

**Female Cloistered Monasteries in Malta:
Issues and Challenges in Safeguarding Living Religious
Heritage in the Event of Secularisation**

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty for the Built Environment, University of Malta in part
fulfilment of the requirements for the attainment of the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural
Heritage Management

July 2022



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To my family and dearest Chokki

Acknowledgments

I would like to start by thanking Dr Shirley Cefai for her role as supervisor of this dissertation and Dr Reuben Grima as course-coordinator, for his guidance and support. I am especially grateful to the Abbesses, Mother Superiors and communities of the monasteries of St Margaret, Bormla, St Ursula, Valletta, St Scholastica, Birgu and St Peter's, Mdina for embracing my request and providing insight on their spiritual identity, their traditional knowledge and where possible permitted access to their spaces within enclosure. Without their contribution, this dissertation would not have been possible. In this respect, a special mention goes to Mother Superior Pawlina Xuereb, Mother Superior Agnese Zammit, Abbess Maria Tiralongo and Abbess Maria Adeodata Testaferarrata de Noto.

I would also like to thank Rev. Dr Nicholas Doublet, Diocesan Archivist and Mr Michael Pace Ross Administrative Secretary at the Archdiocese of Malta for their assistance in advocating this research. A special mention goes out to Dr Petra Caruana Dingli for her advice, knowledge, and her assistance during the visits to St Peter's monastery. The help and encouragement of Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Ms Simone Mizzi and of Rev. Dr Edgar Vella are also duly noted.

I would finally like to thank my husband Steve, my son Alex and my family for their understanding, constant support, and encouragement.

Abstract

This dissertation is born out of concern for the dwindling cloistered communities residing within Maltese monasteries of high heritage value and the implications this might have, among other concerns, on the spaces of significance they inhabit. Since it is understood that the significance of living religious heritage is intrinsic to the living element, the aim of this study is to anticipate the discourse of abandonment of sites and instead to focus on preemptive measures that envisage identifying and safeguarding the accumulated significance of a living heritage site at risk, by valorizing the central role of their core-communities.

The methodology adopted for the purpose of this study tested the combination of a 'living heritage approach' designed to prioritise the 'living dimension' with a 'value-based assessment' that constitutes common practice in matters relating to decision-making in heritage management. Anthropological-ethnographic methods, such as semi-structured interviews with a selection of cloistered nuns, together with observational, phenomenological and historical approaches were incorporated within the research. This study also proposed a methodology for numerically quantifying 'current use of space' in an attempt to tangibly portray the extent of risk that these living heritage monuments are facing due to diminishing use by their communities.

This research reaffirmed the importance of the 'theory of continuity' as central to the definition of living religious heritage. It also introduced a method of applying this central concept and using it as a measure for quantifying risk, resulting in a numerical value for the current use of monasteries, thus enabling the classification of risk and outlining urgency. From the qualitative research applied, recommendations for best practice were established. Furthermore, an understanding of the shift in values once the community becomes dispersed was obtained. This study also tested the initial application of preemptive measures intended at highlighting elements of the intangible that will become obsolete to memory.

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Glossary

Associative Value	<i>...most heritage places will have intangible values derived from peoples' feelings about, understanding of, and relationship to a place, its history, and the uses to which it has been traditionally put. More and more intangible values (also known as 'associative values') are an important element of many heritage places... Often this interest in intangible values is expressed as a desire to know more about the people who lived and worked at such place, rather than about particular architectural styles or archaeologically defined cultures. (UNESCO, 2018b, Para 28, p. 8).</i>
Associations	<i>Associations mean the connections that exist between people and place (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Article 1.15.) Associations may include social or spiritual values and cultural responsibilities for a place. (Explanation to Article 1.15)</i>
Belvedere	<i>A small house or structure, sometimes with one side open, designed to give a beautiful view (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, n.d.)</i>
Communicative Memory	<i>Explained by Jan Assmann as memory related to the diffuse transmission of memories in everyday life through orality, and cultural memory – in which the speech was focused – referring to objectified and institutionalized memories, that can be stored, transferred and reincorporated throughout generations (Meckien, 2013, n.p.).</i>
Corridors	<i>Horizontal circulation was provided by corridors and vertical circulation by stairwells (Coomans, 2018, p. 69).</i>
Cultural Memory	<i>Cultural memory, on the other hand, is limited to the recent past, evokes personal and autobiographical memories, and is characterized by a short term (80 to 110 years), from three to four generations. Due to its informal character, it does not require expertise on the part of those who transmit it. (Meckien, 2013, n.p.)</i>
Cultural Significance	<i>Cultural Significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present and future generations. Cultural Significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups" (ICOMOS, 1999. Burra Charter, Article 1.2).</i>

Choir (Inner Church)	<i>The inner church will have a nave only, without chapels. The floor will all be on the same level, and not elevated by steps in any part... Great care must be taken that the inner church, which is the nuns' church, is not built near a public road (Borromeo 1577, p. 112)...the nuns were to be isolated from everyone including the confessors and priests celebrating Mass. The interior church had the required choir stalls and a cloistered entrance connecting with a private courtyard and the rest of the monastic complex... (Note no. 2 by Voelker in Borromeo 1577, p. 112).</i>
Crypt	<i>A crypt is a subterranean vaulted space..., intended to receive the tombs of holy people... (Coomans, 2018, p. 102)</i>
Dormitories	<i>...if the dormitories are not common halls and real cubicles separate and distinct are built, they should be systematically arranged on both sides of a central passageway...(Borromeo 1577, p. 124).</i>
Enclosure	<i>The cloister of a religious community which reserves certain parts of the residence to the exclusive use of the members of the community. Strict enclosure, called papal, is the standard for other, less restricted forms of cloister. It pertains to religious institutes of women who are strictly contemplative (Catholic Dictionary, 2022).</i>
Enclosed garden	In Maltese monasteries this space refers to the main courtyard area. These areas are generally surrounded by covered walkways referred to as loggias. The enclosed garden is a space dedicated to sustainable water practices, the cultivation of fruit trees, plants, and flowers. It provides quick external access from one part of the monastery to the other. It is also an important provider of light and ventilation to the interior spaces and can be used in solitude or during recreational activities especially in summer (author).
Ethnographic Approaches	<i>Ethnographical Approaches.... include the historical, as well as the social and political context of the site as a means of understanding contemporary sociocultural patterns and cultural groups (Low, 2002, p.32).</i>
Functional Value	<i>Function is a cultural variable relating to the society who constructed and utilize the structure (Gomez-Roblez, 2010, p. 152).</i>
Historical Approaches	<i>Historical approaches locate a particular site, place, or built form in its temporal context... they can provide insight into past values of the site and how perceptions and significance</i>

have changed over time... while historical approaches address past users...they do not address the current users of the site (Low, 2002, p.32).

Infirmary	<i>The infirmary, that is the place where the sick or convalescent nuns are cared for...(Borromeo 1577, p. 126)</i>
Inner sacristy	An area within enclosure used by the community to store vestments and other articles related with use of the choir and the monastery church. A communication wheel is used to pass articles from the inner sacristy to the priest in the outer sacristy (author).
Kitchen/ Workspaces	<i>The kitchen should be located as close as possible to the refectory so that the dishes can be handed through a window or small passageway in-between to the nuns who serve in the refectory. The kitchen will be spacious and with a fireplace...The following rooms should be annexed to the kitchen; a small room for apportioning cooking foods; a small room to be used as a pantry for daily food and provisions; a place for washing dishes, pots and food utensils; a courtyard with a well (Borromeo 1577, p. 118).</i>
Novitiate	<i>The novitiate or schoolroom where the novices live should be built in a location separated from those places frequented by the professed nuns. The site should be spacious and situated so that it receives good air... (Borromeo 1577, p. 125).</i>
Observational Methodology	<i>Observational methodologies are the mainstay of qualitative researchers, and they include simple observation of activities and behavioural mapping, as well as elaborate systems of time-lapse photography of public spaces and nonverbal communication strategies for understanding the built environment (Low, 2002, p.32).</i>
Phenomenological Approaches	<i>Phenomenological approaches focus on “place” and on “how place grows out of experience, and how, in turn, it symbolises that experience (Richardson 1984, cited in Low, 2002, p.32).</i>
Parlour	<i>The cells for conversations [or parlatorium], both inner and outer, should be built in a place that is not remote and hidden, but in plain sight and close to the door of the monastery reception room (Borromeo, 1577, p.119).</i>
Recreational hall	A space dedicated to communal activities as prescribed by the rules and regulations of cloistered communities [author].
Refectory	<i>The dining room, called refectory, should be in the location most convenient to the other parts of the monastery. It will be</i>

large enough so that not only all the nuns residing in the monastery at the time can be comfortably seated along the walls, but also those who are likely to be received into the monastery in the future, depending on its size and resources. It will have at the head a decoration of sacred images, appropriately and piously painted. At the center of the side walls there will be a pulpit, from which spiritual reading can be distinctly heard everywhere (Borromeo 1577, p. 117).

Secularisation	<i>The process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose their social significance (Bryan Wilson 1966 as cited in Crisan, 2017, pp. 30-31).</i>
Social value	<i>Refers to the associations that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them (Burra Charter, 2013. Practice Note, Understanding and assessing cultural significance, p.4).</i>
Sociocultural values	<i>Sociocultural values are at the traditional core of conservation – values attached to an object, building, or place because it holds meaning for people or social groups due to its age, beauty, artistry, or association with a significant person or event or (otherwise) contributes to processes of cultural affiliation (Mason, 2002, p.11)</i>
Spiritual value	<i>Refers to the intangible values and meanings embodied in or evoked by a place which give it importance in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Practice Note, Understanding and assessing cultural significance, p.4).</i>
Typological Value	<i>This value is derived from the building's architectural typology, refined through time to host specifically defined activities (Gomez-Roblez, 2010, p. 151).</i>
Use	<i>Use means the functions of a place, including the activities, traditional and customary practices that may occur at the place or are dependent on the place. (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Article 1.10).</i>

List of Abbreviations

CICLSA	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
FRH	Future for Religious Heritage
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
PCFC	Pontifical Council for Culture
PRERICO	The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Places of Religion and Ritual
PVR	Pastoral Visitation Report
RHD	Religious Heritage Discourse
SIOCH	Superintendence of Cultural Heritage
SVC	Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHL	World Heritage List

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of Dissertation

The inhabited female cloistered monastery has survived as a unique typology of living religious heritage. Defined by the concept of *enclosure*¹, these sites combine vast architectural complexes built to fulfil highly specific functions as dictated by papal law and liturgy with gender specific communities living a rigid, religious traditional way of life. When still inhabited by communities, monasteries bear strong existential meaning as they survive as direct evidence of the communities' presence (Bartolomei, 2021). They are also perfect examples of the inseparability of the tangible and intangible elements associated with religious heritage.

For the past decades, living religious heritage has been experiencing a decline due to diminishing vocations (Holy See Press Office, 2019). The process of *secularisation* is also affecting female religious communities resulting in the gradual abandonment of monastic complexes, launching these monuments as heritage at risk on multiple levels (Bartolomei, 2021; Bartolomei, 2019),

The aim of this dissertation is to focus on female cloistered monasteries as living heritage monuments presently at risk of abandonment due to dwindling vocations (Bartolomei, 2021; Bartolomei, 2019). This international phenomenon is unfolding at varying speeds (Holy See Press Office, 2019) in different countries and each monastery presents a case-study with its own set of variables that merits assessing. In realistic terms, the sudden loss of the 'living' component of religious heritage sites poses a risk on all its aspects be it, the architecture, works of art, libraries and archives, ethnographic materials, furnishings but also its long-standing traditions, rituals, and narratives (Bartolomei, 2021). All these elements contribute to the monument's identity and if closure is not preceded by a systematic management of its tangible and intangible assets, there lies the risk of dispersal through loss or malpractice (PCFC, 2022) leading to an incomplete assessment of the site's significance.

¹ Italicized English words that appear *infra* text, are defined in the glossary.

1.2 Objectives

By acknowledging these monasteries as living religious heritage at risk, it is the intention of the researcher to assess the impact that diminishing *use* by the communities has on the site's significance. This means that the architecture of the monastic complex and the communities that reside within it are the primary focus.

For this reason, research will be conducted on a selection of female cloistered monasteries of high-heritage value situated in the Maltese islands that are still in *use* to varying degrees by a community with the intention of achieving the following:

- Objective 1 - valorizing female monastic architecture as a stratified portent of *typological, functional, historic, symbolic, social* and *spiritual values* whilst still in *use* by a community. The objective is to elicit meaning whilst the community is actively in place and leading a traditional life.
- Objective 2 - quantifying the extent of current *use* of the female cloistered monasteries under study.
- Objective 3 - engaging with the community of female cloistered nuns with the intention of identifying past and present traditions linked with usage of space in an attempt to highlight the risks of these elements becoming obsolete to memory.

1.3 The Research Questions

This research aims at answering the following questions:

1. Since the *use* of female cloistered monasteries is at risk of terminating, which heritage values attributed to these monasteries will be compromised once the core communities become displaced, and which values may come to the forefront?
2. Considering female cloistered monasteries are heritage at risk, which mechanisms of valorization can be initiated as preemptive measures?

1.4 Rationale

By valorizing the role that the community plays in the site's *cultural significance* (objective 1, p.2), it is hoped that this study will contribute further to the general discourse on living religious heritage. This discourse emerged as a pressing central theme as early as 2003 (Killick, Stovel & Stanley-Price, 2005) when academic attention was initially concerned with ways of sustainably managing and conserving religious sites whilst acknowledging the importance of the intangible (UNESCO, 2003) and striking a balance in maintaining the spirit of place (ICOMOS, 2008).

In subsequent debates, the central theme focused on the 'living' component whereby the resident communities and their central roles as long-term custodians ensured continuity of *use* over the years (Court & Wijesuriya, 2015; Poullos, 2014a). The communities' continuous presence together with their spiritual and traditional way of life have over the centuries shaped intrinsic spaces of significance replete with artefacts that are interwoven within the evolution of the art, architecture, urban fabric and the socio-political histories of the places in which they exist Female enclosed monasteries are a highly specific and fragile example of this (Bartolomei, 2019).

Developing in tandem with the above is the discourse on the abandonment of religious sites as a by-product of *secularisation*. This has been the focus of several academic debates with issues raised on the ethical conservation of these monuments through adaptive re-use (Albani, 2017; Fiorani, Kealy, Plevoets, et al., 2017). A central theme of these debates is the importance of understanding the site's significance making this the basis of informed decisions for future use. Although this topic lies outside the spectrum of living religious heritage due to the missing 'living' component, the importance of understanding the significance of a previously 'living' monument brings these two debates together. The relevance of studying the *cultural significance* of female cloistered monasteries in view of eventual cessation has in my opinion not been frequently met with in the literature on living religious heritage. This study intends to address this gap and preempt the discourse of abandonment of sites by focusing on the analysis of the significance of a living monument with a community in place rather than after cessation.

1.5 Context

1.5.1 The Selected Monasteries

The monasteries selected for the purpose of this study are four from the five female contemplative monasteries bound by the rules of papal *enclosure* founded on the island of Malta before the departure of the Order of the Knights of St John in 1798. These monasteries are still inhabited by communities and are functioning to varying degrees today. They are:

- St Ursula's Monastery, Mdina²
- St Scholastica's Monastery, Birgu
- St Margaret's Monastery, Valletta
- St Peter's Monastery, Bormla

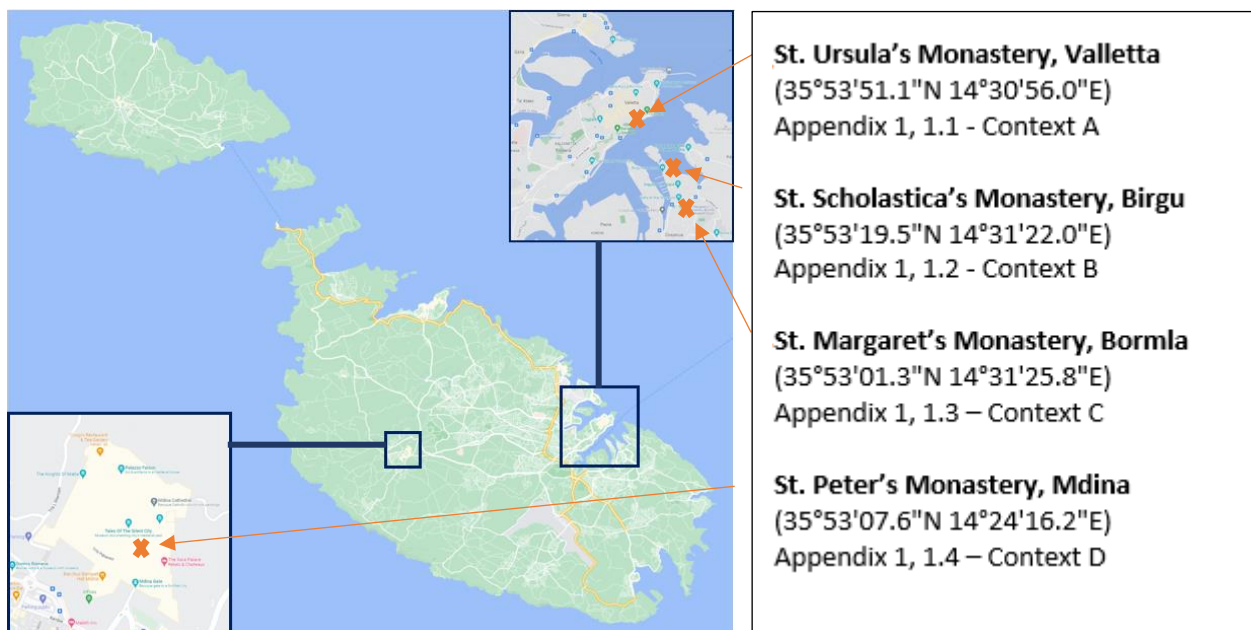


Figure 1. Map showing the Maltese archipelago of Gozo, Comino and Malta (top to bottom). Source: Google Maps (n.d.) [The Maltese Islands]. Inserts indicate the locations where the Monasteries are located. For further contextual information refer to Appendix 1.

