MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

Journal for Maltese Living Abroad

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MALTESE - FAIRFIELD CITY NSW HERITAGE COLLECTION

SHAUN BONNET OAM

Prof SONIA GHANDI

THIS IS HOW A TUNNEL OR A BRIDGE BETWEEN MALTA AND GOZO WOULD LOOK LIKE

MALTA >< GOZO - BRIDGE OR TUNNEL?

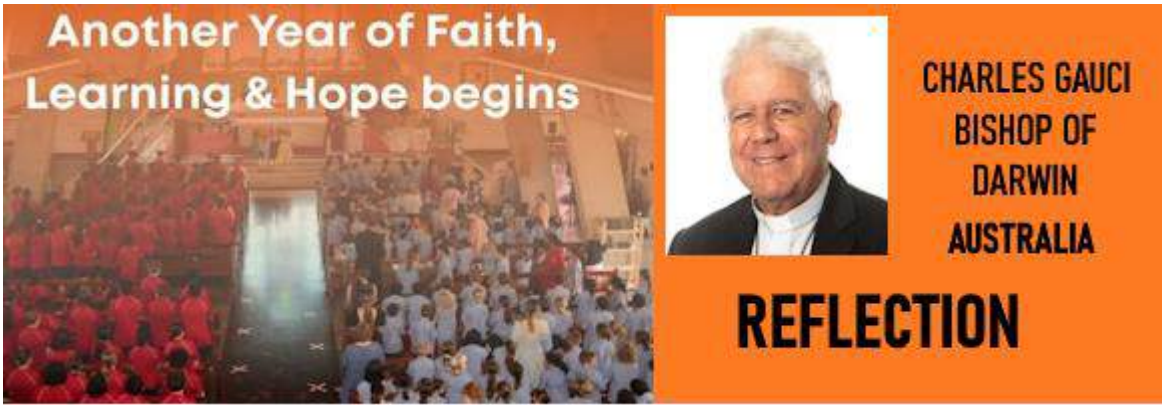
ORDER OF MALTA Australia

MALTESE ASSSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ISLAND OF GOZO

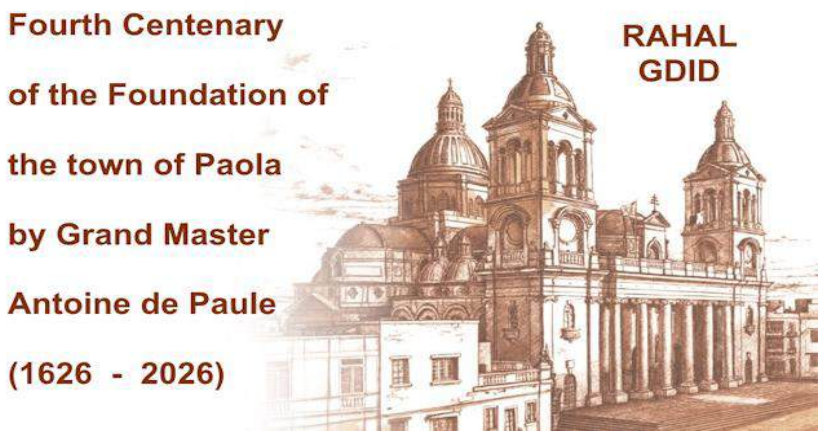
A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The policy of the Journal for Maltese Living Abroad is now evidently clear: the journal is intended for all members of the Maltese Diaspora. It serves as an informative, educational, inclusive, and nostalgically entertaining resource (and it is free). I hold no preferences; EVERY MALTESE IS WELCOME to receive the journal, contribute to it and join our large, happy family. Unfortunately, some individuals are too preoccupied to even acknowledge this publication, while others show indifference, although most of our readers always express their gratitude and appreciation for the journal. Our objective is to ensure that Maltese emigrants living outside of Malta remain on the map and are not forgotten. We extend our gratitude to the numerous Maltese individuals, associations, schools, libraries, aged care facilities, councils, embassies, high commissions, consulates, as well as the Maltese and Australian governments and agencies that contribute to the publication of this unique journal. With your support, I will persist in this mission without fail. No other Maltese journal is printed by the government and provided to Maltese seniors free of charge. Thankfully, the journal is archived in libraries, schools, museums, and clubs, not only abroad but also in Malta and Gozo. Please continue to support me. Frank Scicluna - Editor Adelaide, Australia



2026 - As we begin our school year, dear **students**, I offer you my prayer and blessing for the year ahead. May your classrooms be places where you grow not only in knowledge, but also in kindness, courage, faith, and hope. You are known and loved by God, and our Catholic schools are places where your gifts are nurtured so that you may flourish as whole persons, mind, heart, body, and spirit.
To our **teachers and school staff**, thank you for the generosity with which you serve our young people. Your work is far more than the passing on of information; it is the shaping of lives. May God strengthen you in your vocation, grant you wisdom and patience, and renew you in the knowledge that your care for the whole person reflects the heart of Christ the teacher.
To **families and all who support our children** – parents, carers, grandparents, and community members, thank you for the love and encouragement you give each day. You are our children's first teachers and greatest supporters. May this school year be one of partnership, trust, and shared hope, as together we help our young people grow into the people God calls them to be.
May God bless you and keep you, fill your days with hope and courage, and guide our Catholic school communities to grow in wisdom, compassion, and faith, now and always.

Rahal gdid, or Paola, this year will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the village by Grand Master De Paule. For this special anniversary for the Paulists, a number of activities will be held by the Raġal Gdid Local Council in partnership with other non-governmental entities.



Details of these activities were announced during a press conference addressed by the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, Alison Zerafa Civelli, the Mayor of Paola Jason Silvio and the Artistic Director of the Casal Paola celebrations, Joe Julian Farrugia. This conference was held in the historic chapel of Sant'Ubeldeska which will also be at the centre for these activities. It was stated that five main activities will be held in January, May, June, August and November. The Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, Alison Zerafa Civelli, praised this initiative by the Local Council through which it will be commemorating such an important anniversary for this village.

But above all the most important thing is that the planned activities aim to continue to raise awareness and recognize the history that has shaped this village, but also so that at the same time residents and those who come from outside this village can spend quality time. "It is gratifying to see that the Local Council has come up with this initiative to celebrate such an important anniversary with so many important activities. The Parliamentary Secretary concluded by saying that through these series of activities, the history that has shaped this village, so important in our country, over the last 400 years will be better appreciated.

Meanwhile, the Mayor of Paola, Jason Silvio, explained that Grand Master De Paule had a small place where the main square is today, in which he kept some tools for when he went hunting in Kordin. He said that over time this Grand Master decided to establish a village around this place and named it Casal Paola, but people mostly called it Casal Nuovo, where even today many Maltese still call it Rahal Gdid. "This year we will be celebrating this important anniversary for our Village, which is steeped in history that perhaps not everyone knows about. The main purpose, apart from celebrating an anniversary, is to inform the public more with interesting information about Casal Paola, or as it is better known as Rahal Gdid.

The planned activities will all be of a high level based on instilling a sense of unity in Rahal Gdid" For his part, the Artistic Director, Joe Julian Farrugia listed the activities that will be taking place. He explained that the first event will take place on Saturday 24th January with a mass at the Basilica of Christ the King, the reading of the Grand Master's ban and a gun salute on the parvis, a parade towards the Church of St Ubaldes where the ban will be read, as well as 3D projections on the façade of the same church, where the Official Anthem of Paola will be inaugurated. Farrugia explained that another event will take place in May when a march will be played by the three village bands as one band together with all the village associations. The march will leave from the area of the Lourdes Parish to the Square where the President of Malta will unveil the inscription of the Grand Master with which the village was founded. In June, an evening of light music will be held in the Square, followed by the unveiling of a monument in the Square itself, followed by another in August, where the memory of Mons F. Xuereb will be celebrated near the Lourdes church. The final event will be held in November, when a monument to the St. Paulist victims of the war will be unveiled.

