in the late 16th century with a uniform design, built completely in a short time and having preserved its coherence until today." Unlike many other capitals that include heritage-listed buildings or districts, Valletta is one of the few capital cities in the world to be recognised in its entirety as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Built on a hilly peninsula between two of the finest natural harbours in the Mediterranean, a defining feature of Valletta is its innovative urban grid, which combined military defences with urban liveability. Designed by Francesco Laparelli, an engineer dispatched by Pope Pius V to assist Grand Master La Valette, Valletta's layout became a model for cities across Europe and beyond. At a time when most fortified cities sacrificed liveability for security, Valletta broke new ground.

In 1830, Benjamin Disraeli, who would later become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, famously described Valletta as "a city of palaces built by gentlemen for gentlemen."

While it is debated how imminent or severe the threat to Valletta's heritage status is, UNESCO's concerns about unregulated development and construction are clear. Valletta's continued status as a World Heritage Site depends on a careful balance between modern development and the preservation of a city that has stood for centuries as a testament to resilience, vision and architectural excellence.

The Maltese government is now expected to submit an updated report by 1 December 2026.

Find more of Sean's writing about Malta at seanrichardson.com.au

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Maltese Welfare NSW conducted an Information Session at the Greystanes Support Group, facilitated by the Maltese Community Council of NSW. This important event was tailored for our senior community members and focused on the Red Cross.

The session was well received, with the audience actively engaging through questions and sharing their experiences of receiving Red Cross assistance while residing in Malta, as well as volunteering with the organisation in Australia. The group expressed appreciation for the presentation being delivered in Maltese. Following the success of this session, Maltese Welfare NSW plans to offer similar talks to other groups.

Australian Red Cross Volunteers Lawrence and Nathalie Gatt provided a comprehensive overview of the history of the Red Cross, its services within the Australian community, and the longstanding connection between Australian Red Cross and Malta, which dates back to the First World War. At that time, troops recovering from the Gallipoli campaign were cared for in Malta, where an Australian recreation hall—funded by the Red Cross—was constructed. Current efforts are underway to restore this historic building.

Today, Malta Red Cross is also firmly established and delivers a wide array of services. The importance of Australian Red Cross Social & Emotional Support Services—including **Tele-Chat, Tele-Cross, and Home Visiting** programs—was emphasised, particularly for the elderly community. These services, available to eligible recipients under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), were detailed during the session and are offered free of charge.

Maltese Welfare NSW continues to strengthen its partnership with the Red Cross by providing Maltese-speaking volunteers to assist Maltese clients when needed. Volunteering is essential to the effective delivery of these services, and we encourage all community members to consider the significant benefits of volunteering.

Lawrence Gatt, President of the Maltese Welfare NSW Inc

St Thomas Tower - Marsaskala, Malta

The Malta Tourism Authority has completed a €3.39 million EU co-funded restoration of Marsascala's St Thomas Tower, as this 17th century coastal fortification reopened its doors as a state-of-the-art museum experience that brings Malta's piracy and corsair history to life.

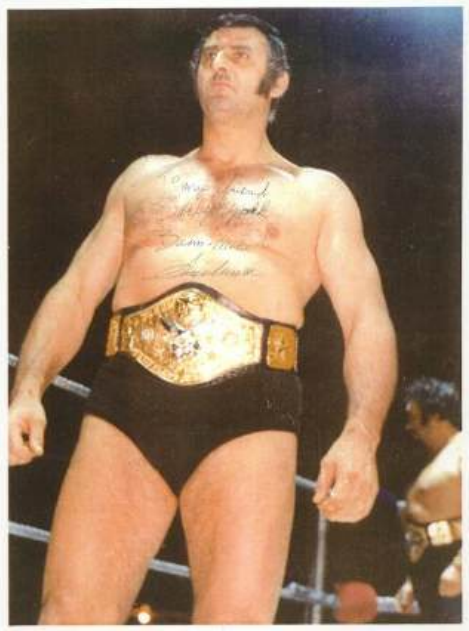
Located in Marsaskala, Malta, St. Thomas Tower stands as a formidable bastioned watchtower erected in 1614, marking the third of six Wignacourt towers. During the early 18th century, an artillery battery was integrated with the tower.