A fifth monastery dedicated to St Catherine and situated in Valletta was not included in this dissertation due to limitations as explained in section 3.7, p.45.

² For background information on the monasteries under study see section 3.2 and 4.2

The churches and complexes of the monasteries under study are considered as having high-heritage value and are listed in part or in full in the ‘National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands’ (SOCH, 2014, 2012a, b, & c). As with international female monastic institutions, they enjoy juridical autonomy and in general fall under the radar of civil and church administrations.

All the monasteries in question occupy vast footprints in panoramic locations set within the dense and highly historic urban landscapes of Mdina, Birgu, Valletta and Bormla respectively (Appendix 1). As attested by the several examples of conversions of abandoned monasteries worldwide (Lockhart, 2021; Travelmyth, n.d.) economically, this translates into an architectural typology of sought-after complexes of potential profitable real-estate. Whereas to date the status of the four case-studies is one of non-commodified heritage, the systematic depopulation being caused by *secularisation* can dramatically change scenarios.

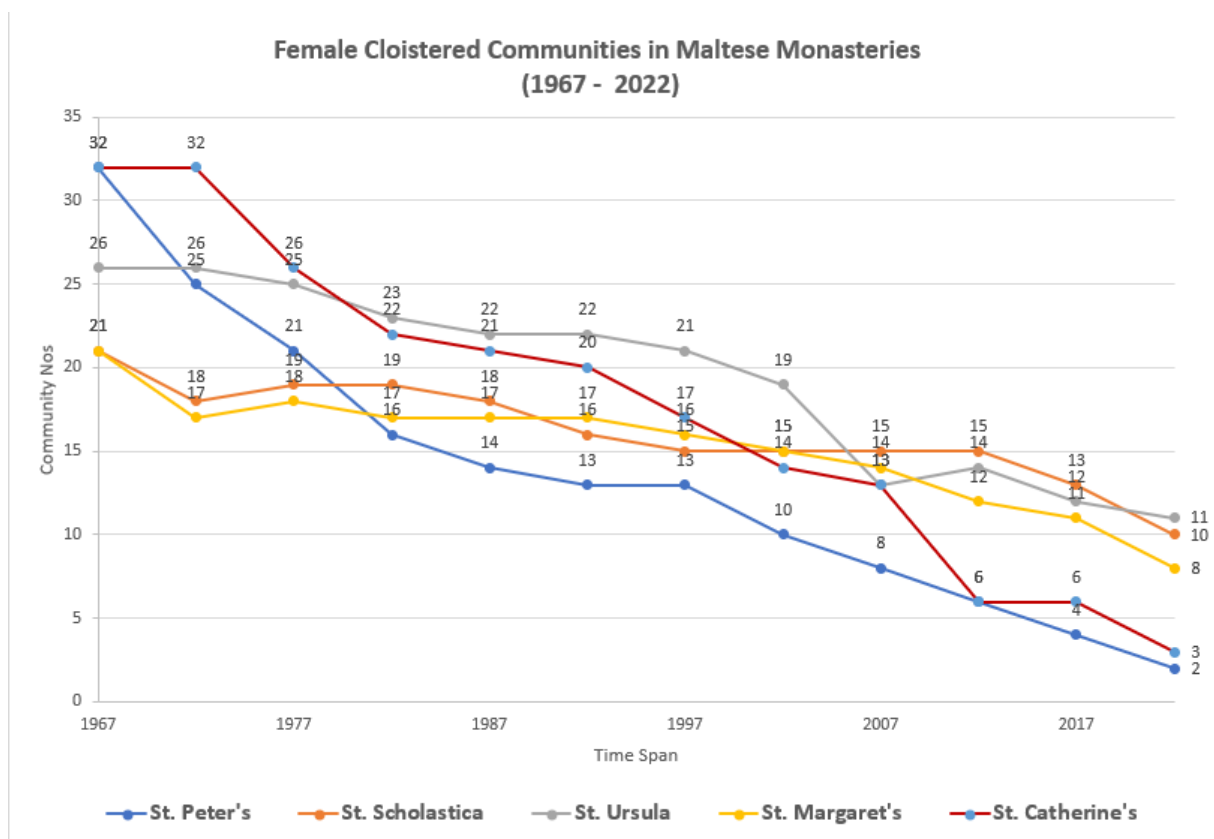


Table 1. Graph showing the decline in community numbers in the five Maltese monasteries considered as having high-heritage value. Data covers a span of 55 years, starting in 1967 and retrieved every five years till 2022. Electoral Commission Registers³ (1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, 2022).

³ I would like to thank Mr Michael Buhagiar, archivist at the Malta Diocese Archive for suggesting research within the Electoral Commission Registers.

The decline in Maltese female monastic communities is increasingly becoming a tangible affair (Table 1). So far, the closure of a female monastic site on the sister island of Gozo has been reported (Times of Malta, 2021). Also, the three remaining residents at the monastery of St Catherine's in Valletta are resorting to looking overseas to recruit foreign nuns (Cilia, 2021) in an attempt for community recovery and to maintain the required numbers to ensure autonomy. Over the past decades, journalists have increasingly taken an interest in the issue of diminishing communities reporting various appeals (Galea Debono, 2001) and creating awareness. In the same spirit of openness initiated by the Second Vatican Council [SVC] (1962-1965), cloistered communities are responding to this crisis by resorting to social media, creating websites (Calleja, 2012), and participating in documentaries (Aquilina, 2014) in order to provide information about life in the monastery to prospective candidates. Based on the steady average decline of community numbers as presented in Table 1., these measures have yielded minimal to negligible results.

Although the monasteries in question are defined by regional, cultural, and socio-political contexts, the difficulties being experienced, and their general attributes make these case-studies relevant to the broader typology of international female cloistered monasteries.

The subsequent section (1.5.2) aims at providing the reader with a brief contextual background behind the elements that shaped and defined the specificity of this genre of living religious heritage in Malta and overseas.

1.5.2 Enclosure – A General Background

1.5.2.1 Introduction

The female cloistered monastery⁴ is a gender-specific typology that denotes a particular way of life that unfolds within the physical confines of an architectural complex as defined by *enclosure*. Thomas Coomans simplifies the concept by referring to a monastery as “organised sacred space and time” (2018, p.100). He explains that architecture organizes space whilst liturgy is responsible for the distribution of time in space. Luigi Bartolomei (2021, pp.12-13)

⁴ From this point onwards, the term ‘monastery’ alone shall be used instead of ‘female cloistered monastery’.

refers to this as “*dualismo*” whereby the architecture presents the “static medium” that will outlive its cultural context presenting issues for its conservation and the “dynamic medium”, represented by liturgy and tradition, which in this dissertation is regarded as unstable as it is dependent on the presence of a community. This duality will form the basis on which a brief, but necessary context is provided for the purpose of this dissertation.

1.5.2.2 Female Monastic Architecture; Events and texts that have contributed to shaping the static medium

The architecture of female monasteries is dictated by the concept of *enclosure* which although dating to early Christendom, takes shape for the purpose of this discussion with the introduction of the *Periculoso*, a legislation created by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 (Evangelisti, 2007, p. 45). This law imposed strict *enclosure* exclusively for the female monastic orders omitting any equivalent law for the male cleric (Hills, 1999). This gender-specific shift between male and female monasticism has been the subject of considerable academic interest in the socio-cultural context of patriarchy and the study of the female paradigm in history producing vast and specialized literature on this subject (Hills, 2004; Hills, 1999; Lehfeldt, 1999; Muscat, 2013)

Two and a half centuries later, the *Periculoso* was taken to new heights when during the final rushed phases of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) this outdated law was reinstated as a quick reformative measure enforcing *enclosure* on all nuns including those religious women who at the time had chosen to lead an active un-cloistered life (Medioli, 1999). These Tridentine reforms were avidly accepted by the Bishops and Princes of Catholic Europe thus establishing a network in which to disseminate and enforce this fundamentalist approach (Evangelisti, 2007, p. 45). Now more than ever, this reformed architecture took the momentous role as guarantor of female virginity which according to the papal forces was only possible through the strictest physical separation (Hills, 1999). Emphasis on visually referencing separation and impenetrability became the attributes of the altered existing monasteries and especially the new monasteries built within the bustling urban landscapes of the 16th and 17th century. Hills describes the new architecture as “responding with a rhetoric of fortification” in relation with its immediate contexts (1999, p. 283). High unarticulated walls, small windows with thick double iron grilles, heavy curtains, complicated systems of locks and keys, rotating wheels for

the passing of provisions were functionally and symbolically emphasizing these new edicts. To ensure uniformity in adopting these measures, a working document was produced in 1577 by the Trent reformer San Carlo Borromeo, the *Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectillis Ecclesisticae* (Borromeo, 1577). This important document specified the function, form, furnishings and positioning of rooms, architectural spaces, and elements to guarantee that papal *enclosure* was achieved efficiently. Ultimately it also guaranteed that *stabilitatis loci* could be maintained by providing spaces replete with all that is necessary for a life of spirituality, the fulfillment of work, sustenance, intellectual and physical growth, punishment, recreation and eventually death (Bartolomei, 2021, p.14).

The laws that governed papal *enclosure* and dictated architectural form and function remained largely unchanged for the next 400 years only to be revised during the Second Vatican Council [SVC] (1962-65). Some of the major changes of this Council included the abolishing of social classes among the community, the relaxation of certain aspects of *enclosure*, the introduction of a tabernacle in monastic *choirs* and “the abandonment of Latin in favour of vernacular languages” [Coomans, 2018, p. 101]. Changes as a result of SVC left their mark on the *use* and appearance of architectural spaces and on the long-standing traditional life. Response to these changes differed from one monastery to the next and depended on their respective regional traditions and on the charism of the Orders they formed part of.

Following SVC, a number of ‘instructions’ and ‘guidance documents’ were issued, the most recent one being the *Cor Orans* in which updates on the present definition of papal *enclosure* (CICLSA, 2018, Article 189 – 203) was provided. Apart from re-confirming the monasteries’ *sui juris* status, this document also re-affirmed the provisions of the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei Quarere* whereby female communities were encouraged to enter a Federation of monasteries defined as “a structure of communion among some autonomous monasteries of the same Institute, erected by the Holy See...so that in sharing the same charism, the federated monasteries overcome isolation...”(CICLSA,2016, Article 7). Entering a Federation was also a means of creating a system, controversial to some (Tadie, 2020), of managing suppression should the situation dictate as illustrated in Figure 2.

45 When the number of professed members of solemn vows reaches five, the community of said monastery loses the right to the election of its Superior. In this case, the Federal President is obliged to inform the Holy See in view of appointing the *ad hoc* commission^[37] and whoever has the right to preside over the elective chapter, subject to authorization from the Holy See, will proceed to the appointment of an Administrator Superior, after having heard the members of the community individually.

Figure 2. Article 45. *Cor Orans* (CICLSA, 2018). Source:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccscrlife/documents/rc_con_ccscrlife_doc_20180401_cor-orans_en.html#SECOND_CHAPTER

1.5.2.3 The Rules and Constitutions; Texts that contribute to the dynamic medium

Every female monastic order relies on their respective Rules and Constitutions for instructions on everything pertaining to their life in the monastery. This is necessary to lead a highly disciplined and regulated life. The daily life of a nun depends on maintaining a “cyclical routine of praying, penitence, and work” (Evangelisti, 2007, p.27). Prayer, attire, comportment, type of meals and their frequency, use of space, schedules, the organisational structure, and every aspect of monastic life was prescribed in detail in these writings. These prescribed routines involved daily repetitive actions such as ringing of bells and responding accordingly to their calls, conducting prayers in *choir*, retreating into solitary cells, joining the community for meals and recreation, working on assigned duties etc. The repetitive sequence of spiritual life, communal duties and monastic offices forms the essence of traditions that find their roots in “the early forms of Western monasticism” (Evangelisti, 2007, p. 27).

Although in principle, the Rules and Constitutions of monastic life are similar, every Order’s Rule has its own specificities based on its spirituality and various writings “that define the spiritual, legal and liturgical aspects of the life of these communities” (Coomans, 2018, p.153). These specificities define the charism of these contemplative communities.

1.6 Brief Chapter Overview

Following the introduction to the aims, objectives, research questions, the selected case-studies and a contextual background to female cloistered monasteries, this section will outline the subsequent developments of this research.

Chapter 2 will aim at providing a general theoretical framework on living religious heritage and its recent developments. It will also aim at narrowing down the discourse and identifying specific areas within the wide gamut of cultural heritage theory with which to analyse the task at hand.

Guided by the objectives raised and the gaps identified in the theoretical framework, a research methodology will be presented in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the research parameters will be clearly defined with the intention of ironing out the complexities in translating the research conducted on the four monasteries. The results of the on-site research shall be presented in Chapter 4. This chapter shall be supported by appendixes that contain paraphrased narratives from semi-structured interviews and imagery taken whilst on-site.

In conclusion, a discussion of the analysis and outcomes of this research will be presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the reader is first introduced to the overriding topics, mainly that of Religious Heritage Discourse (RHD) (section 2.2) and the evolving concept of living religious heritage (section 2.3). In both cases, a brief understanding of the emergence of these topics within the evolution of the International Heritage Discourse is outlined with the intention of understanding how attitudes towards religious heritage have changed throughout the years and to introduce developments in this field of research.

The subsections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 provide greater focus on the specific developments in living heritage discourse that concern the central theme whilst the final section (2.4) will focus on aspects deemed of relevance to the debate of value assessment of living monuments inhabited by core-communities.

Chapter 2.2 Religious Heritage Discourse within an International Framework

2.2.1 Introduction

Religious monuments and sites with past or present spiritual connection form a large representation of almost 20% on the World Heritage List [WHL] (Dallari & Nigilio, 2018). In the south-east and European Mediterranean, 64% of its World Heritage Sites are considered as properties of religious interest having a concentration that is 10% greater than the rest of the world (UNESCO, 2016). Unlike other categories on the WHL, a substantial amount of these properties still retain their original *use* today highlighting the “high degree of potential sustainable value” when compared to other properties (Dallari & Nigilio, 2018, p. 2). Outside the WHL, religious monuments or properties of religious interest represent “perhaps the largest single category of heritage property to be found in most countries” (Stovel, 2005, p.2).

Despite its presence across the vastness of the cultural spectrum, the debate on its specific protection as ‘religious’ and not simply heritage emerged relatively recently and very gradually within the international framework and working documents made available throughout the 20th and 21st century (Tsvolas, 2019). The next section aims at outlining the emergence and evolution of RHD within this international framework.

2.2.2 Religious versus Secular

Theodosios Tsivolas proposes texts (Table 2) that have contributed to the evolution of RHD. He suggests that as an aftermath of World War II, freedom of religious beliefs and free access to practicing one’s religion were firmly set as a basic human right (2019, p. 3). Within the same period, the Hague Convention affirmed the importance of protecting “cultural property”, irrespective of its “origin or ownership” and clearly distinguishing the typologies of “religious” and “secular”, as equally worthy of protection marking the beginnings of the RHD (Tsvolas, 2019; The Hague, 1954, Article 1).