Gozo's leading business lobby wants the government to reignite talks about developing a permanent link between the island and mainland Malta.

The Gozo Business Chamber said this past week's adverse weather conditions had once again highlighted Gozo's accessibility challenges and reliance on a sole mode of transportation – sea ferries.

"People were stranded, and flights and appointments were missed because our sole mode of transport between the two islands could not operate," it said.

Gozo Channel ferries linking Malta and Gozo were suspended for periods on Monday and Wednesday and for all of Tuesday as high-speed winds rendered crossings dangerous. A fast ferry service was also cancelled for even longer stretches, for similar reasons.

A bipartisan push to develop an undersea tunnel linking Malta and Gozo was effectively scrapped some years ago after years of planning and preparatory work. The government had said in 2023 that it intended to "re-examine" the tunnel idea, but nothing has emerged from that pledge to date.

The Gozo Business Chamber, which was among leading proponents of the tunnel idea, said on Saturday that the discussion should be revisited.

It praised plans to reassess the accessibility of Mġarr Harbour, noting that it would form part of a task force focused on that which was announced this week. It also took note of a government pledge to add two ferries to the Gozo Channel fleet by 2029.

But, it said, this project did not exclude parallel work to develop a more permanent connection between the two islands.

"The planned expansion of the Gozo Channel fleet and the permanent link project would complement each other, strengthening the island's resilience," it said.

A lot of work focused on developing a permanent link has already been done, it said.

The chamber's calls for a reignited debate about a permanent link between the two islands follows a similar call made earlier this week by a permanent secretary who lives in Gozo.

Ronald Mizzi, who is spearheading civil service work on the government's Malta Vision 2050, wrote on Facebook that he was forced to miss a family funeral because there was no way of getting to Malta during the storm.

"I can live with that (pun intended)," he wrote. "But there may be others whose situations are far more critical: people whose lives or health are at stake, who simply cannot afford to wait, irrespective of weather conditions. Yes, one may argue that such events are not frequent. But when they happen, and when they happen to you, that argument offers little comfort."

Mizzi's call was endorsed by, among others, Gozo Regional Development Authority CEO and former Infrastructure Malta boss Ivan Falzon, who said a permanent link would also help ease "bottlenecks and burdens" placed on residential areas around the two islands' ports, such as Għajnsielem, Xemxija hill and Manikata.

PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA REFORM!

A public consultation was launched last December about social media reform, with the government publishing a green paper that will lead the discussion around social media safety and practice.

Being led by Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms Rebecca Buttigieg, the public is being invited to take part in a public consultation on the reform, aiming at shaping future policies that affect how social media is accessed and used in our society.

The opinions of people are being sought after, with questions like the following being asked:

Should there be a mandatory age-verification system for access to social media?

What measures should be introduced to better protect children and adolescents from harmful or inappropriate content? How can we ensure that social media platforms are used responsibly and safely?What changes are needed to address the social impact of social media?

This comes after countries like Australia actually banned social media for under 16 year olds. It's a topical issue which is being discussed the world-over as technology becomes an ever more important part of daily life. The next public consultation is being held on the 28th of January 2026 at Villa Blanche, Triq Ħal-Far, iż-Żurrieq at 6:00pm. This is your chance to share your thoughts! You may also participate in the public consultation until 27 February 2026 by attending one of the open sessions or by submitting your feedback online at: publicconsultation.gov.mt #MaltaDaily

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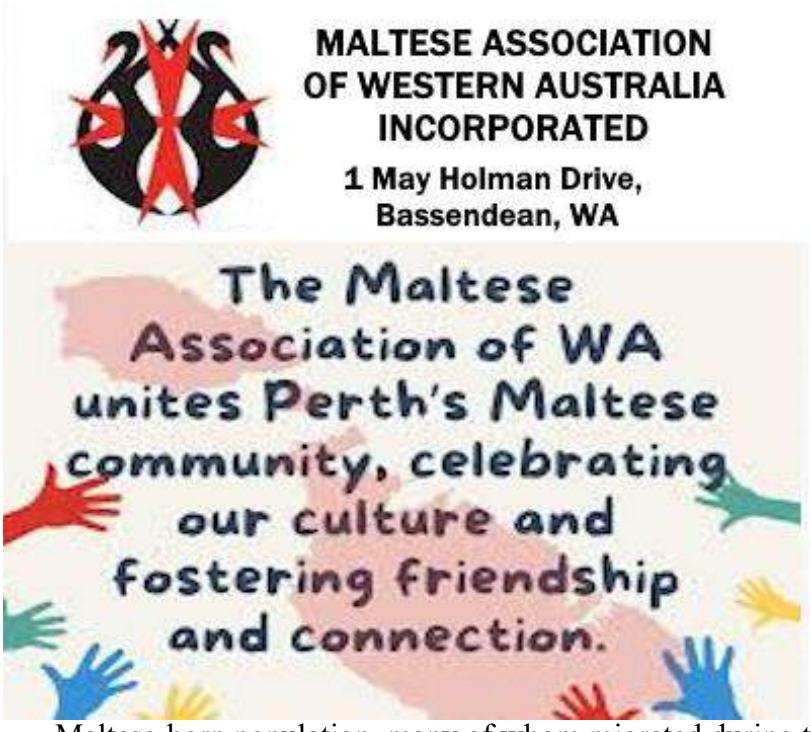

The Maltese community in Western Australia is a well-established, tight-knit group, with the Maltese Association of WA (MAWA) based in Bassendean acting as a central hub for culture, heritage, and social events. It serves the local population through community gatherings, a hall for events, and support services.

- **Key Organization:** The Maltese Association of WA (MAWA) is located at 1 May Holman Drive, Bassendean.
- **Community Hub:** The MAWA centre serves as a focal point, offering a hall for events, a bar, kitchen, and meeting rooms, often used for fostering friendship and cultural connection.
- **Demographics & History:** While the largest populations are in Victoria and NSW, WA has a significant, older Maltese-born population, many of whom migrated during the 1950s and 1960s.
- **Activities:** The association organizes events that celebrate Maltese culture, tradition, and food.
- **Support:** The community often collaborates with wider Australian-Maltese networks to support senior members and preserve their heritage.

The community is supported by an Honorary Consulate in Western Australia.

While much of Southern Australia is having its worst heatwave in years and extreme to catastrophic bushfire weather is predicted for Friday, large parts of far north QLD are under water.

Is this normal for this time of year or are we seeing more sever weather with climate change? How can people prepare for extreme weather events? Experts offer their advice.

Expert Reaction*These comments have been collated by the Science Media Centre to provide a variety of expert perspectives on this issue.*

Dr Paul Cheng is an Associate Professor in Livestock Nutrition and Grazing Management at The University of Melbourne

"Floods, fires and heatwaves are extreme weather events that majorly affect livestock directly and can disrupt the supply of feed. After bushfires, grazing can become limited for weeks or even months, meaning that livestock must rely almost entirely on fodder. Further, heatwaves increase pressure on feed systems, lowering voluntary feed intake of livestock by 10–30%, especially when temperatures exceed livestock heat-stress thresholds. In these conditions, access to quality hay is critical to maintain animals' welfare and body conditions.

These risks are amplified when extreme events occur across multiple regions altogether at once, limiting the ability to source fodder from unaffected areas.

Traditionally, producers relied on regional variability to balance feed shortages, but that buffer is becoming less reliable.