As the largest watchtower on the island, St. Thomas Tower commands a strategic position above the shoreline, positioned on the seaward face of the il-Ħamrija headland. Its purpose was clear: to thwart any attempt of troop landings in the protected anchorages of Marsaskala Creek and St. Thomas' Bay.

Pirates and Corsairs Museum

Step into a world of high seas adventure at the Pirates and Corsairs Museum housed within the iconic St. Thomas Tower in Marsaskala. This immersive museum brings Malta's swashbuckling maritime history to life, uncovering tales of daring pirates, feared corsairs, and epic naval battles that once raged along its shores. With interactive exhibits, authentic artifacts, and captivating storytelling, it offers a thrilling experience for visitors of all ages. Perfectly set within the historic walls of a real coastal fort, the museum invites you to journey through centuries of intrigue, danger, and adventure. A must-visit for history buffs, families, and curious explorers alike! The restoration and conversion of the tower into a museum, was co-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund.

MALTESE-CANADIAN WRESTLER



BARON MIKIEL SCICLUNA

By Dr. Barry York

Anyone remember 'Baron' Mikel Scicluna, the Maltese-born wrestler who was successful in Canada, the US and Australia? He came to Australia for a few months in 1968. In interviews following his televised matches, he would say a few words in Maltese.

As a wrestling fan since 1964, when it began on GTV-9 in Melbourne, and of course influenced by my own Maltese ancestry, I tried to keep up with the late Mikel Scicluna's career in the ring.

I was shocked to discover, years after his 1968 tour Down Under, that in Melbourne he wrestled as a 'heel' (bad guy) but in Sydney was a 'baby face' (good guy). In those days, there was no Internet to keep us informed of such things happening in different parts of Australia. In Australia in 1968, he won the IWA world heavyweight title from Spiros Arion but later lost it to Mario Milano.

He was born at Balzan, Malta, in 1929 (according to one wrestling magazine report).

He was a great entertainer and needed no wacky gimmicks - just his wrestling boots and trunks. He was very tall and possessed wrestling skills and physical strength as well as knowing how to 'work the crowd'.

He died in 2010, in the USA, and had retired from wrestling in 1983.

His wrestling career spanned three decades, beginning in Canada in 1953. He originally wrestled under the name 'Mike Valentino' but on being recruited into the World Wide Wrestling Federation, run by Vince McMahon senior in New York in 1965, McMahon gave him the new name of 'Baron' Mikel Scicluna - and a 'heel' persona. (Michael Scicluna was his real name).

In 1996, he was recruited into the WWE Hall of Fame. I have read that, after retiring from wrestling, he loved to return to Malta each year and sometimes stayed for extended periods.

I wrote him a fan letter early in 2010, just before his death as it turned out, after finding his postal address on the Internet. I sent him a few of my articles about the Maltese in Australia too. He sent me this autographed photo in reply, which I'm happy to share. He inscribed it with the words: "To my friend Barry York, Baron Mikel Scicluna".

I think that's King Curtis in the background and, as 'the Baron' is wearing a tag team belt, I think the photo was taken in 1972, when he and Curtis held the world tag team belts in the USA.

IF YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL
SHARE IT WITH OTHERS – SEND IT TO US

Maltese Baked Rice
Ross il-Forn

This simple dish of comfort food, Baked Rice, is ONE OF THE favourite dishes in the island of Malta. Tomato sauce, ground meat, rice, cheese and eggs are all stirred together in the same pan, then baked until the flavours meld into deliciousness, with more melted cheese on top. A simple, nourishing, and satisfying dish to feed a family. This baked rice, packed with sausage meat, eggs, veg and cheese will satisfy even the hungriest members of your household. But don't worry if there are leftovers, it's great served cold, too.

Ingredients

- 400g (2 cups) long grain white rice
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 600g beef, herb and garlic sausages, casings removed
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tbsp mild curry powder
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 zucchini, finely chopped
- 400g can diced tomatoes with basil and oregano
- 400g jar passata
- Free Range Eggs
- 80g (1/2 cup) drained roasted capsicum strips, chopped
- 120g (1 1/2 cups) coarsely grated cheddar
- 60g (3/4 cup) finely grated parmesan cheese
-

Method

Show ingredient quantity

- **Step 1** Preheat oven to 220C/200C fan forced. Grease a 5cm-deep, 20 x 30cm (base measurement) baking dish.
- **Step 2** Cook rice following packet directions until just tender (be careful not to overcook). Drain. Transfer to a large bowl.
- **Step 3** Meanwhile, heat half the oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Crumble the sausage into the pan and cook, breaking up with a wooden spoon, for 7 minutes or until browned. Use a slotted spoon to transfer to a plate.
- **Step 4** Heat the remaining oil in the frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook the onion, stirring, for 5 minutes or until softened. Add the garlic and curry powder and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the paste and cook, stirring, for a further 1 minute. Add the zucchini, tomatoes, passata and 125ml (1/2 cup) water. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until mixture thickens.