1949	United Nations	Fourth Geneva Convention
1954	The Hague (Netherlands)	Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of armed conflict
1972	UNESCO	World Heritage Convention
1985	Council of Europe	Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe
1992	Council of Europe	European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised)
2000	Council of Europe	The European Landscape Convention
2005	UNESCO	European Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

Table 2 Chronological appearance of texts that have influenced RHD as suggested by Theodosios Tsivolas (2019, p.3)

Subsequent years witnessed the evolution and refinement of concepts pertaining to the protection of cultural heritage within the texts of the conventions under the aegis of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (Tsvolas, 2019, p. 3). Although there is no legal framework or “enforcement mechanisms” that tackle religious cultural heritage as a typology in its own right, these texts (Table 2) “have contributed to the overall formation of the concept that the international community is entitled to establish legal canons for the protection of cultural property in globo” (Tsvolas, 2019. p. 4). However, due to the exigencies for

sustainable solutions for the management of World Heritage sites, interest in categories with specific exigencies such as religious heritage gain momentum within the contemporary World Heritage Discourse receiving focus from the advisory bodies of ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN.

2.2.3 ICCROM 2003: a milestone event

The first systematic debate on religious heritage took place at the forum on the *Conservation of Living Religious Heritage* organized by ICCROM in 2003 coining down the term ‘living religious heritage’ (Cassar, 2015; Killick, Stanely-Price & Stovel, 2005). Considered as a milestone event, the main aim was to highlight the fact that religious heritage had characteristics, related to its distinct spiritual nature, “that distinguish it from other forms of heritage” (Dallari, 2016, p.136) and thus merits a conservation debate that incorporates these characteristics. During this conference, it became clear that there is a gap in the provision of specific guidelines dealing with the conservation and sustainable management of a vast typology of living heritage that is “inseparable from the frameworks of the religion or belief system of its society” (Inaba, 2005, p. 46). The challenges of reconciling faith with conservation at a time of rapid modernisation and globalisation were proving to be vast and complex. To this effect one of the questions raised during this forum was: “how to maintain sacred and heritage values in the face of increasing or decreasing interest in religion in society” (Stovel, 2005, pp 3-5).

2.2.4 A Discourse that Picks up Momentum

The ICCROM 2003 Forum was instrumental at launching living religious heritage as a typology with its own distinct characteristics and complexities. A recurrent theme in the essays presented during this forum was the recognition of the importance of the intangible dimension of religious sites (Killick, Stovel & Stanley-Price, 2005). With the ratification of the “Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage” happening that same year (UNESCO, 2003), both events act as a catalyst for RHD which from this point onwards takes a leap forward. Some of the main developments are listed in the table below:

2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Recognition of the thematic relevance</u> of RHD through ICOMOS' Resolution 32 adopted at the 15th General Assembly. This called for an "International Thematic Programme on International religious assets." (UNESCO. Heritage of Religious Interest, n.d.)
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Religious Heritage and Sacred Places" is chosen as the theme for the "International Day for Monuments and Sites" (ICOMOS, 2008a). • Concurrently IUCN/ UNESCO (UNESCO/MAB & IUCN, 2008) reinforces the discourse on the <u>importance of communities and the diversity they bring through traditional practices in the sustainable management of Sacred Landscapes</u> (Dallari & Nigilio, 2018).
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO launches the "Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest" (2010) "<u>intended to assist in integrating several guiding principles into policies</u> at the local, national, regional and international level" (UNESCO, 2016, point 5, p. 2)
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO refers to <u>living religious heritage in use</u> as forming the larger representation of religious monuments on the WHL (UNESCO, Conclusions and Recommendations, 2016. Point 14)."

Table 3. A selection of developments in RHD following the ICCROM 2003, Forum

2.2.5 Secularisation and Adaptive Re-use

A more recent development within RHD concerns the abandonment of properties with religious significance due to the increasing phenomenon of *secularisation* that is pervading Europe and the Western world. This has generated great academic interest and is currently the topic of conferences and debates (Bartolomei & Antonini, 2021; FRH Biennial Conference, 2021; Fiorani et al., 2017). Churches, monasteries, sanctuaries and other sacred sites in rural or urban settings that previously served the communities through their original *use* are being abandoned or decommissioned [Fiorani et al., 2017].

The loss of the original *use* of sites opens the central discourse to issues that are, "political, legal, economic, sociological and of course religious" (Di Biase, 2017, p. 55). This multi-vocality tends to sway the debate on adaptive conservation or adaptive re-use in different directions depending on the source and points of interest. At polar ends of this debate are two main issues;

1. whether to consider these spaces as “empty shells” (Plevoets & Prina, 2017, p.2) to be re-adapted to contemporary uses in society or
2. whether to incorporate the “complexity of meanings embodied” in these properties through their symbolic value and identity of place (Albani, 2017. p.11).

Among the conclusions reached, in a conference on adaptive re-use entitled *Preserve, Use and Develop* (Diocese of Lund, 2018) organized in collaboration with PRERICO, ICOMOS and FRH, emphasis was placed on the importance of researching and understanding the multitude of values these vacant sites incorporate with the aim of including this analysis into a strategy for “preservation, use and development of ecclesiastical heritage” (Diocese of Lund, 2018, p. 7).

With the skeletal framework of RHD in place, understanding the characteristics of living religious heritage and the emergence of this topic within the various conservation approaches shall be discussed in the following section.

Chapter 2.3 What is Living Religious Heritage?

2.3.1 Living versus Dead

The 'living' dimension in 'living religious heritage' adds a different aspect to the concept of heritage. In an essay entitled *Living Heritage: A summary*, Wijesuriya (2015), elaborates on the evolution of this concept as introduced in 1904 by the Madrid conference and relates how in the first decades of the 20th century, 'use' is regarded as a factor that determines the choice of architectural conservation interventions depending on whether the building constituted a relic or a heritage monument still fulfilling its original purpose (Peers, 1913 in Wijesuriya, 2015). The former, needed consolidation from further decay, whilst the latter, needed to be restored with *use* in mind but taking into consideration its past, as a history to be preserved for its future (Wijesuriya, 2015).

In the early 20th century, continuity of original *use* becomes a characteristic of living heritage sites (Wijesuriya, 2015). This genre becomes absorbed in the conservation edicts that catered for the safeguarding of the material fabric of these structures through the safeguarding of the cultural, "aesthetic and historic values" (Poulios, 2014b, p.15). Presumably due to the influx of living sites enlisted on the WHL, it becomes increasingly clear that the original distinction between 'living' and 'dead' monuments (Stanley-Price, 2005) goes beyond the definitions attained so far and that conservation thinking must evolve to include the specificities brought about by the living dimensions of sites – mainly that "they are places deemed to have a heritage value but that continue to be foci of traditional culture and use" (Stanley-Price, 2005, p. 1).

2.3.1.1 Living Religious Heritage as a Distinct Typology

After UNESCO's 1994 Global Strategy aimed at tackling the overrepresentation of European sites on the WHL (Labadi, 2005), focus on worldwide diverse cultures and traditions opened up the conservation debate to a less "restrictive concept of cultural heritage" (Bortolotto, 2007. p. 39). This less restrictive vision is reflected in the choice of papers presented during the ICCROM *Forum* of 2003 (Stovel, 2005) covering a substantial sample from the gamut of

world religions with the intention of creating a clearer scope for the term living religious heritage as a specific typology apart from other living heritage sites. As part of the summary presented by Herb Stovel in the proceedings of this Forum, (2005, pp 9-11) the following 4 points (Table 4) are deemed relevant to this research:

1. In living religious heritage , the intangible value gives relevance to the tangible and in as such the debate of both becomes inseparable (Stovel, 2005. Point 2, p. 9)	Concept explained further in section 2.4.2.2
2. Living religious heritage can be considered as heritage at risk at varying levels and should be managed as such (Stovel, 2005. Point 3, p. 9).	Causes of risk – secularisation, modernisation, globalisation, heritagisation, museumification etc.
3. Living religious heritage is heritage with an active living community that plays a fundamental role in the entire scheme (Stovel, 2005. Point 4, p. 10).	Concept explained further in section 2.3.2
4. Living religious heritage is characterized by continuity (Stovel, 2005. Point 5, p. 10)	Concept explained further in section 2.3.3

Table 4. Four from the six concluding points presented by Herb Stovel (2005, pp 9-11)

With reference to point 4 above, Wijesuriya states that “the phenomenon of the past becoming a living present can only happen with a very strong tradition of continuity” (2005, p.37). Whereas before 2003, continuity of original *use* was the primary attribute of living heritage, following the ICCROM debate the concept broadened to include the communities and the role they played on this element of continuity (Wijesuriya,2015) . This concept will be discussed further in the subsequent sections.

2.3.2 Communities – The Living Dimension of Heritage Sites

As seen in previous sections, the essence of a living heritage site is defined by the presence of a community that engages with a site on varying levels (Poulios, 2014). Apart from the diversities brought about by the geographic and socio-cultural context, a communities’

association with a site can be varied and the different *associations* are described by Ioannis Poullos (2014b, pp.25-26). Female cloistered communities are a community that dwell within a site and are referred to as the core-community. This type of community represents a socially cohesive group that claim ownership, permanent *use* and original connection with the heritage property within clearly defined physical boundaries (Poullos, 2014b). They are inseparable from the heritage space they occupy and claim a more direct role than the broader community (Poullos, 2014b).

In an introductory speech at the 2003 ICCROM Forum, Jean Louis Luxen points out the distinction between resident communities that bear a 'singular' or 'universal appeal' (ICCROM, 2005, p. 2). By singular he was referring to properties or spaces inhabited by a single community whose outlook is inward and one that "inhibits the sharing of knowledge and understanding with those outside the faith" (Stovel, 2005. p. 2). Although not specific to the resident community in focus, the restrictive characteristics of a cloistered community fit the description of an inward appeal typology which to the best of my knowledge is the reason for the gap in literature that tackles its specificity from a conservation and management point of view.

Outside the aegis of UNESCO and its advisory bodies, management concerns related to this specific typology fall under the responsibility of the Papal Commission for Culture and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. It has however been pointed out that their concerns with the communities and the heritage sites they occupy are mainly of an economic nature and lack the subtleties and complexities of the RHD that has evolved within the World Heritage Context (Bartolomei, 2019).

As with other concepts in the cultural heritage field, the acceptance of the 'living dimension' of sites as a main attribute of living heritage has happened gradually over time (Wijesuriya, 2017; Poullos 2014b) . The terms 'community' or 'living traditions' as key contributors to the socio-cultural contexts start firmly appearing in key texts (Table 5) and demonstrate the level of recognition given by international academia to the importance of the involvement of the community for the sustainable management of sites to the extent that "heritage protection without community involvement and commitment is an invitation to failure" (UNESCO, 2007).

In 2010, a *Statement on the Protection of Religious Properties within the Framework of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2010. Kyiv statement) was released. This saw UNESCO's

first international effort to discuss the protection of living religious and sacred sites with the active participation of religious authorities (UNESCO, 2010. Point 7).

1972	UNESCO, World Heritage Convention (Art. 1)	"Each state party to the convention shall endeavor... to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community. "
1994	ICOMOS, Nara Document	Articles 11 to 13 highlight the importance of maintaining cultural diversity . This requires a thorough understanding of the socio-cultural contexts in which they survive.
1994	UNESCO, Cultural Criterion vi.	"To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions , with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. "
1995	UNESCO, Operational Guidelines	"a continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life , and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress . At the same time, it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time."
1996	UNESCO, Operational Guideline (para 14)	"Participation of local people in the nomination process is essential to make them feel a shared responsibility with the State Party in the maintenance of the site." (Paragraph 14)
1997	UNESCO Cultural Criterion iii.	" iii. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared "
1999	ICOMOS, Burra Charter	"Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape. (preamble)"
2005	UNESCO Operational Guidelines	<i>A significant proportion of the elements necessary to convey the totality of the value conveyed by the property should be included. Relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscape, historic towns of other living properties essential to their distinctive character should be maintained (Paragraph 89 – Integrity)</i>
2007	UNESCO – Item 13 of the provisional agenda	<i>Heritage protection without community involvement and commitment is an invitation to failure. (Background)</i>

Table 5. Some of the key texts that acknowledge 'community' and 'living' dimension of sites as also suggested by Poullos (2014b, p.15 -17)

Notwithstanding these developments, the concept of community involvement within the World Heritage mechanisms remained weak (Poullos, 2014b). Poullos argues that the inclusion of 'living traditions', as part of an attempt to balance a biased westernized WHL, were introduced within mechanisms that catered originally for 'dead traditions'. Criteria were therefore amended and expanded instead of radically changed to suit the specificities of the living dimension.

The ambiguity of the extent of communities' involvement in sustainable management created inconsistencies within the heritage discourse giving rise to the contribution by ICCROM entitled *People-Centered Approaches to Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Living Heritage*

(Court & Wijesuriya, 2015). This publication takes the form of a guidance document, explaining among other things, the wide benefits of applying people-centered approaches. Described as an endogenous approach, people-centered approaches are intended to embrace the ‘livingness’ of sites opening-up the care of heritage to genuine democratic processes between the decision/ policy maker, the heritage specialist, and the communities (Court & Wijesuriya, 2015). For this reason, a *Living Heritage Approach* was recommended as a new conservation methodology born specifically out of these democratic processes. This approach holds relevance to the central theme of this dissertation as it focuses on the core-communities and shall be discussed in the subsequent section.

2.3.3 Living Heritage Approach

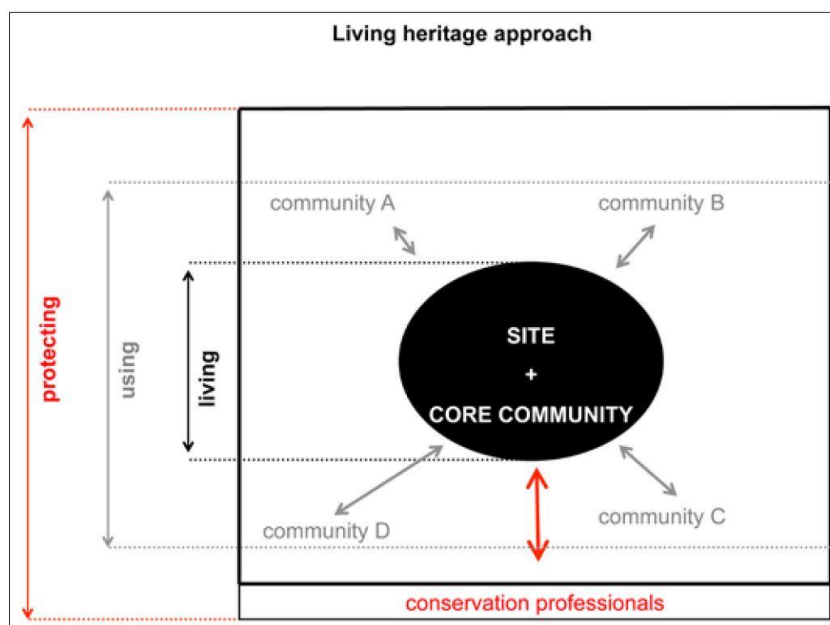


Figure 3. A Living Heritage Approach. Source: Poullos, 2014b, figure 52, p. 130

The Living Heritage Approach is an offshoot from ICCROM’s Living Heritage Sites Programme launched in 2003. It can be considered as “a strategic innovation” in the approach of conservation of a living site (Poullos, 2014a). It acknowledges the role of the core community as the primary custodian of the site (Figure 3) challenging the conventional practices of material-based and value-based conservation by firmly placing the elements of ‘community’ and ‘continuity’ as its primary attributes (Poullos 2010, 2014a, 2014b). It claims that fostering

its protection forms the basis of the management and conservation of living heritage. It also reinforces the paradigm shifts in conservation trends (Avrami & Mason, 2019; Avrami, Mac Donald, Mason & Myres, 2019) that moved away from the exclusive care of the materiality “of heritage to that of pursuing the wellbeing of both heritage and society as a whole” (Wijesuriya, 2017, p. 1). A living heritage approach is a recent addition to the material-based (initiated by the Venice Charter 1964) and value-based approaches (initiated by the first Burra Charter 1979) that constitute the founding blocks of conservation theory. Briefly, a material-based approach, considered as a byproduct of the “secular values of European society” (Wijesuriya, 2017 p.3), is an expert-driven methodology that places the significance of heritage in its fabric. The central concept is that of preserving the past as “historical evidence” (ICOMOS, 1964. Venice Charter, Article 3) implying a certain discontinuity. On the other hand, a value-based approach (Burra Charter, 1979, 1999 & 2013) was developed in response to the inclusion of non-western communities on the WHL thus embracing the concepts of the communities’ spiritual, religious and traditional association with heritage and included them among the stakeholders’ debate for a transparent and democratic process (Mackay, 2019).