While climate variability has always shaped Australian agriculture, recent decades have seen an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme heat, and it becomes a less predictable event. This makes reliance on 'just-in-time' fodder supply increasingly risky. Planning protected fodder reserves ahead of extreme weather is one of the most practical and effective ways to safeguard livestock welfare under current and future conditions."

"Since the 1970's, scientists have warned governments and the public that continued burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – will have extreme consequences on our climate, resulting in increasing extreme storms, floods, heatwaves, droughts and bushfires. Despite Australia being particularly susceptible to all these disasters, our leaders are still green-lighting rapid expansion of Australia's already huge contribution to global coal and gas supplies through exports.

The costs of this behaviour are borne by communities, particularly those who have contributed the least but unable to afford protection. Developing countries, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rural communities, and especially children and future generations will suffer most from increasingly devastating events. The National Climate Risk Assessment (https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/policy/adaptation/ncra) must be required reading for all Australians. Its sobering reading confirms that the events we see as extreme today will be frequent and even more severe in coming decades. All our systems, from health to national security, are facing high to extreme risk. State and federal governments

must put people first now – stop fuelling climate change with fossil fuel developments and urgently start working together to build the protections we will need to survive the consequences of complacency.

Mass will be followed by wreath laying at Ċirkewwa site near where Oliwia Wojnowska died. Oliwia Wojnowska, 13, was killed after a giant wave carried her out to sea at Ċirkewwa . The Polish Community in Malta is holding a memorial service for Oliwia Wojnowska who died after being swept out to sea at Ċirkewwa on Monday afternoon.

The body of the 13-year old girl, who was on holiday in Malta with her family, was found following a three-day search. She had been standing on the pavement behind railings with her 49-year old father and 17-year old brother, watching the rough sea, when a large wave crashed over them. The father and son were pinned against a wall while the girl was swept out to sea. The father sustained injuries trying to grab his daughter.

A drone operator spotted the teenager's pink jacket on the rocks close to nearby Sunset Viewpoint facing Paradise Bay on Tuesday afternoon, almost 24 hours after the incident.

Her body was recovered a day later. On Thursday, the Polish Parish announced it will hold a memorial service and holy mass in her memory for the Polish community in Malta on Sunday February 1 at 10.30am at St John Bosco Chapel in Sliema.

The mass will be led by bishop Robert Chrząszcz, delegate of the Polish Episcopal Conference for the Ministry of Poland abroad.

After the mass, the community will go to the site of the tragedy in Ċirkewwa to lay wreaths and light candles.Representatives of the Embassy of Poland will also take part in the ceremony.

INVITATION –

THE ORDER OF MALTA - ANNUAL LOURDES MASS ADELAIDE

Saturday 14 Feb 2026 at 10am

The Order of Malta's annual Lourdes Mass at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide is celebrated for the intentions of all Catholic families, but the sick and infirm members of our community are particularly encouraged to participate. Those in attendance receive a blessing for good health and a bottle of water from the Lourdes sanctuary and an Order of Malta brochure from Members of the Order. Members will be available after Mass to talk about the work of the Order of Malta.

Noel Mifsud OSJ

AMAZING GRACE - 110 YEARS OLD GRAND DAUGHTER OF THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA JOSEPH HOWARD

Grace Gatt (née **Howard**; born 30 January 1916) is a Maltese supercentenarian who is currently the oldest known living person in Malta. Her age is validated by the Gerontology Research Group (GRG) and LongeviQuest (LQ).

Biography

Grace Gatt was born in Valletta, Southern Harbour Region, Malta, on 30 January 1916. She grew up in a large house in Valletta just across the Manoel Theatre (Teatru Manoel) with her parents and grandparents. Her paternal grandfather was Sir Joseph Howard, the first prime minister of Malta who served from 1921 to 1923, whom she was very close to. She recalls him to be the first person she travelled abroad with. Her mother, Adelina was the sister of Sir Arturo Mercieca who served as Chief Justice of Malta from 1924 to 1940.

At the age of 6, she developed a passion to operas, attending performances at the Manoel Theatre. She was also deeply interested in Russian history and culture and became friends with the Russian princess Nathalie Poutiatine, who fled to Malta as a refugee after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. She enjoyed travelling across Europe but never made it as far as Russia due to her cautiousness, belief in moderation and avoiding risks, which may have been a contributor to her long life. She loved cooking, preparing different dishes everyday. She was also skilled in embroidery and made flower arrangements for the wife of the Governor of Malta.

Joseph Howard
Malta's First Prime Minister

In 1940, she married Alfred Gatt, who she met as a friend at a carnival event, and secretary to George Borg Olivier while he was prime minister. In their early marriage years, the couple continued to compete in carnival dance challenges. In 1941, her family evacuated from Valletta due to the bombing conflict in Malta during World War II (1940–1942): They moved to Mosta and later to Sliema. In 1942 she gave birth to her son, Edgar, in a air-raid shelter. No less than two years later, she gave birth to her second son, John.

When she was 61, her husband passed away, and her second son, John, also passed away a few years ago. She lived in her own home until the age of 95, moving to a nursing home, where she made a lot of friends and decided to stay. She doesn't know the secret to her long life but believes that her evening ritual may contribute to her longevity. She used to have a small amount of whiskey and a light dinner of salad and boiled eggs. Due to her medications, she has since stopped doing this.

On 23 December 2024, following the death of 112-year-old Maria Farrugia, she became the oldest known living person in Malta.

On 17 April 2025, following the death of 110-year-old Theresa Ryan, she became the oldest known living Maltese-born person.

On 30 January 2026, she celebrated her 110th birthday, becoming a supercentenarian.

Grace Gatt currently lives in Sliema, Malta.

WHAT AN UNFORGETTABLE ANNUAL PORTARLINGTON FAMILY DAY

Celebrated, on Sunday 25th January, this special occasion continues to hold deep meaning for our Maltese community. It's a day that brings together the best of who we are – celebrating music, food, family, and the rich heritage that our families carried with them when they made Australia their new home. This year, more than 2,500 people came together to share in the spirit of *familja*, culture, and community. The sounds of our band, the aroma of Pastizzi and traditional Maltese dishes, the laughter of children, and the joy of reconnecting with friends made the day feel like a little piece of Malta right here at the bay.

A Day Filled with Music and Joy - A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made the day so memorable. To our incredible musicians who travelled from near and far to perform with *The Maltese Own Band,* and to our featured artist Sean Luke Spiteri, whose performance and generosity truly captivated everyone – thank you. We were also honoured by a surprise appearance from Josuel Grech, who flew in all the way from Malta. As an award-winning Elvis Tribute Artist and recent Parkes Festival champion, Josuel wowed the crowd with several special performances that will long be remembered.

Heartfelt Thanks to Our Supporters - Events like these simply wouldn't be possible without the help of our valued sponsors and community partners. Our deepest thanks go to The Original Maltese Pastizzi Co. and Ashfords Automotive Repairs for their ongoing support year after year.

We're also grateful to all our food vendors, stallholders, our talented face painter, the hardworking security team, the Lace Making Group, Knights of Melbourne & Sydney Custom Car Club, Nanna's Place Mediterranean Restaurant, and all our amazing volunteers.

A big round of applause to everyone who joined the games and activities – especially our five brave Pastizzi Eating Competition contestants. Congratulations to Tanner, who took out the title in spectacular fashion by eating TWO DOZEN Pastizzi!

Partnerships That Make It Possible - Our immense gratitude goes to our MC Emmanuel Brincat, who continues to champion Maltese associations across Victoria and has supported our band faithfully for an incredible 49 years.

A special thank you also to our co-hosts, the Portarlington Cricket Club, for their wonderful partnership and friendship. Your support helps make this community event the great success it is.

