Visits by Prof. May Cassar and Dr Nigel Blades
February 2004

From the 11th to the 13th of February 2004, the Institute for Masonry and Construction Research welcomed May Cassar, Director of the UCL (University College London) Centre for Sustainable Heritage, and Dr Nigel Blades, Development Officer from the same Centre, as Visiting Lecturers within the programme leading to the award of a Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Conservation Technology for Masonry Buildings. Both May Cassar and Nigel Blades were able to travel to the University of Malta after the Institute for Masonry and Construction Research at the University of Malta and UCL signed an EC Socrates Agreement last year.

This visit led to three days of intensive lectures, discussions and practicals for the 5 postgraduate students attending the course.

May Cassar tutored the students for a full day on the 11th February on Values, Sustainability and Conservation Planning. This included formal lectures, discussions and individual short presentations by the students. Full use was made of the available time as the students were set learning tasks to prepare in advance of the classroom teaching.

In the evening of the 11th, Prof. Cassar gave a Public Lecture at the headquarters of Heritage Malta on “Rethinking Conservation”.

![Public Lecture Image]
This lecture, which was well attended, focused on a discussion of whether the interpretation of conservation needed to be more inclusive; that the barriers between the conservation of the built heritage and the natural environment are artificial and that conservation of the whole context - the cultural landscape is a far more appropriate interpretation of what we do.

On the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} of February, Nigel Blades lectured the students on Air Pollution Damage to Materials in the Indoor Environment. A formal lecture on the morning of the 12\textsuperscript{th} led to a practical session on the monitoring of NO\textsubscript{2} inside and outside buildings. Permission to monitor the Old University Building in Valletta was kindly granted by Heritage Malta, where its headquarters are based. Diffusion tubes had been installed on Merchants Street, St Christopher's Street, inside the courtyard and inside the building two weeks previously, with the help of Mr Mario Coleiro and Mr Martin Spiteri, both of Heritage Malta. These tubes were removed in the afternoon of 12\textsuperscript{th} February.

The amount of NO\textsubscript{2} deposited in the tubes was analysed at the laboratories of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Malta. These facilities were made available to Dr Blades and the students through the kind permission of the Dean of the Faculty of Science. The help of Mr Mark Zerafa of the Department of Chemistry in the setting up of the practical is gratefully acknowledged.
After NO$_2$ levels were determined, Dr Blades explained to the students the use of the model developed during the EC 5$^{th}$ Framework Programme project 'Innovative Modelling of Museum Pollution and Conservation Thresholds (IMPACT)' This EC research project is assisting museums in the control of damaging gaseous pollutants.

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainableheritage/impact/

IMPACT has produced a web-based software tool (referred to as the model earlier) to assist museums, galleries and archives in making sensible decisions about the risks posed to their collections by air pollution.