A living heritage approach:

“prioritizes the core-community’s connection over the other communities’ associations with the site, acknowledging that heritage forms an integral part of the life of the specific community, in that it strengthens core-community’s identity, pride, self-esteem, structure, and well-being. On this basis, the core community is given the primary role in the conservation process. It does not simply participate but is actively empowered....” (Poulios, 2014b, p.130)

This people-centered approach relies on the preservation of continuity which is so far regarded as the inherent value of living heritage sites. In this case, continuity can be classified into criteria, all of which need protection in equal measures for the communities to survive. These were first identified by Ioannis Poulios in his study on Meteora and are briefly listed as follows (2014b, pp. 120 - 132):

- "Continuity of the site's original function" (Poulios, 2014b, p.120) - A living heritage approach is intended to sustain the present site's original function and restore it should adverse events lead to an abrupt cessation.
- "Continuity of the community's connection with the heritage site" (Poulios, 2014b, p.120) - The connection of a community with a site is defined by its association with it. Therefore, the core community that resides within the site and gives the site its significance through ongoing intangible expressions, occupies a primary role in the hierarchy of relevance within the site. The living heritage approach puts the core community at the very top of the conservation process, elevating their role from participatory to one that sets the agenda and retains control over the process.
- "Continuity of community's care" (Poulios, 2014b, p.120) - A living heritage approach acknowledges the core community as the primary custodians of the sites they occupy. The maintenance and traditional care practices that kept continuity alive over the centuries are studied and incorporated within the conservation strategies which are in turn reinforced by scientific conservation intended to assist rather than dictate methodologies of care. In cases when traditions favour the renewal of resources as part of their religious practices, a living heritage approach places greater emphasis on continuity of *use* rather than the aspects of materiality and heritage protection (Poulios, 2014b).
- "Continual process of evolving tangible and intangible heritage expression" (Poulios, 2014b, p.127) - A living heritage approach treats the tangible materiality and the intangible expression as a "unity of opposites" (Xu, 2018, p. 2) to be treated as an "inseparable whole" (Poulios, 2014b, p. 132). This concept therefore embraces change that may happen over time and according to the exigencies of the community's needs.

At the time, Poulios had suggested that if continuity becomes threatened in one or more of the aforementioned criteria, a living heritage approach may no longer apply as a conservation/ management strategy that can be used in its entirety (Poulios, 2014b. p. 132-133).

2.3.3.1 Conclusion

The definition of living religious heritage and the subsequent living heritage approach are developments that took place in the first decades of the 21st century. This discourse is one still in evolution as is attested by the four-part on-line hybrid conference (FRH, 2021) organized during the completion of this research. This conference specifically tackled the four criteria of continuity forwarded by Ioannis Poullos and outlined above. In the first part of the conference entitled *Continuity of Function or Use*, Henrik Lindblad (2021, 22:04 – 28:48) presented a draft statement by the FRH working group on continuous use. Among the statements provided, Lindblad proposes the following:

1. “The definition of cultural heritage and living heritage needs to be broadened.” (Lindblad, 2021, 25:54)

Lindblad explains that whilst the existing characteristics still apply, the definitions concerning “aspects of living, continuity, use, community and heritage values” need to be broadened to encompass a wider spectrum (Lindblad, 2021, 25:54)

2. “The approaches of a living heritage approach and heritage values are complementary”. (Lindblad, 2021, 27:17)

Whereas previous academic literature on ‘living religious heritage’ tended to lean towards a living heritage approach as a preferred option, Lindblad is suggesting that value assessment on such sites must be seen as complementary rather than opposed. The same understanding is also echoed in Poullos’ brief introductory presentation during the same conference (Poullos & Walter, 2021. 29:50)

Chapter 2.4 Assessing Heritage Values and *Cultural Significance*

2.4.1 Introduction

In the concluding remarks of the ICCROM conference of 2003 (Stovel, 2005, p.9-11), concerns pertaining to the sustainable management and conservation of living religious heritage were related among others to issues of finding ways of understanding the values of this type of heritage and of maintaining the spiritual, religious and heritage values at a time of rapid modernisation and globalisation (Stovel, 2005).

The aim of this Chapter is to provide an overview of the developments in value-based research whilst keeping in focus specific themes that relate to living religious heritage.

2.4.2 Assessing Values – An overview

The development of the concept of heritage values in academic literature runs parallel to the broadening in scope of the term 'cultural heritage' (Avrami, Mason, de la Torre, 2000). De la Torre states that the "expansion of the concept of heritage has been the direct result of the broadening values" (2013, p. 157). Conservation theory and site management had to evolve in line with these changes becoming a "complex and on-going social process that includes the identification and valorization of heritage" (De La Torre, 2013, p. 157).

The first momentous attempts at considering a sociohistorical dimension to preservation through a value-based approach were made by Alois Riegl (1848-1905) in his theoretical writings (Ahmer, 2020; Lamprakos, 2014). Riegl explains that in order to define a monument in terms of preservation, one must negotiate between the conflicting values of the past (commemorative, age and historical values) with the relative values of the present. He believed that "a monument is defined not by fixed, objective criteria, but rather by the perceptions of the viewing subject" (Lamprakos, 2014, p.420). His theoretical writings are however in conflict with the legal frameworks established thereafter whereby the materiality of monuments remains at the very heart of preservation choices, establishing the traditional European conservation theory.

Materiality lies at the very heart of the historic Athens charter of 1931. This principle was carried forward in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964), a document created in response to the vast rebuilding schemes that took place post WWII and that in its essence focused on the articulation of the historical and aesthetic significance of sites (Buckley, 2019).

An important moment in value-based approaches to conservation takes place with the introduction of the Burra Charter of 1979. This evolved out of exigency for the conservation and management of sites of significance that were in essence and circumstantially different to the Eurocentric context from which conservation theory had originally developed (Mackay, 2019). Born in Australia, the Burra Charter became a highly adaptable doctrinal text that reflected the need to manage diverse sites with multifaceted, multi-focal and in certain cases conflicting values (Mackay, 2019).

In response to these needs the first version of this charter introduces the inclusion of the 'social value' which together with the Nara Document (1994) in later years had a "profound impact" (Buckley, 2019, ft 4, p. 63) on the general discourse of heritage conservation. 'Social value' (also referred to as the *associative value*) has been described as "a collective attachment to a place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities" (Jones, 2017, p.22). Article 1.15 of the Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1999) refers to attachment as '*associations*' or "connections that exist between people and a place."

The recognition of a broader societal framework and the inclusion of the intangible form the most significant update of the subsequent version of the Burra Charter in 1999. This version saw the inclusion of the 'spiritual value' among the 4 other criteria (aesthetic, historic, scientific, and social) leading to a redefinition of *cultural significance* (Jones, 2017; ICOMOS, 1999. Burra Charter)

Cultural significance is the collective term derived from the "aggregate of values" that sum up the importance of a site to society. (Torre & Mason, 2002, p.3).

The Burra Charter Process

Steps in planning for and managing a place of cultural significance

The Burra Charter should be read as a whole.

Key articles relevant to each step are shown in the boxes. Article 6 summarises the Burra Charter Process.



Figure 4. The Burra Charter Process Flow Chart. Source: ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013. P.10. © Australia ICOMOS Incorporated 2017.

The multi-vocality brought about by the ‘broader societal framework’ and their varying perceptions instigated the democratization of the conservation process that saw the inclusion of all stakeholders as central to all (Avrami, MacDonald, Mason & Myers, 2019). In terms of management, this aspect added a higher degree of complexity which the Burra Charter in 2013 tried to tackle by adding ‘Practice Notes’ to an already highly intelligible document. This version illustrated the Burra Charter Process (Figure 4) that placed the understanding of the *cultural significance* of sites as the first phase. This process has become common practice in heritage management worldwide with specificities in selecting criteria for understanding values being the main differentiator. In Version 1 of the Burra Charter Practice notes (2013, p.4) heritage practitioners are provided with the definition of the ‘spiritual’ and ‘social’ value among others, together with a summative way of eliciting meaning under these categories. These values are of essence in the assessment and understanding of living religious heritage. Regarding methodologies for investigating *social values* Buckley (2019) writes that these remain largely underdeveloped and there is some confusion about “how it should be incorporated into heritage management” (2019, p. 53).

2.4.2.1 Value-based Approach versus Living Heritage Approach

As already established, understanding values in the general discourse of management and conservation of sites lies at the epicenter of concern on which baseline decisions will need to evolve. However, the Burra Charter's effort at "democratizing heritage practice" by promoting equity among stakeholders has been met with academic criticism by some who claim that "it is less supportive of diversity and community centered practice" and despite its efforts still "shores up rather than devolves the authority of experts" (Waterton, Smith and Campbell as cited in Buckley, 2019, p. 53). Among these critics is Ioannis Poullos who "has criticized value-based management because it insufficiently considers the needs and rights" of the community (Buckley, p.53) and states that "unlike a material-based and a value-based approach, which commenced with conservation professionals, a living heritage approach commences with communities" (Poullos, 2015, p. 171).

In his various writings Poullos' sustains that since the survival of this heritage depends on the communities' association of the place, then the continuity of this association should be the driving force in future decisions for the conservation and management of sites (2014, a & b; 2011; 2010a). This discourse was originally intended for traditions of care and maintenance by core-communities that consider renewal and change as part of their continuous care, such as the site of Meteora (Poullos, 2014a). This notion per se does not directly affect the central question of this dissertation. As seen in Poullos' recent intervention at the 2021 FRH conference (section 2.3.3.1), his standpoint softens and he recommends that the choice of approaches or the mix of approaches are dependent on the exigencies of the heritage in question (Poullos & Walter, 2021, 29:50).

Within the discourse of values and religious heritage, certain overriding topics prevail above others. For the purpose of this dissertation, the tangible and intangible, the spirit of place, authenticity and aspects of *cultural memory* shall be introduced briefly in the subsequent sections.

2.4.2.2. Values Attributed to Tangible and Intangible Aspects

With the *Convention of Intangible Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003) developing in tandem with the birth of living RHD, the debate on the intangible aspects became inevitable. Conventional conservation tends to separate the tangible (materiality) from the intangible (expressions), whilst a living heritage approach treats them as a "unity of opposites" (Xu, 2018, p.2) to be "treated as an inseparable whole (Poulios, 2014b. p. 132)." In this respect, it is interesting to note that Wijesuriya (2017) classifies resistance to change and the overemphasis on the tangible or the material as leading to "*secularisation* of heritage, a phenomenon used to describe the distancing between materiality and spirituality" (2017, p. 2).

'Sacredness' can be described as the inherent value of religious heritage (Tsvolas, 2017). Going beyond the material expression, sacredness considered as an intangible, is an ambiguous concept that can be explained as the opposite of the ordinary and mundane and "placed apart from everyday things or places, so that its special significance can be recognized, and rules regarding it obeyed" (Cassar, 2015, p.7). In tangible objects it translates as the numinous quality which sacred objects possess. Its function is "not of a descriptive nature but a transforming one" (Barkeshli & Zekrgoo. 2005. p. 97).

The same concept can be applied to the spaces pertaining to living religious heritage. The traditional way of life and on-going intangible expressions related to the spiritual faith of the core-communities that reside within these monuments give these sites their present significance. For this reason, the community is seen as occupying a primary role in the hierarchy of relevance within the site. "The tangible fabric of a place and the intangible aspects that give it meaning are inseparable" (Rogers, 2019. p.172).

The inseparability of the tangible and the intangible in architecture is captured in Article 1 of the Quebec Declaration (ICOMOS, 2008). This reads:

Recognizing that the spirit of place is made up tangible (sites buildings, landscapes, routes, objects) as well as intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, festivals, commemorations, rituals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colours, odours, etc.), which all significantly contribute to making place and to giving it spirit... (ICOMOS, 2008, Article 1, n.p.).

This declaration “seeks to overcome the tangible and intangible divide” (Lesh, 2020, p.10) by combining multi-sensory experiences all of which contribute to the essence of living religious heritage. It also serves to introduce the concept of ‘spirit of place’ discussed in the subsequent section.

2.4.2.3. Genius Loci/ Spirit of Place and Authenticity

A substantial part of the material heritage being dealt with in this dissertation is that of the architectural buildings designed for living a particular life that has remained largely unchanged throughout the ages. The community in question commit to dedicate their life to a religious order that lives exclusively within a restricted environment creating an existential space defined by a strong bond between community and surroundings. Understanding architecture in terms of existential spaces formed a central theme of the research by Christian Norberg-Shulz (1980). He explains:

“...a place is a space which has a distinct character. Since ancient times the genius loci, or spirit of place, has been recognized as the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms within his daily life. Architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*...” (1980, p.5)

Genius Loci is an ambiguous concept that dates to Roman antiquity. It has been described as a form of spirit that accompanies man through life determining his fate and giving him his essence (Petzet, 2008, p.10). According to Shultz, place is not a mere physical location but a space that incorporates a spirit “which cannot be described by analytical and/or scientific methods” (Rifaioglu, Mert & Sahin, 2008, p.1). He proposes a “phenomenological method in order to understand and describe the ‘spirit’ of the place through a depiction of its physical features and an interpretation of the human experiences within the place” (Rifaioglu, Mert & Sahin, 2008, p.1). In terms of monasteries, and the architectural heritage it represents, Pierre Lucier says that the spirit of place lies in the amalgamation of the communities’ spirituality, the respective architectural designs and the presence and actions (use) of the communities’ that dwell there (as cited in Coomans, 2018, p.154). He continues by saying that if the

“authentic heritage value is recognized, it can provide guidelines for profane reuse likely to respect and prolong their symbolic potential” (p.154).

Interior spaces of monuments are described by Klingenberg (2012) as the main conveyor of the *use* of the buildings. She writes that “to grasp the totality of an interior, both material and immaterial aspects must be understood” (2012, p. na). This ‘totality’, together with the continuous largely unchanged *use* of the living religious heritage under study contributes to the ‘spirit of place’. In turn, this totality, also referred to in the Nara Document (ICOMOS, 1994. Article13) as a list of multi-layers that include cultural context, spirit, use, traditions etc., contributes to understanding the authenticity of sites.

Authenticity forms an essential qualifying factor in the process of assessment of values of cultural heritage sites (Cassar, K., 2015) and is being referred to in this dissertation in this respect. However, with living religious heritage, authenticity is not a value from the past that needs to be regained or maintained but a value “in the present that is associated mostly with the community’s intangible association with the site” (Poulios, 2010a. p. 181). Point 15 of UNESCO’s conclusion and recommendations of the *Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest* (UNESCO, 2016) states that a sustainable management plan for religious heritage must include measures for protecting the innate “religious interest” of these properties as this ‘interest’ contributes significantly to the site’s integrity and to its authenticity making it a vital element in the outstanding universal value ascribed to them. In this respect, ‘authenticity’ and ‘spirit of place’ are inseparable attributes to the heritage in question. Valorizing these concepts as attributes of living religious heritage at risk will address a gap in the literature that mainly focuses on authenticity and spirit of place in terms of visitor experience and heritagization of sites.

2.4.2.4 Communicative and Cultural Memory as a Social Value

Understanding the values that social groups ascribe to the cloistered monasteries in question forms a central theme of this dissertation. There are various social groups associated with these sites. The group that interests this study, is the core-community that is physically detached from the outside world, resides within the *enclosure* and for whom the monument

bears high significance. The concepts of *communicative* and *cultural memory* shall be applied to these groups.

The field of memory studies is vast and finds its origins in the discourse developed during the first half of the 20th century with the writings on collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs(1877-1945) (Naguib, 2015; Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013; Nora, 1989). Halbwachs introduced the concept of memory as a social phenomenon whereby individuals can create, conjure or localize memories through their connections with a defined social group. Collective memories are therefore pieces of information put together by individuals who live within a social group that has “group-constituting powers” and that affect the construction of these narratives (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013, p.22). In 1989, Pierre Nora amplified the notion that groups and memories are formed within designated locations, introducing the concept of ‘spatial *cultural memory*’ or sites of memory, whereby distinct spaces are envisaged as portents of individual’s emotions that embody memories (Hussein, Stephens & Tiwari, 2020; UNESCO, 2018b). “Halbwachs and Pierre Nora are considered to be the founders of the recent cultural memory studies ” (Hussein, Stephens & Tiwari, 2020, p.2). Regarding sites as portents of emotions and memory, *associative value* comes strongly into play in this discourse. In a study commissioned by UNESCO, one reads; “... In a site of memory, the associative values can be of greater importance than the material ones and can convey a variety of meanings, even though the material remains can be vital in understanding the associative values” (2018b, Article 52).

In the first decade of the 21st century, the writings of Aleida and Jan Assmann provide further contributions to memory studies by further defining the key concepts. According to the Assmanns’, collective memory is divided into two groups – *communicative* and *cultural memory* (Naguib, 2015.). These are the areas that concern this study.

Communicative memory has a functional aspect and can be explained as “memories based on human interaction” (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013, p.23). Through social interaction and socialization, the autobiographical memory of an individual mirrors the memory of the social group. This aspect is of interest to this research. The lifespan of this type of memory is considered short and relies on the living component and the modes of communications that can extend the lifespan of a living memory into an intergenerational dimension if passed on (Meckien, 2013). The memory, through its communication, “becomes the media content or an archived testimony” (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013, p.23).