A Celebration of Komunità, Culture, and Gratitude Above all, thank you to each and every one of the 2,500 people who joined us this year. You are the heart of this event and the reason the Maltese spirit in Portarlington continues to thrive. Finally, a massive thank you to our dedicated musicians, our committee, and our incredible Portarlington Sub-Committee – a passionate team of six who work tirelessly year-round to bring this day to life. This year's celebration was truly one of *komunità*, culture, and gratitude – a tribute to our past, our journey, and the wonderful country we are proud to call home. Grazzi lil kulħadd – thank you all. We can't wait to celebrate with you again next year!

Joe Portelli - President, Maltese Own Band Philharmonic Society Inc.

Pjazza San Franġisk Pjazza Sant Wistin

ŻEWĠ PJAZEZ POPOLARI FIL-VICTORIA

Kirba tal- Kav Joe M Attard Rabat – Għawdex

Fil-qalba tar-Rabat Għawdex fejn ngħix jien, għandna żewġ pjazez ferm popolari u mfittxija, Pjazza San Franġisk u Pjazza Sant Wistin. Pjazza San Franġisk tilqa' fiha l-Ministeru għal Għawdex kif ukoll monument 'life size' tal-Fqajjar t'Assisi San Franġisk xogħol l-artist żagħżugħ Rabti Emanuel Farrugia. B'dispjaċir ikolli ngħid li s-Salib antik li nsibu hawn issa ilu għal diversi xhur maqsum fi tnejn billi kien ġarrab xi ħsarat waqt xi xogħlijiet strutturali li kienu qed isiru hawn. Sa issa ħadd għadu ma ħa ħsieb isewwi l-ħsara li ġarrab għalkemm xi żmien ilu kont ktibt dwar dan il-kaġun. Issa jew niesna m'għadhiex taqra l-ġurnali inkella inkella l-bruda kilitna u ħsiebna biss x'sa nieklu u x'sa nilbsu!

Pjazza oħra mfittxija fir-Rabat tagħna hija pjazza Sant Wistin fejn insibu jsaltan il-kunvent u l-Knisja ta' Sant Wistin li tilqa' fiha kuljum għadd sabiħ ta' vetturi biex jipparkjaw. Sewwa kienu l-linji sofor tal-Parking jingħataw passata żebgħa oħra u min jaf għadx jasal iż-żmien li tingħata wkoll passata tarmac għax il-ħofor u stoffi ma tgħoddhomx.

L-awtorita li tgħix hawnhekk tista' tixhed għal dan. F'dan il-misraħ nsibu wkoll li l-Pirjol u l-Patrijiet ħadu ħsieb jipprovdu spazju tassew kwiet u sabiħ fejn wieħed jista' jmur iqatta' ftit ħin quddiem Gesu Ewkaristija, maqtugħ mill-istorbju u l-ħamba tal-Belt. Hija kamra ċkejkna mżejna bil-mużajk bl-Ostja Mqaddsa li tgħinek tinqata' mill-għagħa u l-ħajja mgħaġġla. Sibu ftit ħin u morru żuruha u araw iniex qed nigdeb! Hawn insibu wkoll l-Oratorju Don Bosco, bejta ta' talb u attivitajiet għaż-żgħażagħ tagħna, li jista' jżommhom il-bogħod minn ħafna perikli. Fr. Effie dejjem għaddej biex iżomm struttura bħal din miexja 'l quddiem u tiffunzjona. Għinuh!

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A MALTESE HERO WHO SAVED THOUSANDS OF LIVES IN WORLD WAR

TWO
HENRIETTA CHEVALIER (SCERRI)

The Maltese are a people of courage. St. George's Cross adorned the national flag for defiance during the last World War that saw the island bombed more than London's Blitz. But there is one Maltese woman who deserves recognition in her own right – Henrietta Chevalier – a textbook example of a World War Two heroine.

A year after the turn of the 20th century, Henrietta or "Chetta" Chevalier was born in Sliema to Emmanuel and Maria Scerri. At 19, she married Thomas Chevalier. Just before the start of World War Two, the pair moved to Rome, where her husband worked as an agent for the British company Thomas Cook & Sons and went on to have six children.

Her life would be thrown into chaos after Benito Mussolini's rise to power in a facist coup d'etat. After the death of her husband and the imprisonment of one of her sons in 1939, Chevalier found herself trapped inside the facist state as it descened into chaos with the onset of WWII. This when Henrietta, widowed with children and an elderly mother to care for, took it upon herself to be a different kind of agent.

From Henrietta Chevalier to Mrs M. Her journey as a crucial uncover spy in World War Two started when she was recruited into O'Flahery's network. Founded by Monsigneur Hugh O'Flaherty, the network was a notorious escape organisation for Allied prisoners of war and civilians running from the clutches of Axis powers.

The network is attributed to have saved over 6,500 lives during the year it was in operation. At least 4,000 of those were helped by Chevalier, or, known by her nom de guerre, "Mrs M" for Malta. Mrs M gave O' Flaherty a *carte blanche* to use her third-floor apartment on Via Imperia. Despite its modest size, the apartment was used as a storehouse and safe house for anyone fleeing fascism. Thousands of men, women and children found solace there, hidden away in every corner of her few rooms.

Chevalier and her family lived at the constant risk of execution and ruthless eye of Hitler's SS, to save the lives of others. Still, it never deterred Mrs M's unsurmountable sense of hope and humour.

There were, of course, several times when the plan was nearly foiled, including one in which involved her daughter. Their apartment acted as a depot for food and supplies, which added a layer of risk because black bags could easily arouse suspicion.

On one occasion, her daughter Gemma just narrowingly escaped fascist police while buying supplies – a fact she kept from her unbeknownst mother.

Despite the constant danger, risk and drama, the Chevaliers were never caught, and Mrs M always wanted her lodgers back.

At one point in time she had four British soldiers staying with her and when asked by the Major about the risks her comment was:

"They are absolutely grand, these boys. They are just like my own children. It is all so marvellous!"

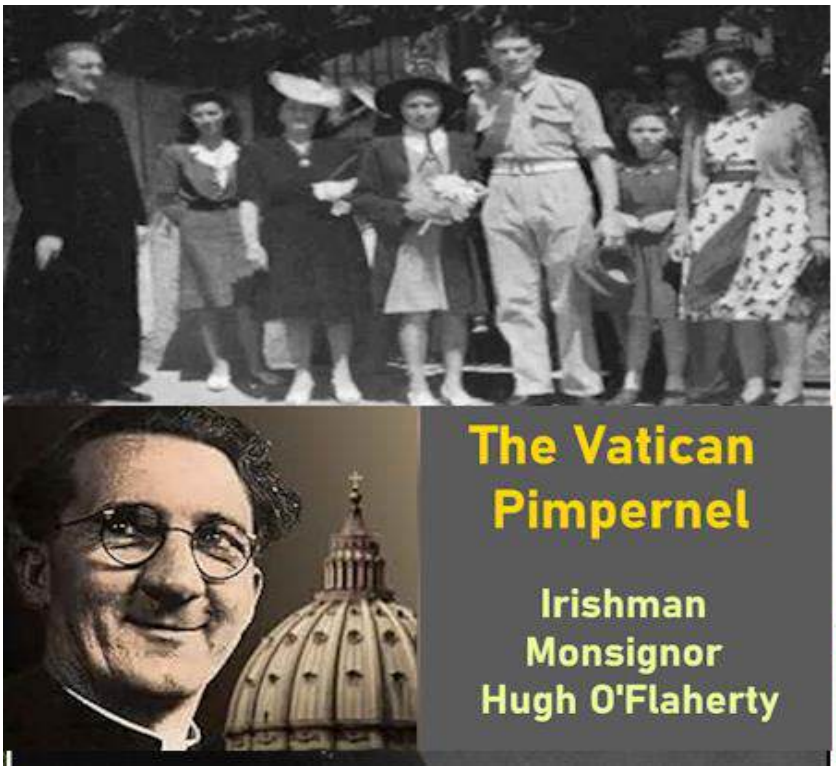
As a housewife, she knew how to make her extraordinary guests feel at home, while war loomed just outside the apartment walls. With brief experience as a nurse, she was known to head out and give medical assistance to those on the run in the city.