DELICATA CLASSIC WINE FESTIVAL 2025, NADUR, GOZO

ĠNIEN IL-KUNSILL, NADUR, GOZO
Friday 22 and Saturday 23 August 2025
The grandest wine event of the year comes to Nadur, Gozo!

GOZO'S BEST VIEWS Delicata, in conjunction with Nadur Local Council, will be taking its Classic Wine Festival to the viticultural heart of **Gozo, Nadur** for the 21st year on **Friday 22 and Saturday 22 August 2025.** Once again this scenic, idyllic Gozitan village will come alive as the Delicata Classic Wine Festival gets underway at the 'Ġnien il-Kunsill'

GREAT AWARD-WINNING WINES

In all there will be **20 wines** to sample. Vintages of nine Delicata award-winning brands are served from as many stalls spread along the garden's periphery.

These include the semi-sparkling **Frizzantes** made from the very rare native old bush vines Girgentina and Ġellewża. Besides a selection of delectable white, red and rosé DOK Malta wines from the **Medina range,** the DOK Gozo **Victoria Heights** boutique wines will also be on show.

And, let's not forget the noble mono-varietals of the iconic flagship **Gran Cavalier** selection and Malta's most internationally awarded **Grand Vin de Hauteville** range, including Malta's only award-winning and super-trendy Viognier.

Or, enjoy the sweeter lifestyle **Dolcino** and the **Falcon** wines, the popular lush Casella Moscato and other varietals of the **Classic Collection** as well as all three of the **Pjazza Reġina** wines. The **SpitZZers** will also be on show for you to enjoy.

GET YOUR WINE PURSE

Wine coins will be the common currency at this summer's Delicata Classic Wine Festival, exchangeable for glasses of delightful wines. To try the wines, all festival revellers have to do is purchase **24 wine coins in a complimentary purse and a souvenir glass (yours to keep too) for €25.00**

Handing over the correct change of wine coins at the stalls will prompt dedicated wine stewards to pour **a standard 125 ml glass** of the wine on show in the clearly marked festival glass. We serve all wines by the glass: no tasters, no bottles.

Different wines hold different currency: the charge ranges from **8 wine coins** for a glass of the flagship selection Gran Cavalier and Grand Vin de Hauteville to **6 coins** for Medina, Pjazza Regina,Victoria Heights and Frizzantes, and **4 coins** for a 150 ml pouring of other quality wines such as the Classic Collection, The Falcon, Dolcino and others.

.DIFFERENT CUISINES AND GOZO SPECIALITIES

Live cooking stalls will be serving a tempting variety of both traditional Maltese and international dishes to tease a wide range of palates. There will be a selection of pizza, fried rabbit, oriental dishes, gourmet sausages, BBQ grills and various baguettes and desserts.

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY – don't drink and drive

Whilst entrance to the Festival is free, strictly no wine will be served to anyone under 17, and patrons are reminded to enjoy responsibly. Wine glasses are sold until 11 pm, wine is poured up to 11.30 pm and the festival closes at midnight. Mineral water and soft drinks are also available for purchase. To get to the event, nowadays one has several practical options such as carpooling and hailing a ride through one of the online platforms or from the taxi rank in Mgarr. ***See you there!***

LAMPUKI SEASON OPENS WITH TRADITIONAL BLESSING OF FISHING BOATS

A mass and a celebration for the blessing of fishing vessels marked the opening of Lampuki season for the local fishing community on Monday evening.

This mass and celebration was led by Fr. George Spiteri, who is the administrator of the Marsaxlokk Parish Church.

This ceremony is an integral tradition to local fishermen as it marks the official beginning of an important period for local fishing. The blessing is given in order to bring prosperity and safety to fishermen during the season.