Whereas communicative memory relies on socialization and the recent past, cultural memory goes back to the origins and is described as foundational. Its essence is formed by symbolic heritage that is rooted in the past taking the form of monuments, texts, artifacts, traditions etc. (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013). These act as “mnemonic triggers” that initiate meanings (Meckien, 2013, n.p.) acting as “permanent points in the past transforming them into carrier points of symbolic meaning” in the present (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013, p. 23). Aleida Assmann explains that through their symbolic forms “cultural memory creates a framework for communication across the abyss of time” (2008. p. 97). She considers cultural memory as a form of symbolic communication that relies on ‘tradition’ in the same manner that *communicative memory* relies on oral communication. She writes: “Tradition can be understood as a special case of communication in which information is not exchanged reciprocally and horizontally but is transmitted vertically through generations...” (as cited in Assmann, J, 2006. p.8).

In their writings, the Assmann’s subdivide *cultural memory* into two further dimensions - a passive and active dimension. The passive dimension is referred to as the storage memory or the archive (Assmann, 2008). The archive is an institutionalized repository of uninhabited and uninterpreted memories (archives, reserve collections, items in attics etc.) that have lost touch with the present and are stored for reference’s sake and retrieved when needed. This means that the living component of the memory no longer exists and therefore constitutes a passive and possibly decontextualized form of memory (Assmann, 2008).

On the other hand, there is an active dimension to *cultural memory* and this is referred to as the ‘Canon’ or the inhabited-type memory (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013). ‘Canon’ refers to the texts in religion that are sacred and unchangeable. In *cultural memory* terms, canon refers to the artifacts, texts, traditions, monuments, personages, places etc that have over the years “passed a rigorous process of selection” thus securing them “a lasting place in the cultural working memory of society” (Assmann, 2008. p.100). Religion, together with art and history is considered as one of the three core areas of the active *cultural memory* (Assmann, 2008). Like churches, cloistered monasteries are institutions of the active *cultural memory*. Tradition is kept alive and highly concentrated within their respective architectural spaces, where commemorative artifacts, images of saints, liturgical texts, rituals and customs have survived and repeatedly been used over the centuries. This constant use of tangibles, spaces

and reenactment of traditions by a community brings the past into the present giving it relevance.

Within the discourse of memory, the topics of remembering and forgetting are intrinsic to this discussion. *Communicative* and *cultural memory* are to varying degrees acts of active and passive remembering. Jan Assmann regards the moment “when *communicative memory* fades away as a moment of symbolic transition and the constitution of a new framework of social remembering, which makes possible a reinterpretation of the past” (as cited by Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013, p. 24). At this point, reinterpretation will rely on various factors, primarily the possibility of maintaining interest in the significance of the past culture and its monument.

Buildings that lose their communities and primary custodians tend to fall into neglect, as is increasingly the case with religious properties all over Europe. This initiates a process of passive forgetting where spaces and objects “fall out of the frames of attention, valuation and use” (Assmann, 2008, p.98). Passive forgetting could imply that the monuments and their objects are rediscovered at a later stage.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology selected aimed at fulfilling the objectives set out at the beginning of this study (figure 5).

Objective 1 - valorizing female monastic architecture as a stratified portent of typological, functional, historic, symbolic, social and spiritual values whilst still in use by a community. The objective is to elicit meaning whilst the community is actively in place and leading a traditional life.

Objective 2 - quantifying the extent of current use of the female cloistered monasteries understudy.

Objective 3 - engaging with the community of female cloistered nuns with the intention of identifying past and present traditions linked with usage of space in an attempt to highlight the risks of these elements becoming obsolete to memory.

Figure 5. Objectives as presented in section 1.2.

In order to achieve the above, research was conducted on four Maltese monasteries.

3.2 The Case Studies – Background Information

Four monasteries of high heritage value still relatively in use on the island of Malta have been selected for the purpose of this study. Since monasteries encompass several diverse and specific spaces, a representative selection of spaces within the *enclosure* of each monastery has been chosen to form the basis of this study. These spaces are relevant to each monastery and are as follows:

- *parlour*⁵
- *choir*
- *upper choir*

⁵ Refer to Glossary for definitions of these spaces

- *refectory*
- *kitchen & workspaces*
- *recreational hall*
- *corridors*
- *dormitories*
- *novitiate*
- *crypt*
- *infirmary*
- *belvedere/ roof,*
- *enclosed garden*

The salient characteristics of the monasteries under study are as follows:

Name	Location	Order	Community No.
Monastery of St. Margaret	Bormla	Discalced Carmelite of St. Theresa of Avila	10. Only 8 nuns live in residence (Average age – 80)
Foundation	1731 (AAM, 1739, f.1110)		
Architectural Structure	Dated approximately to mid. 1730 (AAM, 1739).		
Description	<p>This monastic complex is built abutting the fortifications of the Cottonera lines at the extremity of the village of Bormla. The construction took place in the mid 1730’s under the patronage of Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena [1722-1736] and Bishop Alpheran de Bussan [1728-1757] (AAM, 1739, f.1109).</p> <p>As it stands to date, only 8 nuns reside within the monastery. Except for one community member, all nuns are aging and suffer from mobility issues. This factor has led to various adaptations of their way of life which include the introduction of lay people within enclosure to cook, clean and tend to the sick. To date, only brief studies on the monastery have been conducted and little is known about the monastery’s architecture and works of art. To the knowledge of the Prioress of the community (verbal communication, October 2021), no architectural surveys of the interior spaces of the property have been commissioned or reproduced so far and no inventories of its assets have been compiled.</p>		

Table 6. Summary details for St Margaret’s Monastery, Bormla (information retrieved November 2021)

Name	Location	Order	Community No.
Monastery of St. Peter	Mdina	Benedictine	2 (Average Age - 80)
Foundation	First half of the 15 th century (Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1996)		
Architectural Structure	Established on the site of the former Hospital of St. Peter, this monastic complex went through various construction phases and alterations dating from the 15 th to the late 20 th century (Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1996).		
Description	<p>Situated in proximity to the main entrance of the fortified city of Mdina, this monastery predates the arrival of the Knights of Malta and is the oldest surviving cloistered monastery on the Island. Its core-community has been experiencing a serious decline in vocations and to date only two members still live within its walls.</p> <p>Over the past 30 years, there has been various academic interest in the diverse aspects of this site. A dedicated study on its history, architecture and works of art is currently underway (verbal communication, P. Caruana Dingli). The level of interest in this site means that its significance is not obscure. Architectural plans are available for consultation in D. De Lucca (1995, p.67). According to an interview held with a community member in January 2022, inventories of movable items of interest are kept within the monastery's archive.</p>		

Table 7. Summary details for St Peter's Monastery, Mdina (information retrieved January 2022)

Name	Location	Order	Community No.
Monastery of St. Ursula	Valletta	Gerosolimitan	11 (Average Age - 65)
Foundation	Originally founded in Birgu in c. 1582, the community moved to Valletta in c. 1595 (Aquilina, 2004, pp.74- 75)		
Architectural Structure	Built in various stages, with foundations attributed to Antonio Garsin c. 1633 (Aquilina, 2004, p.77).		
Description	<p>This is the Monastery of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John. Occupying almost an entire block on the east side of the city, one of its façade's faces the highly coveted view of the Grand Harbour in Valetta. It is one of two female cloistered monasteries in this UNESCO world heritage city.</p> <p>This monastery enjoys a stable community of eleven nuns with the youngest collective average age from all the monasteries under study.</p> <p>With the Knights as their patrons, the architecture, works of art and the communities' past roles have over the years generated academic interest in this monument. A thorough study on St. Ursula's monastery published by P. Gorg Aquilina in 2004 remains the leading source of research to date. Although the archives remain inaccessible to the general public, the digitization of all its material is presently underway. Architectural plans to the monastery are reproduced in Aquilina (2004, pp. 106-107).</p>		

Table 8. Summary details for St Ursula's Monastery (information retrieved November 2021)

Name	Location	Order	Community No.
Monastery of St. Scholastica	Birgu	Benedictine	10 (Average Age – 66)
Foundation	Originally founded in Mdina during the first half of the 15 th century (Aquilina, 1993, p. 733).		
Architectural Structure	The nuns took up residence in the Old Infirmary of the Knights in 1652 (Aquilina, 1993, p. 736). The building was adapted and altered accordingly with the final stages of construction recorded in 1717. (Aquilina, 1993; Critien, 1950)		
Description	<p>Situated above the waterfront, this monastic complex occupies a large area within a historically important and dense urban fabric that is presently displaying signs of dilapidation due to vacant properties (Census, 2011, p.3).</p> <p>With an average age of 66, their core-community remains still relatively active.</p> <p>Although a comprehensive study on this monastery has so far never been published, the information available in Bugeja, Buhagiar & Fiorini (1993) permits an accurate reconstruction of the salient historical facts. Recent interest in this complex centered mainly around the 17th century architectural contribution of Lorenzo Gafa as the architect of the Monastery's Church and its titular painting by Mattia Preti. According to the information retrieved during interviews conducted in November 2021, only inventories of its silver possessions exist. No architectural plans of the complex or inventories of other moveable assets have been traced.</p>		

Table 9. Summary details for St Scholastica's Monastery (information retrieved November 2021)

3.3 Choice of Value Criteria

In line with recent observations expressed during the FRH conference of 2021 and as pointed out summarily in point 2, section 2.3.3.1 (p.23), the “approaches of a living heritage approach and heritage values are complementary (Linblad, 2021, 27:17).” This statement was presented as a means for further developing conservation approaches and considering management methodologies that take into account the specificities of living religious heritage. A living heritage approach “prioritises the core-community’s connection... on this basis, the core-community is given a primary role in the conservation process (Poulios, 2014b. p.130).” This *raison d’etre* is primarily behind the selection of this group of value criteria as presented in this study. The researcher’s interest is to elicit information directly from the community (the living dimension) that plays a primary role in the building’s significance. Secondly the choice

was also determined by the research questions and objectives set out at the onset. From these it is evident that diminishing *use* of internal spaces and the extent of the communities' *association* with these spaces is at the very heart of this research. Although when assessing heritage values of monuments including the artistic, aesthetic and architectural values as distinct categories constitutes common practice in value assessment, when considering the above (the living dimension), it has been decided to omit these values as categories in their own right mainly because they fall outside the immediate scope of this research. They have instead been absorbed in other broader categories (such as the typological and historical values as explained hereunder).

In line with objective 1 (Figure 5), heritage value criteria have been selected to help evaluate these spaces and these are:

- Typological Value⁶ – This value refers to the architectural specificities in structure, construction, function and decoration as valued against a context (Gomez-Roblez, 2010). All spaces within monasteries possess *typological value*.
- Functional Value – Function is “an essential component of architecture” (Gomez-Roblez, 2010, p. 152) providing a measure for its use. Continuous use is a salient characteristic of living heritage. In cases where use is diminishing due to external forces this value becomes unstable and as such is considered as a “cultural variable” that is dependent on “the society who constructed and utilized the structure.” (Gomez-Roblez, 2010, p. 152). The extent of present function and current use forms the basis of this study (objective 2).
- Historic Value - Various definitions describe this value as capturing the entire history of a monument till the present day (English Heritage, 2008, p. 28; ICOMOS, 2013, Burra Charter, Practice Note, Understanding and assessing *cultural significance*, n.p.) . This is a broad category and overlaps with other values such as “aesthetics, art and architecture, science, spirituality and society” (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Practice Note, Understanding and assessing *cultural significance*). When eliciting information from within the cloistered community with regards to historic value one must keep in mind the specificity of the living heritage that is in focus, mainly that we are dealing with a living dimension characterized by traditional use and defined by the concept of

⁶ Refer to Glossary for the definitions of typological, functional, associative, social and spiritual values. Historic Value has been explained infra text.

continuity of original use, care, expression and connection (section 2.3.3, p. 22). When a strong tradition of continuity exists as is the case with these monasteries, this continuity becomes a phenomenon, whereby the past becomes a living present giving it contemporary relevance (Wijesuriya, 2005, p.37 as it appears in section 2.3.1.1, p.17). Based on the reasons above and the information elicited from within the community, for the purpose of this study, historic value is assigned to the space when function determined through use by a community ends or is severely compromised. This essentially means that historic value and *functional value* will emerge as inversely related.

- Associative value – Associative value can be described as the “collective attachment to a place that embodies meanings and value that are important to a community or communities” (Jones, 2017, p.22). Although this relates to perceptions and narratives of different groups, for the purpose of this study, the narrative of primary importance will be that of the core-community since they have “direct access” to these spaces (Lipe, 1984, p. 4). In this study this value is related to remembrance and commemoration of the past which supports the concept that religious buildings are ‘sites of memory’ (section 2.4.2.4) (UNESCO, 2018b). For this reason, *communicative memory* comes strongly into play (section 2.4.2.4).
- Social Value – “Refers to the *associations* that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them” (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Practice Note, Understanding and assessing cultural significance, p.4).” This will refer to present meanings.
- Spiritual Value – “Refers to the intangible values and meanings embodied in or evoked by a place which give it importance in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group” (ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter, Practice Note, Understanding and assessing cultural significance, p.4). Since spiritual *values* are related to the core-communities’ presence, this value refers to the space’s present meaning.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Methodology and Tools

The research methodology for the value assessment of past and present use of these spaces was based on a selection of anthropological-ethnographic methods recommended as approaches used for “assessing *sociocultural values* at heritage sites.” (Low, 2002, p.31). The qualitative research applied was twofold and was conducted in this order:

1. *Observational, Phenomenological and Ethnographic approaches* – These qualitative methods are intended to assist the researcher in eliciting past and present values directly from the individuals or groups under study thus obtaining information about the person’s life, activities and interaction within the spaces they inhabit (Low, 2002). The research tools used are:

- Observational surveys – A field journal was kept with records of observations and impressions of what took place in the monastery during the researcher’s scheduled and unscheduled visits. The intention was to observe the core-community as individuals and/ or groups onsite within their own environment. The observational surveys were conducted in different settings mainly: unannounced preliminary visits to the *parlour*, scheduled on-site visits to the architectural spaces of the monastery and during the semi-structured interviews. A selection of the ‘diary entries’ have been attached to appendix 2 and 4. Where possible, an accompanied visit to the premises of the monastery was scheduled. Sequence photography was used as an aid for understanding the monastery’s floor plan and for picking up phenomenological information. This information is recorded in a section entitled ‘On-site Visit Entry’ in appendixes 2 and 4.
- Scheduled semi-structured interviews – These interviews were intended to elicit information from the individuals by presenting a predetermined set of questions (Appendix 6.1). The questions were designed with the intention of understanding the individual’s experience of space in the present whilst recalling elements of use from the past either through personal memory or *communicative memory*. As a sampling strategy, the researcher aimed at interviewing equal numbers of younger members

who joined the monastery after the SVC and older members who lived and remembered life before the changes of the aforementioned Council.

The interviews were designed to last 60 minutes and conducted in Maltese. Appointments were scheduled over the phone indicating the duration of the sitting and organized at the convenience of the participants. The interviews were conducted whilst seated in an environment of their choice within the monastery. All audio conversations were recorded and transcribed once the visit was over. Paraphrased information from the transcripts will be annexed to the appendixes of Chapter 4.

2. *Historical Approaches* – By looking into past use, the researcher aimed at creating a context in which to gauge continuity of use. This entailed consulting various primary and secondary sources.

3.5 Processing the Data Collected

3.5.1 Attributing Values to the Designated Areas

Based on the information collected during the semi-structured interviews, the predominant heritage values will be attributed to the thirteen spaces in the monastery. These values will be supported by observational data gathered on-site and contextual research. The values will be displayed in a table as demonstrated in the 'First Phase' marked in Table 10 below.

3.5.2 Calculating Current Use Value

3.5.2.1 What is Intended by 'Current Use Value'?

A second phase in the processing stage will deal with numerically quantifying current use of the thirteen spaces under study. This quantification was deemed necessary to tangibly portray the extent of risk that these living heritage monuments are facing due to diminishing communities (Objective 2, Figure5). Therefore, in this case the word 'value' within the term 'current use value' is intended to signify a numerical indicative estimation that will enable the researcher to classify the usage of each individual space within a monastery into high, medium, or low usage.