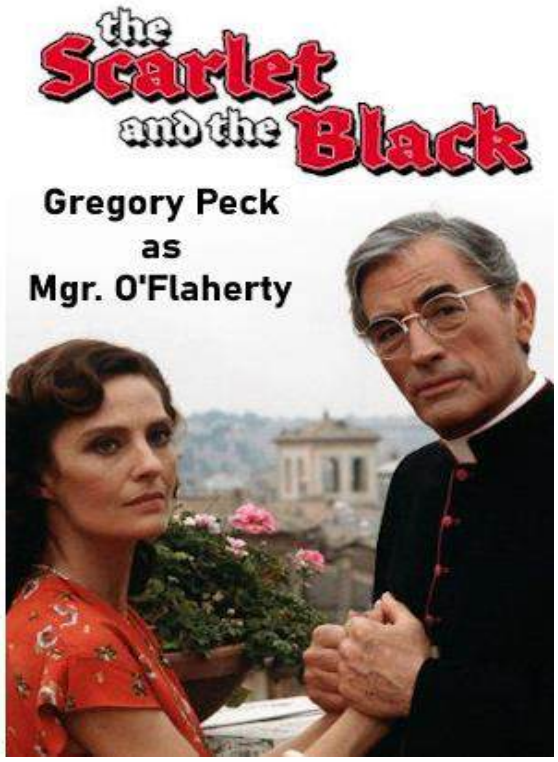
She made sure to make everyone welcome.

"At Christmas, she served brandy instead of tea, Christmas gifts were exchanged among the family and the three British lodgers," a biography notes.

A senior British officer, John Furman, who also acted as a main operator of the Rome Escape Organisation, praised Mrs M as a beacon of light in times of terror.

"What can be said of this incredible woman. I would not call her brave for it seemed to me she had no conception of fear. Her kindness and generosity were unparalleled, her maternal spirit and compassion boundless".





GHALIEX TARMIH L-ILSIEN LI TATEK OMMOK,U TITLEF GHAQLEK WARA LSIEN BARRANI? MALTIJA KIENET L-EWWEL KELMA F'FOMMOK,U BIL-MALTI TKELLIMT TIFEL DAHKANI.

CHINESE IN MALTA

46.4% of property permits for non-EU nationals in 2025 were issued to Chinese.

Chinese nationals accounted for just under half of all property demand in Malta by people outside the European Union last year.

Out of the 741 permits for property purchases by non-EU nationals issued in 2025, 344 (46.4%) were for Chinese nationals. The statistics were presented to parliament by Finance Minister Clyde Caruana in response to a question by PN MP Mario de Marco.

Indian nationals received the second-highest number of permits in 2025, totalling 61, with British nationals coming in third with 53 permits.

Demand by US nationals more than doubled between 2024 and 2025, jumping from 14 property permits to 38 last year.

These permits are needed by non-EU nationals to buy properties that are outside of specially designated zones like Portomaso and Tigné Point and other high-end property developments, meaning the data presented in parliament only captures part of the market.

The data shows demand by Chinese nationals has skyrocketed fourfold since 2021.

Chinese people accounted for 1,090 out of 2,825 total acquisitions of immovable property (AIP) permits between 2021 and 2025.

The number of Chinese nationals requiring a permit has risen from 83 in 2021, to 108 permits the following year, 204 in 2023 and a peak of 351 permits in 2024 before a slight drop last year.

China has proven to be a strong market for Malta's golden visa scheme, although a 2024 study found that people under this scheme prefer to rent a property rather than buy one.

The scheme gives wealthy investors the opportunity to become Maltese residents, with requirements including purchasing or renting a property in Malta or Gozo.

Nearly nine out of every 10 golden visa buyers (88%) are Chinese. The report suggested that golden visa buyers are paying the absolute minimum they are required to for accommodation, renting apartments that would otherwise be available to low-to-medium income renters. Out of over 2,500 golden visa applications analysed, only 67 applicants chose to purchase a property.

"According to the *2022 World Migration Report*, there are 281 million Chinese migrants globally, with Europe being the top destination, hosting approximately 86.7 million immigrants, including about 3 million Chinese. The European Golden Visa schemes, which have gained global popularity in recent years, further illustrate this trend. In Malta, Chinese citizens account for 87% of approved applicants.; in Greece, the figure is 57%; in Spain, 50%; and in Portugal, 43%."

The implication is clear: Malta has the highest proportion of Chinese immigrants among European countries.

What? This "tiny" Malta also accepts immigrants? And 87% of its approved immigrants are Chinese? Is this data reliable?

According to Residency Malta Agency data, between 2016 and 2022, a total of 2,273 main applicants and 5,303 family members were approved for permanent residency in Malta. Of these, 87% were Chinese, far surpassing the following countries: Vietnam was second with only 2.9%, Russia third with 2.6%, and South Africa and Turkey tied for fourth place, each accounting for 1%.

Residency Malta Agency pointed out that Malta launched the Malta Residence and Visa Programme in 2016, which was rebranded and relaunched as the Malta Permanent Residence Programme (MPRP) in 2021. Among the 2,273 main applicants approved under this program, 989 were granted permanent residency in 2020, the highest number in a single year, making the program the second-largest EU Golden Visa scheme that year.

Based on the 87% figure, in the short span of 2016 to 2022, at least 1,977 Chinese people immigrated to this Mediterranean island nation, which is smaller than Beijing's Chaoyang District. And this doesn't even include their family members!

In the following years, although the Maltese government tightened application requirements and increased investment amounts, the enthusiasm of Chinese people for immigrating to Malta doesn't seem to have waned much. This can be seen from the headlines on various "Simplified Chinese websites" (websites used by mainland Chinese residents or overseas Chinese with mainland backgrounds) in recent years: "2023 Marks the Highest Number of Malta Permanent Residence Applications in History," "Over 33,000 Malta Residence Permits Issued in 2024," "Online Application System for 2025 Malta Permanent Residence MPRP Launched"…

Since China implemented its reform and opening-up policy, its economy has developed rapidly, and people's living standards have improved significantly, especially the income growth of the urban middle class. But why do so many people still insist on leaving the vast and resource-rich China to immigrate to this "minuscule" Mediterranean nation?

The reasons are naturally numerous. Many Chinese immigrants to Malta value its "four-in-one" status: it's a member of the European Union, the Eurozone, the Schengen Area, and the Commonwealth. Some Chinese are drawn to Malta's Mediterranean climate: winters are mild, and summers aren't too hot. For those urban Chinese middle-class individuals tired of daily overtime and the "996" work culture (working 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week), Malta's relaxed pace of life is a major attraction. Others who feel they don't meet the requirements for immigrating to other countries are attracted by Malta's relatively lenient application conditions and flexible investment options.