This event was attended by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights, Anton Refalo, together with fishermen, members of the community, as well as families and entities related to the fishing sector.

The lampuki season officially opens on Friday, 15 August, according to European fishing regulations. It closes at the end of the year.

As is the case every year, fishermen have been preparing intensely for lampuki season to open. Over weeks, fishermen have been preparing their palm leaf lattices for their awaited catches. This traditional technique developed by Maltese and Gozitan fishermen is used to attract these fish; lampuki seek the shade provided by these nettings while staying close to the surface of the deep sea.

This year, the government distributed around 6,600 palm leaves to fishermen.

This season, there are 77 full-time (MFA) and part-time (MFB) fishermen registered to fish for lampuki using this traditional method. Boats are currently loaded with the equipment they need, such as these trellises, stones, and ropes, and are waiting to be assigned their positions, selected by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Minister Anton Refalo said that this season is a part of the Maltese identity and cultural heritage. He observed that the government is committed to continue providing more assistance so that this sector may retain its resilience and act sustainably.

Minister Refalo added that even this fish has great value towards Maltese culture and identity, while being an essential part of the country's fishing economy. He said that this is an occasion where we may all see fishermen's work and dedication, noting that their skill and determination contribute to the country's economy and towards Maltese gastronomic heritage.

"In the month of August, families and restaurants across Malta and Gozo eagerly await the first catch of the year to taste this fresh and seasonal fish," the Minister said, "The work and dedication of our fishermen should remain appreciated throughout the year."

MORTADELI 'S LOOK

ADDRESS: Shop 8/4-6 Gilbert St, Torquay, Victoria 3228
PHONE: 0466 888 145
EMAIL:
hello@mortadeli.com.au instagram.com/morta.deli

Mortadeli owner, Jake Cassar, a former travel agent, made the bold move to relocate to Torquay at the beginning of the pandemic. He quickly discovered that access to Mediterranean delights were no longer at his fingertips, and he longed for the flavours of Europe, a destination that was now restricted from satisfying his travel fixation, prompting him to open Mortadeli.

What started out as a humble part-diner/deli swiftly grew legs and extended across the piazza, to include a pasta bar and expand the delicatessen, in a fresh and abundant shopfront.

The culinary offering leans into Jake's Maltese heritage, surfacing memories of spending school holidays at his Nannu and Nana's house, helping them harvest fresh fruit and vegetables and cooking together. This later inspired his own passion for food, priming him to leave school and become an apprentice chef, which took him to all corners of the world, where he cooked and frolicked throughout much of his 20's. His desire to travel preoccupied him away from the kitchen and he made it the centrepiece of his newly awoken lifestyle, informing the inspiration for Mortadeli's look, feel and flavours, after his years of extensive world wide travel.

Mortadeli is a chimera realised, a place where the community and visitors to the Surf Coast can connect over the most important thing in this life – the pleasures of good food and good drink.

I was driving to Tennant Creek. It was Friday — a thousand kilometres of driving from Darwin. About 50 kilometres from my destination, I came across a police roadblock.

Two people had been driving a car heading south when they were involved in a fatal accident. The authorities were waiting for forensic experts to arrive. It was about 5:15 pm when we were stop. We ended up spending more than 16 hours waiting, as the forensic experts could not do their work until daylight. There was a pile-up of about two kilometres of traffic on either side of the road. Those of us present faced the enormity of the tragedy with a sense of solidarity.

People were helpful and courteous to each other, and life stories began to be shared.

My thoughts and prayers went to the couple who had lost their lives in the accident, and also to their families. How quickly tragedy can strike!

As I drove past the following morning, I could see the damaged suitcases on the ground.

As I shared with someone at the scene, we need to be ready at any time, since only God knows the time and place when we will be called to eternal life.

Pastizzi with tomato sauce? Malta/Australia film explores culture and legacy

Production Wraps on Malta / Australia Co-Production "NANNU" Exploring Culture and Legacy

by FilmInk Staff www.filmink.com.au

Production has officially wrapped on ***Nannu***, an intimate and emotionally charged cultural drama inspired by writer/director Matthew C. Vella's personal relationship with his late Maltese grandfather. Filming took place in Western Sydney in January 2025 and concluded in Malta in June 2025, marking a deeply symbolic collaboration between the two countries.