3.5.2.2 Calculating Current Use Value

X Monastery							Use Value*
Typological	Functional	Historic	Associative	Social	Spiritual		
1. Parlour	x	x		x	x	x	3
2. Choir	x	x		x	x	x	3
3. Upper Choir	x	x		x	x	x	1
4. Refectory	x	x	x	x	x	x	3
5. Kitchens and Work Space	x	x	x	x	x	x	3
6. Recreational Hall	x	x		x	x	x	3
7. Corridors	x	x			x	x	3
8. Dormitories	x	x	x		x	x	3
9. Novitate	x		x	x			0
10. Crypt	x	x			x	x	3
11. Infirmary	x	x			x	x	3
12. Belvedere/ Roof	x	x			x	x	3
13. Enclosed Garden	x	x			x	x	2
Total Current Use Value							33 (High Use)
*Current Use Value		Low Use	Value 1 -13				
		Medium Use	Value 14 - 26				
		High Use	Value 27-39				

Table 10. The proposed three phases for calculating the total current use value.

Current use value is annotated in the green column at the extreme right of Table 10. To obtain this value, the researcher has resorted to applying the central elements that define living religious heritage (i.e., continuity of the site’s original function, of care, of connection and expression [section 2.3.3]) as measures for quantifying the ‘current use value’. Based on the information obtained during on-site research, each space shall be assessed for continuity. Table 11 illustrates how continuity of function, care, connection and expression will be applied to individual spaces to obtain a numerical current use value.

4. Refectory			
	Use	Non-Use	Compromised
Continuity of site's original function	x		x
Continuity of care		x	
Continuity of connection	x		x
Continuity of expression		x	
Total	2	2	2

	Use Value
Low Use	1 - 33%
Medium Use	34 - 66%
High Use	67 - 100%

Table 11. Establishing the extent of continuity in monastic spaces.

If continuity (of function, care, connection, and expression respectively) exists in the designated area, it is marked as 'applicable'. In cases where continuity is applicable but jeopardized by external factors (e.g., lack of community members, elevated age etc.), then continuity is marked as 'compromised'. When continuity has stopped then this is marked as 'Not Applicable'. A calculation of these attributes is generated and the indicative use value given. A value of '1' indicates low usage of space, a value of '2' indicates medium usage and '3' indicates high use. When the value is listed as 0, this means that continuity in all four areas no longer exists.

The third and final phase in assigning numerical value to current use entails obtaining the 'Total Current Use Value' for the monastery (Table 10). This is the sum of the values in the thirteen areas under study. This sum is offset against a fictitious value of a fully functioning monastery that would score '3' in all areas having a total collective current use value of '39'. This enables the researcher to rate the monastery as one of low use (Value 1 – 13), medium use (Value 14 – 26) and high use (Value 27 – 39). The results of these values will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

3.5.3 Presenting the Research Results

The results presented in chapter 4 will be divided into two sections. In the first section (section 4.2), the prevalent values of the specific spaces as dictated by use in all four monasteries shall be presented. This will enable the researcher to explore the first research question presented in section 1.3. This section will also include the quantification of the 'current use value' enabling the researcher to classify the four monasteries into categories of low, medium, and high use for the purpose of the discussion in section 5.2.

In an attempt to answer research question no 2 (section 1.3), a second section in the results chapter (section 4.3) will explore in detail the application of the selected methodology on one selected monastery. The validity of this methodology will be discussed in section 5.3.

Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 will be supported by annexed information. Appendix 1 is intended to provide a general physical context of the monasteries. Appendix 2 – 5 will provide where applicable the narratives from the semi-structured interviews, the diary-entries, the on-site

visit details, and sequence photography taken during the one-time onsite visits. All information will be numbered and quoted infra text by code. See the table below.

All Monasteries	Appendix 1	Geographical Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Context A – St. Ursula Monastery - Context B – St. Scholastica Monastery - Context C – St. Margaret Monastery - Context D – St. Peter Monastery
St. Margaret’s Monastery	Appendix 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narratives [N1 – 71] - Diary Entries [D72-76] - On-site Visit Description [ON77-102] - Images [IM1 -58]
St. Peter’s Monastery	Appendix 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Images [IM59 – 104]
St. Ursula’s Monastery	Appendix 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narratives [N102-154] - Diary Entries [D155-157] - On-site Visit Description [ON158-174] - Images [IM105-170]
St. Scholastica’s Monastery	Appendix 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narratives [N175-260]

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All respondents to the semi-structured interviews consented willingly to participate in this research. To this effect a consent form (Appendix 6.2) was signed by the participants and an information letter (Appendix 6.3) was given outlining the delimitations of use of information. All respondents to the semi—structured interviews remain anonymous throughout and every effort to protect their identity has been taken by the researcher. All information retrieved from the semi-structured interviews underwent a rigorous process which involved the paraphrasing of all text and the removal of sensitive or identifiable information.

As requested by Prioress Agnese Zammit at St Ursula’s Monastery, research was permitted on the premises only after the Archbishop of Malta was duly informed about the nature of the research in question. With regards to this, a notification of full support was duly received.

3.7 Limitations

The intention of this study was to originally include the five female cloistered monasteries of high-heritage value on the island, therefore apart from the monasteries under study, the Monastery of St Catherine's in Valletta was also included. During a preliminary visit held on the 18th of October 2021, the Prioress of the monastery explained that only three elderly nuns (including herself) lived on the premises and that in an attempt to save the monastery from closure, three younger nuns from the Philippines were to be introduced to their community. The Prioress admitted that until this event took place, she was not in a position to dedicate time to the researcher's request. Considering the latter, the lack of guarantee of cooperation in the coming months and the introduction of a new variable (three foreign nuns) in terms of research, it was decided to omit this monastery from further research.

As expected, the element of 'enclosure' presented limitations to the research under study. Access to areas within the monastery is at the sole discretion of the Mother Superiors, Prioresses and Abbesses. To this effect, although permission for interviews at St Scholastica was granted, access to visit the premises [Figure 6] was denied. The lack of access signified that no observational data was retrieved in this case.



Figure 6. Access denied at St Scholastica.

Other general limitations that affected this research were as follows:

- The researcher was not given the possibility of explaining the nature of this research to multiple members of the community. All communication was channeled through the Prioresses, Abbesses or Mother Superiors
- The communities were limited in numbers and members of an advanced age were not always considered capable of conducting such interviews. The latter perspectives would have embellished the narrative of past use of space

- Although available for interviewing at specific times, the younger members of the community had very busy schedules since they were fulfilling several extra tasks due to the reduced and elderly members of the community
- The limited available comparative research of this nature which led to a certain degree of experimentation
- Due to the rigorous scheduling of monastic life, only a short span of time was made available to the researcher to conduct on-site visits of these vast monasteries.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Introduction

As explained in section 3.5.3, the research results are presented in two sections. The first section (4.2) will introduce the summary data retrieved from the four monasteries. The second part (4.3) will focus on showcasing the methodology applied and presenting an in-depth case-study on a selected representative monastery from the four.

4.2 Summary Data – The Monasteries

4.2.1 St Margaret's Monastery, Bormla



Figure 7. The community of Discalced Carmelite nuns at St Margert's Monastery (dated c.2018). Source: <https://carmelitenuns.uk/welcoming-st-margarets-convent-malta/>

The community at St Margaret's Monastery amounts to 10 cloistered nuns with 8 nuns residing in the monastery at the time of research [November 2021]. Their average age is 80 with several community members suffering from restricted mobility. The total capacity of this monastery is that of 21 nuns, a quantity dictated by the Discalced Carmelite rule and constitutions (Regola, 1991, p.58, para.91). Based on the footprint of this monastery and the capacity of nuns it can accommodate, it is comparatively smaller in size to the other monastic

complexes under study [approximate areas of all monasteries are reproduced in Appendix 1]. Despite still retaining a very traditional lifestyle typical of papal *enclosure*, the community accepted the request for research and three members made themselves available for interviewing. The ages of the participants were varied, and the interviews covered a span of approximately 55 years of *enclosure*. A thorough on-site visit [Appendix 2.3] was also conducted in the company of a member of the community who provided firsthand knowledge.



Figure 8. Main entrance to the monastery (left) and porticoed entrance to the church of St Margaret (right) at Misrah Bormla

To date, there has been little academic interest in the architectural building or in its small collection of works of art. To my knowledge, no architectural surveys of the monastery’s interior exist.

Table 12 summarizes the level of research conducted in support of the data presented in the subsequent section.

ST. MARGARET'S MONASTERY			
Research Tools Supporting Selection Of Predominant Values			
	Yes	No	
Archival/ Primary Sources	✓		
Secondary Sources	✓		
Semi-Structured Interviews	✓		
Observational Evidence	✓		
Data Attachments in Appendix 2			
	Yes	No	Location of Data
Narratives form Interviews	✓		Appendix 2.1
Diary Entries	✓		Appendix 2.2
On-site Visit Entry	✓		Appendix 2.3
Images	✓		Appendix 2.4

Table 12. Research tools and data attachments for St Margaret’s Monastery.

4.2.1.1 Value Assessment Data

St. Margaret's Monastery							
	Typological	Functional	Historic	Associative	Social	Spiritual	Use Value*
1. Parlour	x	x		x	x	x	2
2. Choir	x	x		x	x	x	1
3. Upper Choir	x		x	x			0
4. Refectory	x	x		x	x	x	1
5. Kitchens & Work Spaces	x		x	x			0
6. Recreational Hall	x	x		x	x	x	2
7. Corridors	x	x		x	x	x	2
8. Dormitories	x	x			x	x	2
9. Novitate	x		x	x			0
10. Crypt	x	x			x	x	2
11. Infirmary	x		x	x			0
12. Belvedere/ Roof	x		x	x			0
13. Enclosed Garden	x	x			x	x	2
					Total Current Use Value		14
							(Medium Use)
*Current Use Value		Low Use	Value 1 -13				
		Medium Use	Value 14 - 26				
		High Use	Value 27-39				

Table 13. Individual values attributed to the 13 spaces, Current Use Value for each space and Total Current Use Value at St Margaret's Monastery as retrieved during research in November, December 2021.

Table 13 illustrates the values attributed to the individual spaces under study. Collectively the values at St Margaret's monastery are:

Typological Value – This is the only Discalced Teresian monastery on the Island and as such it's architecture, art and decorative schemes display specificities related with this order. Built between 1727–1735 (Grima, 2016) under the patronage of Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) and Bishop Alpheran de Bussan (1728-1757), it is entirely detached on all four sides and occupies a prominent position on high ground, abutting the bastion of St Margaret in Bormla (Figure 9). Its severe external architecture typical of monastic facades is interrupted by an elaborate portico that precedes the entrance to the church inviting the public and benefactors of this community within. Otherwise, it remains devoid of decorative features with little indication of internal articulation from the outside (Figure 10).



Figure 9. Monastery abutting St Margaret's bastion.

The monastery's floor plan contains ubiquitous spaces assigned to monasteries post-Council of Trent (Borromeo, 1577, p.116-130). Unlike the other monasteries on the island this monastery does not have a *belvedere* and its ground plan includes a hermitage and an external garden, both of which have only been encountered in this monastery.

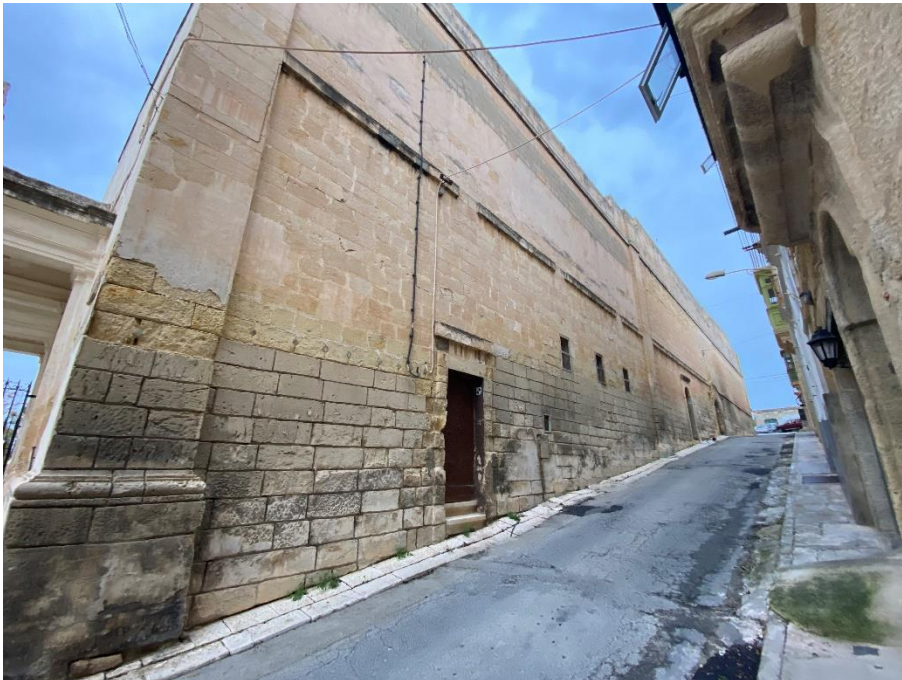


Figure 10. South wall of monastery facing an inhabited urban area almost totally devoid of windows.

Functional Value – Several areas still retain their original function. Low current use values have been assigned to areas that no longer retain full traditional use and have been subjected to change due to constraints caused by dwindling numbers and an ageing community.

Historic Value – In all cases where historic value has been assigned (*Upper choir, kitchens, novitiate, infirmary and belvedere*) function and use have ended due to the ageing community and the lack of vocations. These spaces would have otherwise been still relevant to their monastic life.

Associative Value – The information gathered from the semi-structured interviews [Appendix 2.1] provided a rich variety of information related to traditions, use and rituals that have been abandoned post SVC but also narratives relating to traditions that no longer happen or are slowly being abandoned due to restricted numbers.

Social & Spiritual Value – The spaces that still retained relevance through traditional use (*parlour, choir, refectory, recreational hall, corridors, dormitories, crypt & enclosed garden*) have maintained their *social* and *spiritual values*.

The collective distribution of values at St Margaret’s Monastery are as follows:

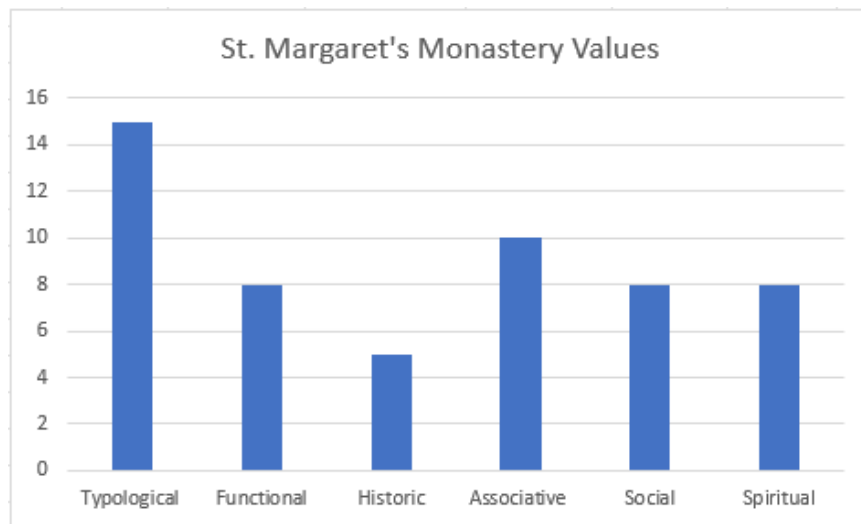


Table 14. Collective values at St Margaret’s Monastery [November 2021]

4.2.1.2 Total Current Use Value

The total current use value at St Margaret’s is 14 out of a possible 39 and is therefore considered as retaining medium use (Table 13).

4.2.2 St Peter's Monastery, Mdina



Figure 11. The Blessed Adeodata Pisani (right) as mistress of the novices instructing Benedictine novices. Source: (Serracino Inglott et al., 2018, p. ii). Photograph, Daniel Cilia

The community at St Peter's Monastery is made up of two nuns with an average age of 80. Due to the advanced age, semi-structured interviews were only possible with one member of the community. The participant in question joined the order at a time when the eighteen resident nuns were already elderly and experiencing a decline in vocations (verbal communication). She has been living at St Peter's for approximately 30 years.

Unlike other interviews, where direct contact was established by the researcher, this interview was arranged by the monastery's historian⁷ who also attended the interview at the nun's request. Due to the participant's sensitivity, questions were modified or omitted depending on the response to the questions asked. This was the only occasion when these modifications were necessary.

Unlike all other on-site visits to the monastery, this visit was not accompanied by a core-community member. Instead, the monastery's historian led the way, providing information and several observations about the history and past use of the building. In this research, on-site visits accompanied by resident nuns are intended as exercises for further eliciting meaning

⁷ I would like to thank Dr Petra Caruana Dingli for her assistance.

(apart from the semi-structured interviews) about the use of space and for obtaining first-hand *communicative memory* whilst visiting the premises and experiencing the space on-site. This was not retrieved during the on-site visit.

For the reasons mentioned above it has been decided to omit extracts from the semi-structured interviews, diary, and on-site visit entries. Appendix 3 contains the sequenced images of the areas visited.