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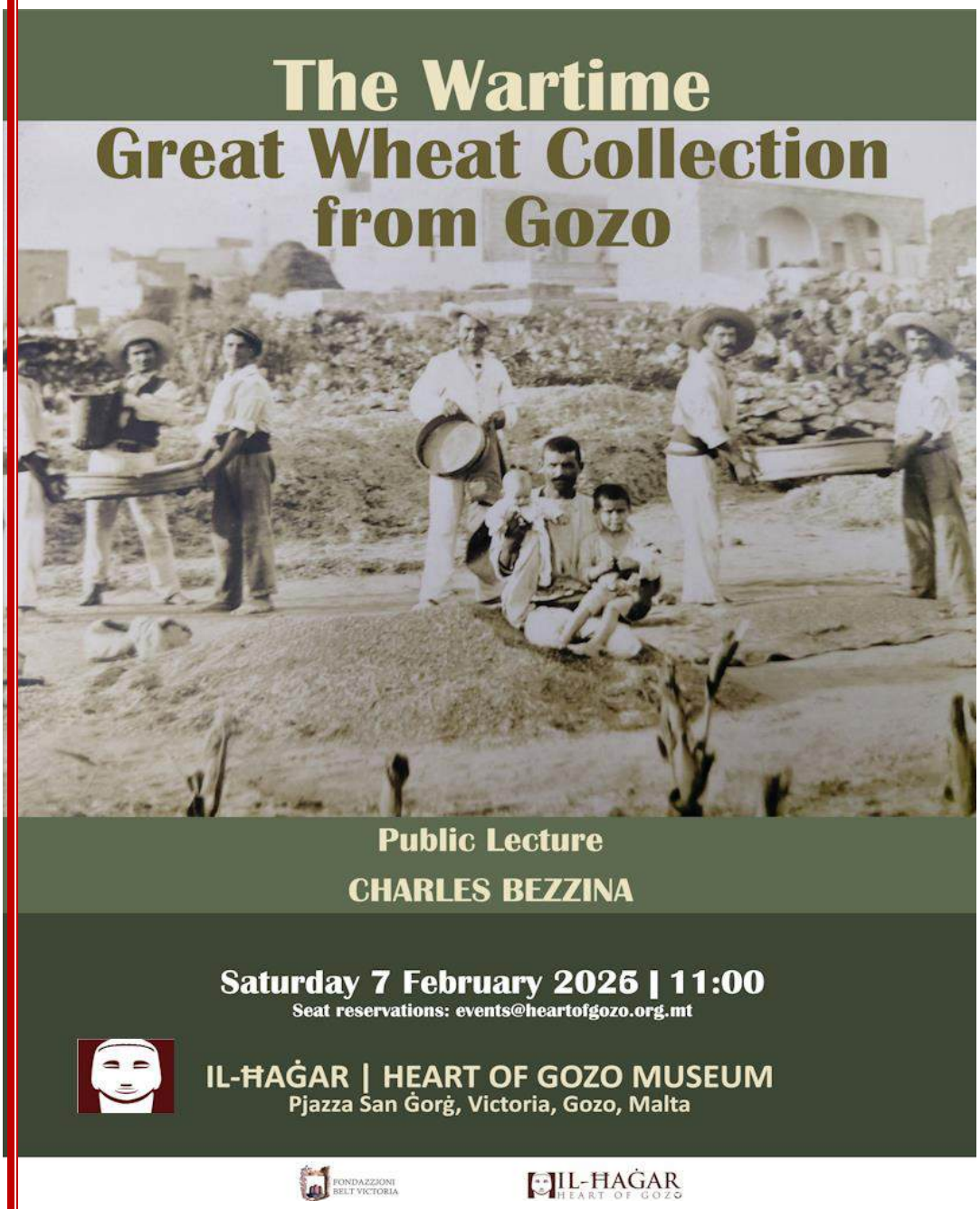


The Wartime Great Wheat Collection from Gozo

Since the Maltese and Gozitan population placed their full trust in the British Empire, the enemy was ultimately doomed. This was achieved despite the many sacrifices the people were forced to endure. Malta was devastated, and in 1942 defenceless Gozo also became a target of enemy attacks. Hunger was widespread. Faced with this crisis, the British Government was compelled to take a drastic measure in order to save the islands: the collection of wheat from all farmers. In Gozo, which was more agricultural than Malta, the wheat collection began in June 1942. But who were those who assisted the Government in collecting the wheat from Gozo? What really happened?

- Who assisted the government in collecting wheat from Gozo?
- What truly unfolded during this operation?
- Can the effort be considered a success or a failure?

These questions and more will be discussed in a public talk by Charles Bezzina at Il-Ħaġar Museum on **Saturday 7 February at 11:00**. Mr Bezzina is a renowned researcher on Gozo during the Second World War and has published over 20 books, including award-winning works. A retired bank manager, he is also an accomplished poet and an active member of literary societies, as well as of the Imperial War

Ms Monica Borg Debrincat c/o Il-Ħaġar - Heart of Gozo Museum

JEWS IN MALTA

Malta

Valletta. Photo by Bengt Nyman – Wikipedia

It seems that the Jewish presence on the island of Malta dates back more than 3000 years! Sailors descended from the tribes of Zevouloun and Asher accompanied Phoenician sailors. An ancient union between Jews and Phoenicians, which prospered and grew stronger over the centuries.

Traces of this link can be found in particular on the island of Gozo in the north-west of Malta, where sailors landed at the time. Similar traces are also present in the Jewish catacombs of the Greek and Roman eras. Some of the catacombs still standing today showcase Jewish symbols, including menoroth. The most famous being the **catacombs of St Paul** in Rabat.

Saint-Paul. Photo by G.Mannaerts – Wikipedia

Following the Arab and Norman conquests, the island's Jews remained integrated in Malta and participated in civil society. In 1240, 25 Jewish families lived on the main island of Malta and 8 in Gozo.

During the Middle Ages, there were Jewish communities in Mdina, Birgu, Valletta and Zejtun. Thus, we find in Mdina a "Jewish silk market", in Birgu a **Jewish street** and in Zejtun a Judaic place. There are also "Gates of the Jews" in several cities, the only places where Jews were allowed to enter the city.

Among the figures of the period was the mystical author Avraham Abulafia who resided in Comino between 1285 and his death a few years later. There he wrote his "Sefer ha Ot" and "Imrei Shefer".

Chabad House in Malta. Photo by Frank Vincentz – Wikipedia

The Jews came mainly from Sardinia, Sicily, Spain and North Africa. And their living conditions were relatively less difficult than in most Mediterranean regions at the time. Sometimes occupying prestigious positions such as that of chief physician. Position held in particular by two members of the Safaradi family, Bracone and Abraham.

The Jewish population increased under Spanish rule. At the beginning of the 15th century, the Bishop of Malta as well as civil authorities removed discrimination against Jews. Xilorun, a Jew from Gozo was even appointed Ambassador of Malta to Sicily. However, the Inquisition of 1492 led to the confiscation of their property and their expulsion. Some fled, and others were converted. Many Maltese are still found today with surnames of Jewish origin.

Jewish Cemetery, Marsa. Photo by Contineltaleurope – Wikipedia

During the reign of the Knights of the Order of St. John, which lasted until the defeat by France in 1798, the population was subjected to martial politics. Without distinction, all kinds of populations found themselves victims of military raids on sea and land, liable to be captured and enslaved. This was particularly the case with the Jews, who were also obliged to wear distinctive signs. There are many accounts of the looting, murder, and sale of slaves during these centuries.

On the road to Egypt, Napoleon conquered Malta in 1798 and therefore applied French law there, including the abolition of slavery and equality between all citizens. This acquired freedom was maintained by the British conquerors soon after. In 1846, the community had its first official rabbi since the time of the Inquisition: Josef Tajar.