Nannu stars well known Maltese actor and two-time Malta TV Awards nominee Henry Zammit Cordina *(L-Għarusa, Ħbieb u Għedewwa, Bizzilla, Il-Klinika*) and Film Critics Circle of Australia award winner and AACTA-nominee actress Frances Duca (*Ali's Wedding*), and introduces nine-year-old newcomer Henry Stoakes. Rounding out the cast is Karina Summers, Mark Andrew, Nathan Camilleri and Charlie Cortis. The film is co-produced by Vella, Duca, Zammit Cordina, and Luke Agius (*The Undesirables, Go Figure*).

Matthew C. Vella, Henry Zammit Cordina, Frances Duca, Luke Agius Photo by Adrianne Armida

A rare Malta-Australia co-production, *Nannu* explores themes of intergenerational identity, heritage, and the immigrant experience. At its heart, *Nannu* is a story about how love and legacy survive across generations, even when traditions shift. A newly released promotional poster captures the film's unique metaphor: eating pastizzi with tomato sauce; a controversial food pairing in Malta but a familiar staple for Maltese children raised in Australia.

"In Malta, dipping pastizzi in tomato sauce is unthinkable. But Aussie kids eat everything with sauce — meat pies, sausage rolls, you name it," says director Matthew C. Vella. "We're using this clash of culinary customs as a metaphor for how traditions change through immigration. It's a bit cheeky, a bit controversial, but ultimately about how culture and legacy adapt and lives on."

This project was funded by Arts Council Malta, Blacktown Arts as part of the 2024 Blacktown City Creative Arts Fund Program, and sponsored by Gato's Pastizzi.

With post-production now underway, the film is being positioned for submission to Academy Award® and BAFTA-qualifying festivals throughout 2026.

Nannu aims to shine a spotlight on the under-represented Maltese-Australian experience, touching on themes of language, cultural pride, and family bonds.

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ST. CATHERINE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

invitation to all the members of this vibrant society to attend the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON

SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2025AT 2PM

43 LEHUNTE STREET KILBURN, SA

Sausage sizzle will be provided at 1pm

We look forward to seeing you there.

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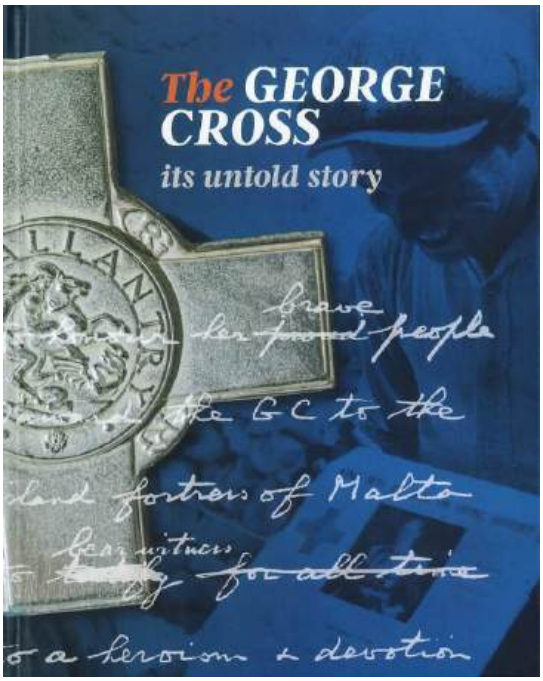
FRIDAY 22 AUGUST 2025 AT 2M

AT 49 LEHUNTE STREET, KILBURN 2025

Lunch at noon – You are cordially invited to attend

The George Cross: its untold story



A new book includes the story of documents recently discovered in The Royal Archives at Windsor Castle and the events that lay behind the award's bestowal

by **Theodore Browning**

Heritage Malta's The George Cross: its untold story

On the 10th of April 1942, a retired British Army Officer named Edward J. Semini wrote to *The Times* in London, suggesting that Malta should be honoured for its contribution to the Allied war effort. Just five days later, King George VI personally wrote to the Governor of Malta, Viscount Gort, to award the George Cross. The Cross features on the Maltese national flag to this day.