Table 15 summarizes the level of research conducted in support of the data presented in the subsequent section.

ST. PETER'S MONASTERY			
Research Tools Supporting Selection Of Predominant Values			
	Yes	No	
Archival/ Primary Sources		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Secondary Sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Semi-Structured Interviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Observational Evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Data Attachments in Appendix 3			
	Yes	No	Location of Data
Narratives form Interviews		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Diary Entries		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
On-site Visit Entry		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Images	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Appendix 3.1

Table 15. Research tools and data attachments for St Peter’s Monastery.

4.2.2.1 Value Assessment Data

St. Peter's Monastery								
	Typological	Functional	Historic	Associative	Social	Spiritual		Use Value*
1. Parlour	x		x	x				0
2. Choir	x		x	x		x		1
3. Upper Choir	x		x	x				0
4. Refectory	x		x	x				0
5. Kitchen & Work Spaces	x		x	x				0
6. Recreational	x		x	x				0
7. Corridors	x		x	x				0
8. Dormitory	x	x	x			x		1
9. Novitate	x		x	x				0
10. Crypt	x	x			x	x		2
11. Infirmary	x		x					0
12. Belvedere/ Roof	x	x	x	x		x		2
13. Enclosed Garden	x	x	x	x		x		1
Total Current Use Value								7
								(Low Use)
*Current Use Value		Low Use	Value 1 -13					
		Medium Use	Value 14 - 26					
		High Use	Value 27-39					

Table 16. Individual values attributed to the 13 spaces, Current Use Value for each space and Total Current Use Value at St Peter’s Monastery as retrieved during research in January 2022.



Figure 12. Entrance to monastery (left); entrance to *parlour* (centre) and entrance to church (right)

Table 16 above illustrates the values attributed to the individual spaces under study. Collectively the values at St Peter’s Monastery are:

Typological Value – St Peter’s Monastery survives as an example of a Benedictine monastic complex established before the Council of Trent. From its set-up in the 15th century, the architecture evolved in response to the Tridentine reforms on *enclosure*, the surge in interest in female monastic life in 17th century (Caruana Dingli, 2020a) and more recently the instructions for contemplative life as a result of the SVC. St Peter’s is one of the largest monasteries on the Island [Appendix 1]. Apart from its visible dimensions, the fact that past records refer to resident communities in the mid-17th century amounting to at least 50 nuns, shows the actual capacity intended by this build (Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1996, p.310). Apart from the communal monastic spaces [Appendix 3,⁸ IM64, 69, 75] and their elevated architecture, this monument displays a vastness in all areas even those reserved for manual labour. Of particular interest are those spaces dedicated to the rearing of animals [IM99], areas for washing and hanging clothes [IM100, 81], spaces for food preparation and storage [IM98]. Of typological interest are also the variety of *dormitory* spaces [IM83-87, 89-92] some of which

⁸ Refer to Appendix 3 for images [IM59 – IM104] of St Peter’s Monastery.

are strongly indicative of past defined social structures within monasteries abolished after SVC.



Figure 13. Crypt at St Peter's Monastery

Functional Value – *Functional value* was assigned to spaces that still retain their primary function and an element of traditional use, which are: the *crypt* [Figure 13], *belvedere* [IM77], *dormitory* [IM83], and *enclosed garden*. A higher current use value has been assigned to the *crypt* since burial within the premises has been retained and traditions related with prayers for the dead in the months of November still happen to date, however full traditional use during burial would not be possible. Similarly, the *belvedere*, still retains its function as a space for meditation.

Historic Value – This value predominates over others mainly because function and use of spaces have become obsolete. A study of the use and evolution of this architectural complex provides important information on the socio-economic, religious and political aspects of monastic life in Mdina which in turn contributes to the general discourse of female cloistered monasteries in Malta. To date, a number of brief studies on this monument have taken place with others being planned in the near future. Although access to the archives is highly restricted, the contents have been organised by Malta's leading ecclesiastical archivist Mgr John Azzopardi now deceased and today maintained by Dr Petra Caruana Dingli. This monastery also bears significance as the place where the 19th century mystic, Blessed Maria Adeodata Pisani lived and died in *enclosure*. She is commemorated physically through the display of her room [Figure 14], her embroidery and lace artifacts and also through a publication that presents a literary interpretation of her works (Serracino Inglott et al., 2018).



Figure 14. The cell of the Blessed Maria Adeodata Pisani

Associative Value – As expected this value ranks high comparatively. However, since only one interview took place, the content matter cannot be verified with other members of the community for accuracy (hence question mark in Table 17 below). Furthermore, due to sensitivity regarding certain topics, omissions were made resulting in incomplete narratives.

Social – The communal spaces in the monastery no longer retain their use. The social aspect has been assimilated within the historic and *associative values*.

Spiritual – *Spiritual values* have also been assimilated into the historic and *associative values*. The *crypt*, *choir*, rooms within the *dormitory*, *belvedere* and *enclosed garden* are still used for solitary prayer and meditation.

The collective distribution of values at St Peter’s Monastery are as follows:

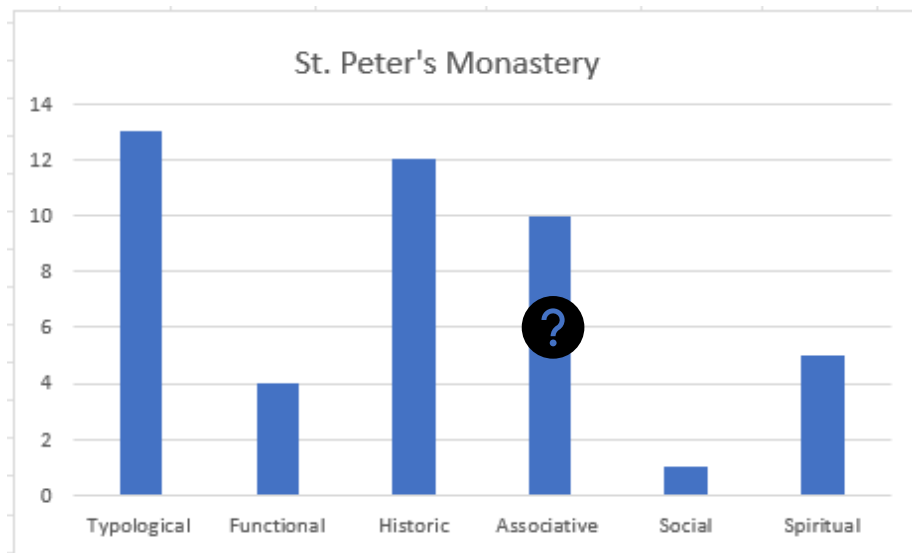


Table 17. Collective values at St Peter's Monastery [January 2022]. A question mark on the *associative* value has been placed since unlike other monasteries, where information was verified by comparison, only one interview was conducted here.

4.2.2.2 Total Current Use Value

The total current use value at St Peter's is low, scoring 7 out of a possible 39 (Table 16). As a community of two, maintaining traditional cloistered life according to the rules and constitutions of St Benedict is no longer possible.

4.2.3 St Ursula's Monastery, Valletta



Figure 15. Community at St Ursula's Monastery (c. 2004) as reproduced in Aquilina (2004, p. XX). Photography, Daniel Cilia

The cloistered community at St Ursula is today made up of eleven nuns with the youngest average age of 65. All members participate to a certain extent in community life under the guidance of a very active and industrious Prioress. The levels of activity were apparent during the on-site visit [Appendix 4, ON158–174] where the community was observed engaged in various tasks within the kitchens [Appendix4, [IM116](#)], *parlour* [[IM106](#)], *refectory* [[IM126](#)], *corridors*, *offices*, *infirmary*, *enclosed garden* [[IM110](#)] and other areas.

The monastic architectural complex is currently undergoing several upgrading and maintenance projects with the intention of ameliorating areas and updating the personal rooms within the *dormitories* for the present community and for prospective candidates in hope of receiving novices in the near future. Apart from infrastructural maintenance the community is also commissioning restoration projects from conservation professionals on various paintings, manuscripts, engravings, furniture and other works of art. A digitisation project of the archives is also currently underway.

After the request for research was accepted the Prioress selected three members of the community for interviewing. These interviews covered a range between 30 to 67 years of life within *enclosure*. On-site meetings at the monastery provided observational information

whilst a detailed visit to the premises provided an understanding of volumes and use of space, albeit disrupted by maintenance works.

Table 18 summarizes the level of research conducted in support of the data presented in the subsequent section.

ST. URSULA'S MONASTERY			
Research Tools Supporting Selection Of Predominant Values			
	Yes	No	
Archival/ Primary Sources		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Secondary Sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Semi-Structured Interviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Observational Evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Data Attachments in Appendix 4			
	Yes	No	Location
Narratives form Interviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Appendix 4.1
Diary Entries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Appendix 4.2
On-site Visit Entry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Appendix 4.3
Images	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Appendix 4.4

Table 18. Research tools and data attachments for St Ursula's Monastery.

4.2.3.1 Value Assessment Data

	St. Ursula's Monastery							Use Value*
	Typological	Functional	Historic	Associative	Social	Spiritual		
1. Parlour	x	x		x	x	x		3
2. Choir	x	x		x	x	x		3
3. Upper Choir	x	x		x	x	x		1
4. Refectory	x	x	x	x	x	x		3
5. Kitchens and Work Space	x	x	x	x	x	x		3
6. Recreational Hall	x	x		x	x	x		3
7. Corridors	x	x			x	x		3
8. Dormitories	x	x	x		x	x		3
9. Novitate	x		x	x				0
10. Crypt	x	x			x	x		3
11 Infirmary	x	x			x	x		3
12. Belvedere/ Roof	x	x			x	x		3
13. Enclosed Garden	x	x			x	x		2
							Total Current Use Value	33
								(High Use)
*Current Use Value		Low Use	Value 1 -13					
		Medium Use	Value 14 - 26					
		High Use	Value 27-39					

Table 19. Individual values attributed to the 13 spaces, Current Use Value for each space and Total Current Use Value at St Ursula's Monastery as retrieved during research in November/ December 2021.

Table 19 above illustrates the values attributed to the individual spaces under study. Collectively the values at St Ursula's Monastery are:

Typological Value – Built intermittently between 1595 and 1766 (Aquilina, 2004), this cloistered monastery survives as the only living religious heritage monument that is representative of the Order of the Knights of St John. Unlike other monasteries in Malta, its jurisdiction originally fell directly under the Grand Master of the Order and not the Bishop. The external façade and internal spaces speak an architectural language that combine typical enclosed monastic features rendered with an elevated degree of magnificence typical of the architectural legacies left by the Knights. Apart from the decorative schemes in certain areas, the monastery reveals specificities in its planning that differ from other monasteries on the island, such as for example the vast areas reserved for the preparation of food (IM114-126) that are substantially larger and grander in their format.

Functional Value – Although the community is relatively small, all selected areas except for the *novitiate* retain a degree of continuity of original function, continuous connection with the site, continuity of cultural expression through adaptation of use as dictated by the SVC and continuity of care as practiced by the present community (Figure 16). To date they have managed to retain their daily schedules of prayer and work by distributing the roles of sacristan, nurse, gatekeeper, storekeeper, cook, server, reader in the *refectory*, laundry worker and other chores among themselves [Appendix 4, Narratives, N119, 135, 145].



Figure 16. The community engaged in maintenance practices working under the supervision of a master gilder (2021).

Historic Value – The entire architectural complex has high-historic value and an in-depth illustrated study produced by P. George Aquilina (2004) provides the reader with comprehensive information about all aspects of this Gerosolimitan order. Regarding usage of space, historic value has been assigned to areas that no longer retain their original use, have ceased to fulfil their original function or are being used to display objects pertaining to the past as a means of recording historical facts.

Associative Value – The *associative values* assigned are related to memories of past traditional uses as elicited from within the community. The narratives in appendix 4 are evidence of this.

Social Value – The *social value* ranks high within these spaces mainly because they find themselves in a position of maintaining function throughout. There is community resilience at maintaining their identity as a living tradition that finds its origins in the Order of the Knights of St John. This is evident in their efforts at valorizing history through their several display areas [IM115, 117, 119, 121, 128 – 131, 138, 154] and their active engagement of conservation professionals.

Spiritual Value – Through maintenance of prayer, work and community life, this value is maintained throughout.

The collective distribution of values at St Ursula’s Monastery are as follows:

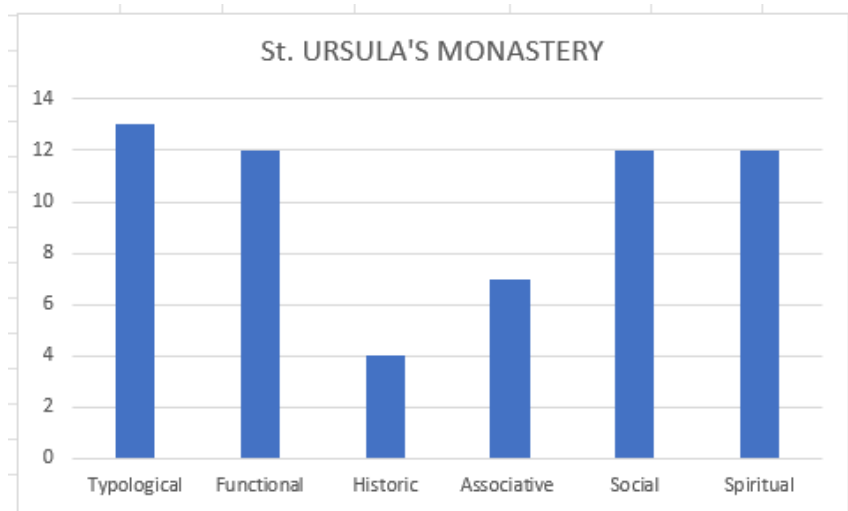


Table 20. Collective values at St Ursula’s Monastery [November/ December 2021].

4.2.3.2 Total Current Use Value

The total current use value at St Ursula is 33 out of 39 (Table 19) and is therefore considered as maintaining high use value.

4.2.4 St Scholastica's Monastery, Birgu



Figure 17. The cloistered community of Benedictine nuns at St Scholastica's Monastery (c. 1971). (Image courtesy of St Scholastica's Monastery)

St Scholastica's Monastery is situated amidst a dense urban and historic landscape (see Appendix 1, Context B). Originating from Mdina, this Benedictine community settled in Birgu during the first half of the 16th century where they took up residence in the former infirmary built for the Knights of St John whilst still active in Birgu. Rooms dating to this early construction still survive and have been assimilated into the new construction that took shape between the 17th and 18th century (Bugeja, Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1993; Critien, 1950).

The community is made up of 10 nuns with an average age of 66, which is a situation similar to that at St Ursula's Monastery. They still live a very traditional way of life and are the only monastery that did not permit access within its *enclosure*. They however consented to carrying out semi-structured interviews which forms the basis for the values in Table 22. The interviews were held with four nuns [Appendix 5, Narratives 175-260], covering a range between 30 to 70 years living in *enclosure*. No architectural plans or drawings have been identified, therefore the lay-out remains unknown to the researcher. Although the rooms and

spaces within the monastery most-definitely possess *typological value*, this value has been omitted since first-hand knowledge of the space was not possible.

Table 21 summarizes the level of research conducted in support of the data presented in the subsequent section.

ST. SCHOLASTICA'S MONASTERY			
Research Tools Supporting Selection Of Predominant Values			
	Yes	No	
Archival/ Primary Sources		☑	
Secondary Sources	☑		
Semi-Structured Interviews	☑		
Observational Evidence	☑		
Data Attachments in Appendix 5			
	Yes	No	Location
Narratives form Interviews	☑		Appendix 5.1
Diary Entries		☑	
On-site Visit Entry		☑	
Images		☑	

Table 21. Research tools and data attachments for St Scholastica's Monastery.

4.2.4.1 Value Assessment Data

St. Scholastica's Monastery							
	Typological	Functional	Historic	Associative	Social	Spiritual	Use Value*
1. Parlour	NA	x		x	x	x	3
2. Choir	NA	x			x	x	2
3. Upper Choir	NA		x	x			0
4. Refectory	NA	x		x	x	x	2
5. Kitchen & Work Spaces	NA	x	x	x	x	x	2
6. Recreational	NA	x			x	x	2
7. Corridors	NA	x			x	x	2
8. Dormitories	NA	x	x	x	x	x	2
9. Novitate	NA		x	x			0
10. Crypt	NA	NA	x	x			NA
11. Infirmary	NA		x	x			0
12. Belvedere/ Roof	NA	x			x	x	2
13. Enclosed Garden	NA	x			x	x	2
Total Current Use Value							19
							(Medium Use)
*Current Use Value		Low Use	Value 1 -13				
		Medium Use	Value 14 - 26				
		High Use	Value 27-39				

Table 22 Individual values attributed to the 13 spaces, Current Use Value for each space and Total Current Use Value at St Scholastica's Monastery as retrieved during research in November 2021.