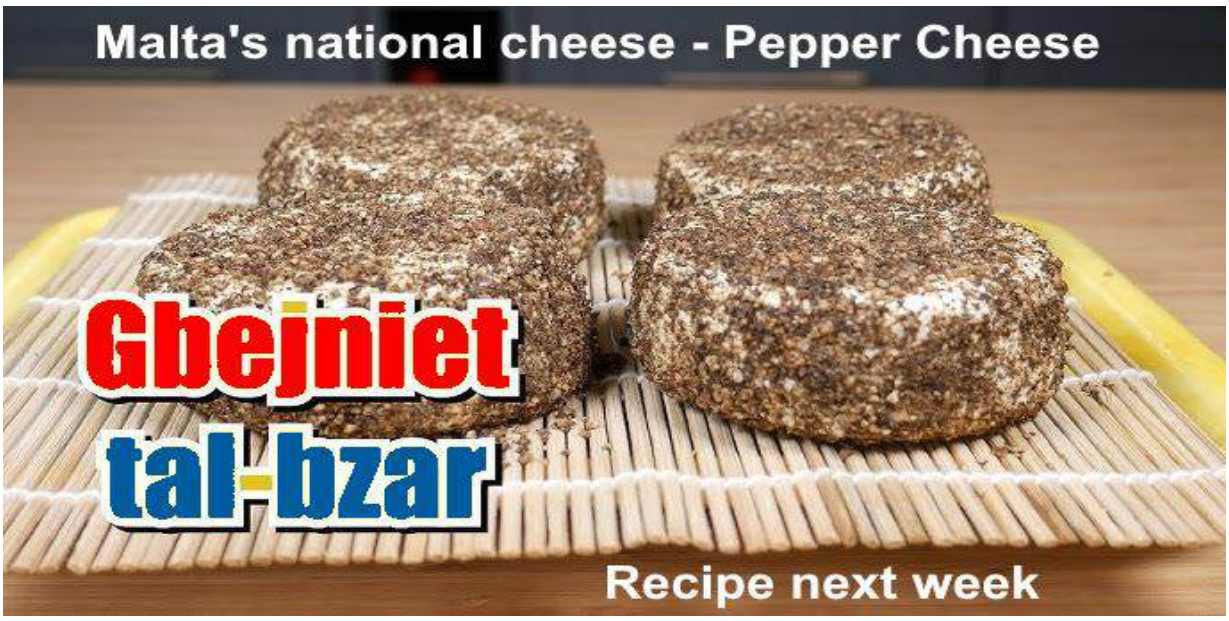
Ta'Braxia Cemetery, Malta. Photo by No swan so fine – Wikipedia

During World War II, Jews fleeing Nazism did not have to have a visa to arrive in Malta, which allowed thousands of them to seek refuge there. Many Maltese Jews enlisted in the British Army at the time.

The country gained its independence in 1964. Following neighborhood renovation projects, the old synagogue in Malta was destroyed in 1979. In 2013, a **Chabad House** was also established on the island.

The very small and ancient Maltese Jewish community is composed of 200 persons in 2025. Most Malta Jews live in Valletta.

There are three Jewish cemeteries in Malta. The oldest cemetery in **Kalkara** dates from the 18th century. In the suburbs of **Marsa** is the second, which dates from the mid-20th century. The third is located in **Tal Braxia** and is abandoned.



FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL MALTESE HOUSES

Malta has a long history of architecture, but along with the grandiose buildings, there were also the functional living spaces built for people, from the older farmhouses to the quainter 19th and early 20th century townhouses.

Malta has a long history of architecture, but along with the grandiose buildings, there were also the functional living spaces built for people, from the older farmhouses to the quainter 19th and early 20th century townhouses.

There are a lot of peculiar features to Maltese houses, including the Arab influences that continue to make a mark on our buildings today. Here are some of the features to look out for next time you're out and about!

PATTERNED TILES -- Ever wondered where Maltese patterned tiles come from? Well, while they are enjoying a comeback today, cement tiles were popular back all over the place back the 1800s. Spain, Greece, Morrocco, France, Italy and others have their own style of patterned tiles, and are **likely to have originated from a mosaic style of tiling from the Ottomans.** Not only were they in vogue in places where the Ottomans have left their mark, but were also moved on to the rest of Europe during the height of Orientalism **(the European fascination with the 'exotic' lands of the East).**

Maltese tiles are likely to **have been introduced from Spain,** and is a relatively young feature of Maltese architecture at 300 years old.

WELLS – *BIR* - The Knights of St. John were always excellent administrators, and one of the laws they implemented was that **all houses were to have a well to ensure water supply.** While farmhouses always had wells and reservoirs, the law made sure that new houses being built, like in Valletta and the Three Cities, would have a well. Many examples can be found around the island, with some wells being situated in basements, kitchens and tiny courtyards of city houses.

This has stayed on as a tradition until today, where townhouses, terraced houses, villas and even maisonettes would have a well built to collect rain water.

MUXRABIJA AND MALTESE BALCONIES

Maltese balconies are almost a national symbol, but did you know that they originate in the Arab *mushrabiya*? The *muxrabija* (literally 'peephole'), is a small box on the house facade from where **women could look out without being seen, due to their being confined to the house.** In Malta the *muxrabija* was replaced by the Maltese balcony, a cross between a European balcony and the *muxrabija* itself, that had the **same function of 'peeping', as well as airing the house.**

Some *mushrabiya* can still be found around, like in Triq Santu Rokku, Birkirkara and Triq Doni, Rabat.

Fish knockers

It is a common misconception that the fishy doorknobs are 'dolphins'; they are fish and they date back to an old Arab tradition. As we well know, Arabs have lived on Malta for a long time before the Knights of St. John, and some customs have lived on.

The fish knocker originates from a custom that saw the placing of fish in front of the door, either by the door jamb or hung; the **fish signified good luck usually after a wedding or birthing.**

FARMHOUSES - For this, put yourself in the shoes of the local farming community of 1400s Malta. Raids by brigands and Ottoman Turks are common, your cattle and crops are your livelihood, and you only travel by donkey and cart. This is the reason **farmhouses have small doors, slit windows and high walls—they are in fact for security against attack.** Roofs would have had a couple of dogs that kept guard and acted as security alarms, and the walls were built thick in two layers (*tad-dobblu*) with earth filling in between.

BBC World Service

SONIA GANDHI, MD, PHD

Professor of Neurology & Group Leader at UCL & The Francis Crick Institute
Location: London United Kingdom

Parkinson's disease is the fastest-growing neurological condition in the world. Dr Sonia Gandhi is working to change that... Parkinson's disease is a progressive brain disorder which causes symptoms including tremors and slower movement.

It affects around 11.8 million people around the world - and that's forecast to double by 2030. Dr Sonia Gandhi is hoping to stop that in its tracks.

She's Professor of Neurology at University College London, and Assistant Research Director at the Francis Crick Institute - and she's learning more about Parkinson's by building model brains.

Sonia says she owes her insatiable curiosity - and her work ethic - to her mother and father, who met in India in the 1960s. Both were the first in their families to go to university. Her mother even refused to eat until her parents allowed her to travel to do a PhD in biochemistry. "It was very much her curiosity I remember growing up, and her clarity of understanding which shaped me as a child," says Sonia.

As for her father: "he just worked so hard."

"His work ethos combined with my mother's quick thinking and intelligence were both big influences on me growing up."

Her parents moved to the UK, and Sonia grew up in Cardiff, Wales. She was so bright that she skipped ahead several years in school.

She went on to study medicine, specialising in Parkinson's disease for her PhD. She had always wanted to study the brain - and meet a large, unmet need.

The question which interested her the most was simple: by the time people go to their doctors with movement problems caused by Parkinson's, they may have had the disease for 10 or 20 years - so what happens during this lost time?

Sonia says that by the point of diagnosis, parts of the brain can have already degenerated by 60-70%. Researchers have struggled to develop models of the human brain that would allow them to study what happens before a diagnosis is made.