Recent research from Heritage Malta, conducted by Kenneth Gambin and Giancarlo Azzopardi, described in a new illustrated book *The George Cross: its untold story*, has revealed the serendipitous series of events that lay behind this rapid decision-making. Their discovery came during a visit to United Kingdom to gather information for the ongoing restoration of the Villa Guardamangia, where Queen Elizabeth II – then known as Princess Elizabeth – lived with Prince Philip between 1949 and 1951. At the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, where to their 'surprise and delight' the archival information on Malta had been laid out ready for them, they came across a bundle of documents concerning the award of the George Cross during the Second World War.

What was particularly surprising about the discovery? 'There was no grand design, no measured discussions, or secret negotiations.' The situation was 'mature,' the researchers say, with previous suggestions for recognising Malta's resistance having been made, and this allowed for the astonishing speed at which the award was given. As Gambin and Azzopardi point out, the King's personal interest in Malta's war story during a raging global conflict is remarkable.

Semini's letter to *The Times* on the 10th of April declared that 'nothing would be more highly appreciated than if our King were graciously pleased to present to the island a suitable standard ... as a token of its valour, its endurance, and its abiding faith in God.' It caught the attention of Leo Amery, Secretary of State for India at the time, who wrote directly to the King's private secretary, Sir Alexander Hardinge, that Semini's suggestion was 'really a good idea' – but led him in fact to 'a bolder and even more striking one. Why not present Malta in its corporate capacity with the Victoria Cross?'

Hardinge took the idea to the King, who ran with it – and gave it his personal touch by awarding the George Cross, which had been instituted in 1940 in his own name. 'Apart from undoubtedly also being a politically expedient morale-boosting gesture in a very difficult moment for Malta and the Allies,' said Gambin and Azzopardi, 'the King genuinely had a direct attachment with the critical situation in Malta and the tribulations of the Maltese people.' George's correspondence indicates a longer-lasting affection for the island; in a later letter to Viscount Gort, he writes that 'you on Malta are constantly in my thought.'

Advertisement

The bravery and valour that won Malta the George Cross paid off; in 1943, forces on the island went on the offensive, and eventually made a vital contribution to eventual Allied success in the

Mediterranean. So what did the award mean to the people of Malta then? While many Maltese welcomed the award during the war, others pointed out their greater concerns – 'they were much more worried about food and the general situation.' The King decided that the Cross would appear on the national flag; this was eventually enshrined in the Maltese constitution.

The George Cross on the Grandmaster's Palace in Valletta. Photo: Frank Vincentz on Wikimedia Commons

And now? On the one hand, Gambin and Azzopardi allow, 'it is certainly a bold reminder of the mettle of our forefathers who resisted and emerged victorious against all odds – an inspiration to present generations.' But equally it is 'a symbol of Malta's colonial past' which some might regard as a 'stain that has to be removed' – perhaps analogous to 'those in the UK for whom the crown is a source of shame.' In the years since, debates have recurred over whether the George Cross should remain on the flag, or should be replaced with a Maltese Cross or other alternative.

In April this year, the *New York Times* reported that the Trump administration in the United States was considering closing a series of its embassies, including the embassy in Malta. Perhaps more than anything else, the story of Malta and the George Cross, as the book brings vividly to life, serves as a reminder of Malta's strategic importance in the Mediterranean. Trump may not appreciate this history – King George VI would have known better.

The George Cross: its untold story is published by Heritage Malta Publishing, and available to purchase in hardback for €10

SINGER MADONNA ASKS THE POPE TO GO TO GAZA

"There is no time left" This was the appeal that the artist Madonna made when she urged Pope Leo XIV to visit Gaza on social media, after she said that there is not much time left. Madonna also stated that as a Catholic person, conscience can bring about change.

She appealed to the Pope to help end the crisis in Gaza and also called on the public to help the innocent children who are caught in this war. She also said that she will not be taking sides but is feeling everyone's pain as a mother, including for those mothers of hostages who are caught in this war.

Pope Leo XIV has been critical of this war since the very beginning of his pontificate, where last July he had appealed to the international community to continue to observe humanitarian law and protect civilians.

Meanwhile, the international organization UNICEF warned that every child under the age of five is suffering from a lack of food and basic supplies as a result of this war, where more than 50,000 children have been killed or injured since October 2023. In addition, WHO Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus thanked the artist Madonna for her compassion and solidarity.

WE ENDEAVOUR TO KEEP OUR MALTESE COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD CONNECTED. THE MALTESE JOURNAL IS THE ONLY ONE OF ITS TYPE IN AUSTRALIA (AND THE WORLD).