"The human brain is very unique, its complexity is unparalleled," she says.

Now, Sonia uses innovative methods to generate lab-grown models of human brains that address some of this complexity and how we're all wired slightly differently.

She believes this will help science better understand how the disease progresses in different people from an early stage, and how we can slow it down.

"I've given a lot of my time, life, energy to this," she says. "I think this community will reach the right answers. So I'm feeling optimistic."

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE - THE FUTURE OF AGEING SERVICES

What happens when one in three people in Malta is over the age of 65? Who will provide informal care as families shrink and demand grows? What role will technology play? And what are the consequences if no clear direction is chosen at all?

These are some of the questions that will shape discussions at *A Caring Nation*, a national conference examining the Future of Ageing Services in Malta, organised by Healthmark and the International Institute on Ageing, United Nations–Malta (INIA).

An expert group of keynote speakers, analyst and practitioners will also discuss the workforce delivering formal care in residential long-term care facilities and the need to cope with the envisioned increases in dementia diagnoses.

The conference will be held at Xara Lodge on April 16th and early bird tickets can be bought from showshappening.com today.

International and national experts will contribute to the discussion, including Ms Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing at the United Nations in New York, who will situate Malta's challenges within a global context.

Dr Patrick Barbara, Consultant Psychiatrist within the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing will be delivering a keynote presentation, focusing on the local realities and pressures already being felt across Malta's health and care systems.

A unique contribution will come from Mr Chris Meilak, an economist at EY, who will present a foresight-based exploration of how ageing services in Malta could evolve under different future scenarios. Rather than predicting a single outcome, his intervention will outline four contrasting futures, ranging from a technology-driven care system powered by AI and robotics, to a community-centred model built on intergenerational solidarity; from a scenario of systemic collapse and overwhelmed services, to one where caregiving becomes more tightly regulated and state-enforced.

The conference will also feature a panel on Intergenerational Solidarity: Past, Present, Future, bringing together voices from different age groups, including university students and older adults, to discuss responsibility, connection and the kind of social contract Malta is willing to uphold.

In addition, academics will present papers responding to a national call for contributions on active ageing, rights-based care, innovation and the future of ageing services.

"As we respond to the daily pressures facing ageing services, we also have a social responsibility to think long-term and ensure sustainability," said Charlotte Sant Portanier, CEO of Healthmark. "The decisions we take today will shape how we live, age and care for one another in the decades ahead. This conference will create the space and mind set for forward thinking."

For Marvin Formosa, Director of the International Institute on Ageing, United Nations–Malta (INIA), the conference builds on recent national policy developments in active ageing and dementia care and charts possible paths for the foreseeable future.

As Malta's population continues to age, A Caring Nation aims to move the discussion beyond regulation and service delivery, opening a broader national conversation about responsibility, resilience and the future of care.

Chicken with Garlic, Capers and Anchovies

Compared with Mediterranean countries (including Malta), where they feature regularly on the menu, anchovies are somewhat underrated in Australia and in many countries in the world. Incorporated into a dish they become almost undetectable. Even people who say they hate them can be converted. I think you will be sold on this easy dressing for Caesar Salad.
Variations of today's chicken recipe kept popping up on my phone, so I thought it was time to give it a try. It makes a very tasty and quick mid-week dinner.

Ingredients

800g – 1 kg boneless, skinless chicken thighs (6-8 pieces)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
6 cloves garlic, peeled
¼ cup olive oil
5-6 anchovy fillets, chopped
2 Tbs drained capers
¼ tsp chilli flakes
Juice of 1 lemon
Chopped parsley to garnish

Method

Trim chicken of any excess fat then season on both sides with salt and pepper. If liked you can cut each thigh in half – I didn't.
Go easy on the salt as the anchovies are salty. Heat olive oil in a large deep frying pan with a lid.. Add chicken pieces and cook for 5-7 minutes each side, or until nicely browned. Remove from the pan.
To the pan add 5 of the garlic cloves, crushed or smashed and chopped, the anchovies, capers and chilli flakes. Cook, stirring, for 3-5 minutes then return the chicken to the pan. Cover with a lid and cook for a further 10 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through, turning them over to coat them with the sauce halfway through.
Remove chicken from the pan. Add lemon juice and remaining clove of garlic, smashed and chopped, to the pan. Cook, stirring, over high heat until thickened and starting to get sticky around the edges. Return chicken to the pan, spoon some sauce over each piece, garnish with parsley and serve.
Serves 6. Send any questions or feedback for this article via the Café Cat website.

Linda Peek -Café Cat- linda@cafecat.com.au via gmail.mcsv.net

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FINALIST – AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2026 - EMILY BRIFFA

Hobart cafe helping unemployed locals secure paid work by helping them out with hands-on training

Tasmanian Emily was among the finalist for the AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2026. She's been recognised for her work at social enterprise cafe Hamlet, which trains and employs people with disability, neuro divergence and mental health concerns.

Emily Briffa's social enterprise, Hamlet, has helped many disadvantaged and marginalised people in Hobart overcome employment barriers and transform their lives.

Hamlet is a community café that provides individualised training, work readiness and wrap-around support to Tasmanians with disability, neurodivergence, and mental health concerns who are experiencing barriers to employment.

Since its inception, Hamlet has helped more than 700 people gain experience to enter the job market and given them valuable skills and training.

Emily has continued to expand Hamlet's operations, creating more job opportunities in a variety of catering and hospitality roles. Under her leadership, Hamlet boasts an impressive 75% employment placement rate for people who complete its training programs.

Hamlet's focus on social inclusion for marginalised groups is a model for what social enterprises can achieve. Driven by Emily's passion and vision, the café has become an integral part of Hobart's community and the lives of many people.

SHAUN BONNET Winner of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

MALTESE/AUSTRLAIN AWARDED THE MEDAL OF AUSTRALIA EMDAL

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division

Mr Shaun Keith Bonett, Vaucluse NSW 2030

For service to the community through a range of organisations.

This recognition reflects Shaun's long-standing contribution to Australia through the establishment and stewardship of organisations grounded in integrity, accountability, and long-term responsibility.

Shaun wrote on his Facebook page "I'm humbled and honoured to today be conferred with the Medal of the Order of Australia at the 2026 Australia Day Awards.

It is a privilege to be recognised among so many outstanding Australians with this prestigious award.

From when he started his first business, he was driven by the purpose of contributing to society, striving to build up the people around me on the journey. This award is as much about the recognition of a united network of partners as it is about individual contribution. IHe has been shaped into the leader he am today by everyone that I have worked with, and I'd like to thank the many incredible teams, partners and charities whose collective efforts have delivered great work.

My commitment – or our shared commitment – is to continue to drive positive impact in many different ways. Together, guided by principles of respect, listening, and unity, we can achieve great things.

Shaun Bonétt (born 1 January 1971) is an Maltese-Australian entrepreneur[1] and property developer who founded and is CEO of the Precision Group.[3][4]
Shaun Bonétt was born in London, England, to parents of Australian and Maltese descent, Marlene and Anton Bonétt, the latter of whom was an oncologist for the World Health Organization.
Bonett moved to Australia in 1978[5] and studied at Saint Ignatius' College, Adelaide.[1] In the 1980s, Bonétt worked as a law clerk in Adelaide, and studied at the University of Adelaide, graduating in 1991 with a Bachelor of Laws and Arts.[1][6] Bonétt is also a graduate of the University of South Australia.
In 2022, the University of South Australia conferred to Bonétt an honorary doctorate.[17]

Personal life

In 2004, Bonnet married model, Vanessa Baron. As of 2021, they have a daughter, Eve, and a son, Gabriel.

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