Table 22 above illustrates the values attributed to the individual spaces under study. Collectively the values at St Scholastica's Monastery are:

Functional Value – Together with St Margaret’s Monastery, this community leads a very traditional way of life. It transpires that several areas still retain their original function and traditional use albeit diminishing. A balance between work and prayer has so far been maintained, however several tasks now fall on the younger members of the community creating an imbalance (Appendix 5, N248). It is interesting to note that the *upper choir* area had lost its original function after SVC and unlike other monasteries, a new use was never adapted to this space. Also, unlike the other case-studies, traditional burial in the *crypt* was never restored after a temporary suspension that prohibited burial in private properties [N188, 235 & 260].

Historic Value – As with the other monasteries, this value has been assigned to areas that are either no longer in use (*upper choir, novitiate and infirmary*) or to areas that have witnessed the cessation of a main function due to historical events (*kitchen, dormitories and crypt*). Regarding the latter it is interesting to note that an interview was held with a converse nun [N218-236]. She survives as evidence of a type of life that was abolished by SVC but that in certain cases carried on into the 70’s. Several of her recollections are of interest to the *associative value* and to the historic value when use no longer applied.

Associative Value – The changes that took place after SVC and the diminishing ‘use value’ of the space creates a number of narratives that have been reported during the semi-structured interviews.



Figure 18. (left) Recreational time (circa 1985). (right) Nuns in the *choir* during the celebration of mass (2014). (Images courtesy of St Scholastica’s Monastery)

Social and Spiritual Value – Once again, these values are attributed to the spaces that have retained traditional use.

The collective distribution of values at St Scholastica's Monastery are as follows:

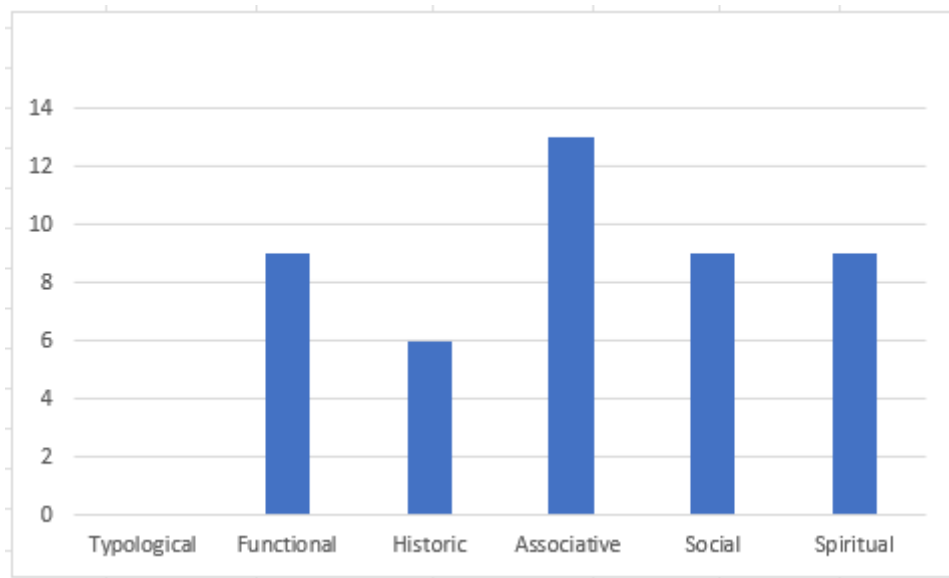


Table 23. Collective values at St Scholastica's Monastery [November 2021]. *Typological* value has been left unmarked since on-site visits were denied to the researcher.

4.2.4.2 Total Current Use Value

Based on the information retrieved during the semi-structured interviews, the total current use value of at St Scholastica's Monastery is medium (Table 22).

4.2.5 Conclusion of Summary Data

By way of conclusion, when combining the total current use value of the four monasteries as presented in Tables 13, 16, 19 & 22 a classification of the extent of use emerges with St Peter’s Monastery ranking the lowest in use, followed by St Margaret and St Scholastica with medium use and finally St Ursula having the highest current use value as illustrated in Table 24. This is in line with objective 2 as set out in section 1.2.

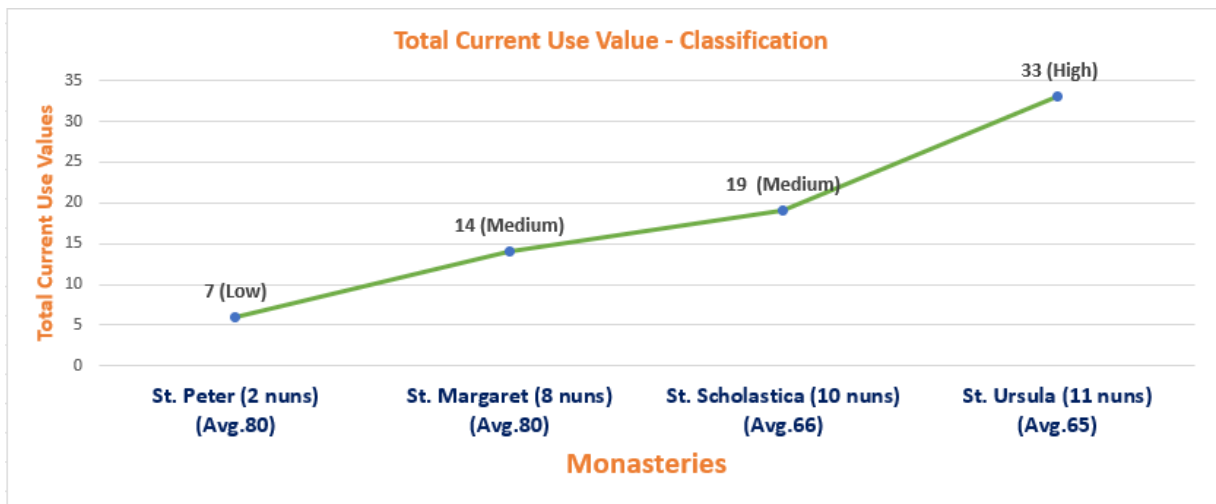


Table 24. Classification of use in the four monasteries based on the total current use value (November 2021 – January 2022)

Other data retrieved includes the values attributed to specific living monastic spaces as illustrated in Tables 14, 17, 20 & 23. These values are based on information retrieved during the semi-structured interviews and from the researcher’s on-site experience of the monastery whilst accompanied by a member of the core-community (as per objective 1, section 1.2).

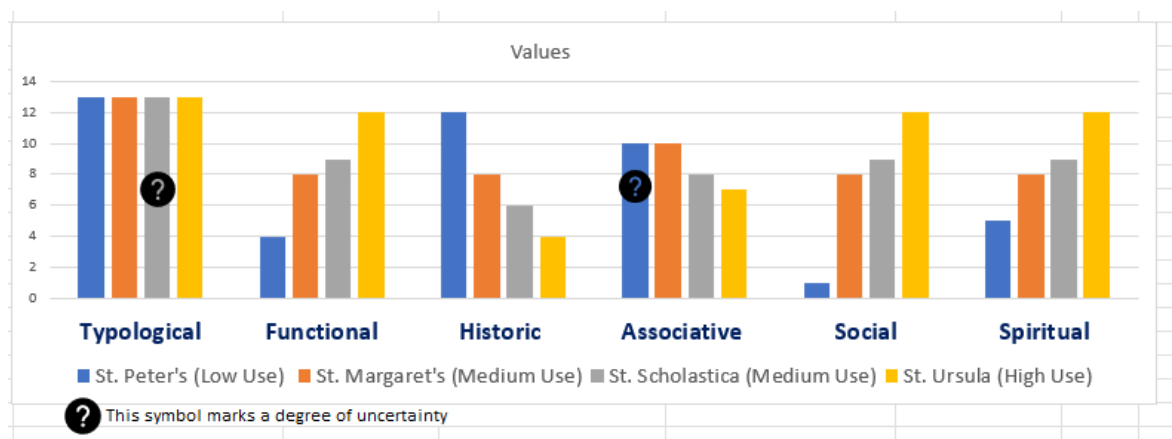


Table 25. Grouping of values per monastery. The question mark symbols represent issues encountered during research due to limitations (November 2021 – January 2022)

The above clustered graphic (Table 25) shows the grouping of all values per monastery that will be discussed further in section 5.2.

4.3 St Margaret's Monastery – Values determined by use

4.3.1 Introduction

By using St Margaret's Monastery as the representative case-study, section 4.3 is intended to demonstrate how the methodology suggested in section 3.4 was applied to the monasteries. Due to various limitations encountered during research, from the four monasteries under study, this monastery presented the most favourable observational and participatory conditions enabling the researcher to achieve the following:

- Conduct semi-structured interviews with at least three participants covering 55 years of life within *enclosure*
- Visit the entire premises without omissions and obstructions
- Being accompanied by a member of the core-community during the on-site visit

The combination of the three elements above was only possible at St Margaret's (see limitations 3.7 and 5.4).

For ease of reference, this section has been divided into 14 sub-sections. The first section (4.3.2) presents the floor-plan sketch⁹ for the monastery. Since no previous plan was located, this sketch is based on the researcher's observations during the on-site visit, on on-line satellite imagery and on the sequence photography taken during the visit. It is important to note that this sketch is in no way intended as an accurate architectural drawing and should be considered as indicative reference.

The remaining sub-sections (4.3.3 – 4.3.15) are divided according to the thirteen representative monastic spaces as outlined in section 3.2. Each space has been assigned a set of values from the criteria outlined in section 3.3. With reference to the *typological value*, it has been decided to only annotate the main characteristics of this value in point form and instead to focus on use through the analysis of function, historic, associative, social and spiritual value.

Throughout this section, reference to data in Appendix 2 shall be continuous.

⁹ I would like to thank Architect Patrick Calleja from Architects Studio for assisting in translating my hand drawn sketch into a digital version.

4.3.2 The Floor Plans



Figure 19. St Margaret's Monastery, ground floor plan

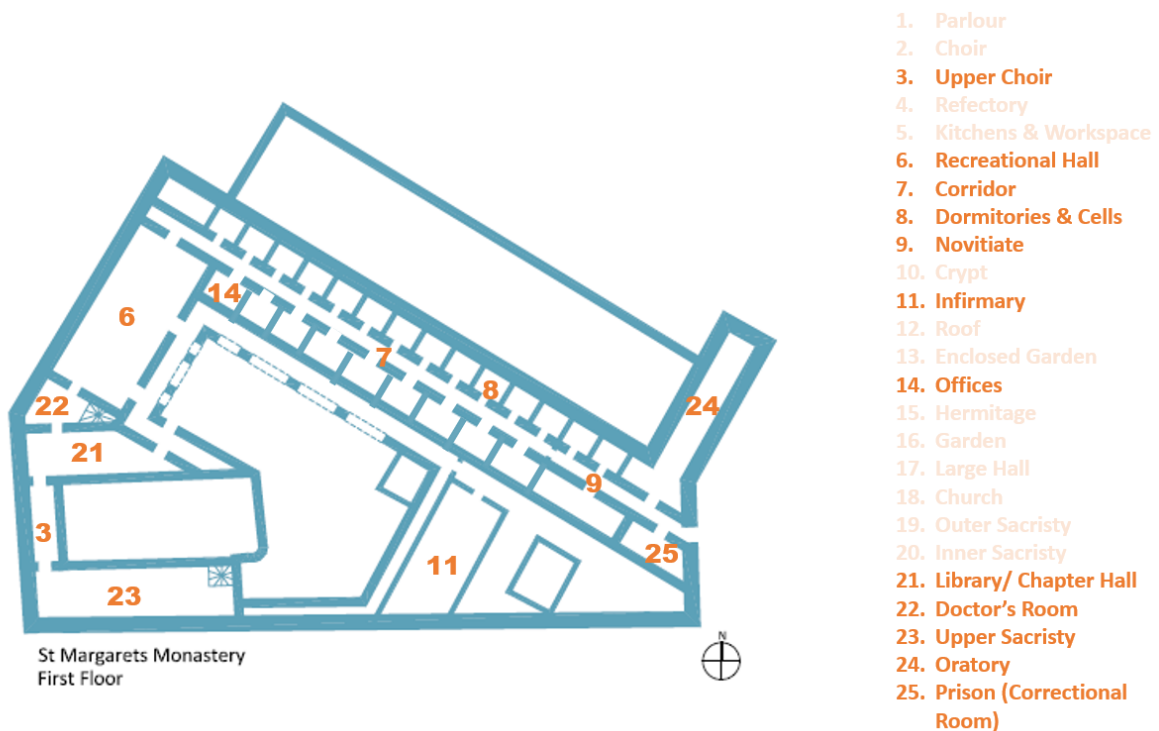


Figure 20. St Margaret's Monastery, first floor plan

4.3.3 The *Parlour* (Area 1a, 1b)

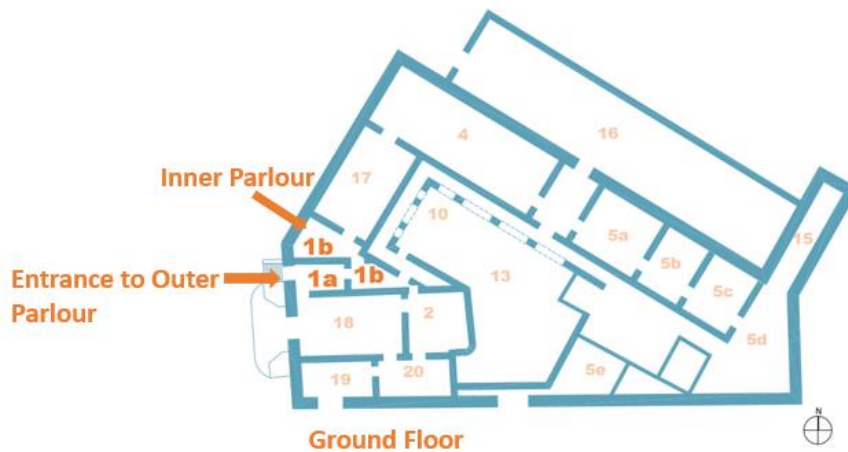


Figure 21. Inner parlour (Area 1b) and outer parlour (Area 1a) on ground floor plan

4.3.3.1 Typological Characteristics¹⁰



Figure 22. Area 1a - Outer parlour, with *rota* (left), two communication windows, entrance door to monastery and other communication window (left to right)



Figure 23. Access to church at ground floor level and to musician's balcony above.

- Entrance to the *parlour* [Figure 21] is situated next to the church entrance at ground floor level

¹⁰ The simplicity and austerity of the decorative scheme are representative of the Teresian charism and a characteristic of this monastery. Being a firm attribute and present throughout the complex, this detail shall not be repeated.

- The *parlour* is divided into 2 areas: Area 1a is the outer parlour intended for secular use and Area 1b is the inner parlour [Figure 21] intended for exclusive use by the community
- The outer parlour has 3 communication windows with a single grille, a wheel (*rota*) and doors providing access into the monastery, another to the church and a third door to the musician's balcony (Figure 22,23)
- The heavy-set wooden internal door that provides entrance to the monastery still displays evidence of locks and heightened security [IM4].



Figure 24. The inner parlour is divided into two areas [IM21,22]. Ropes to belfry are evident (right)

4.3.3.2 Functional Value

The *parlour* is shaped closely by the post-tridentine concept of *enclosure* (Borromeo, 1577). It was constructed to fulfil the following functions:

- a space for controlled communication between the community and the outside world
- provide access for provisions of food, charity and all other daily necessities
- as official entrance from the secular world into papal *enclosure* and community life
- controlled entrance for members of the outside community



Figure 26. Entrance door as seen from within the monastery

Figure 25. Monastery entrance from outer parlour

The use of this space both past and present comes heavily prescribed. From the pastoral visitation report (AAM, VP. 1739. F.1114-1115) detailed information about past use and particular physical attributes of this spaces can be obtained. This document informs the reader that nuns using this *parlour* could never be seen without wearing a veil. The communication windows of the monastery had an outer grille made of metal and an internal grille made of wood. The internal grille was covered by a black translucent drape that blocked out all references to the outside world. They were only permitted to dialogue with their immediate family or people given license to do so by the bishop. All conversations were required to be brief. This applied to all monasteries pre-SVC (Evangelisti, 2007). The external door [IM2] providing access within the *parlour* required locking from the outside with a padlock and key that remained in the possession of an appointed confessor who opened and closed the external *parlour* door from morning till noon. Two other keys were needed for the internal door [Figures 25,26] to the monastery and were to be kept by two *Clavarie* (key keepers) (AAM, 1739, VP. F.1114-1115).



Figure 28. Waiting to be attended to by a member of the community at the parlour window.

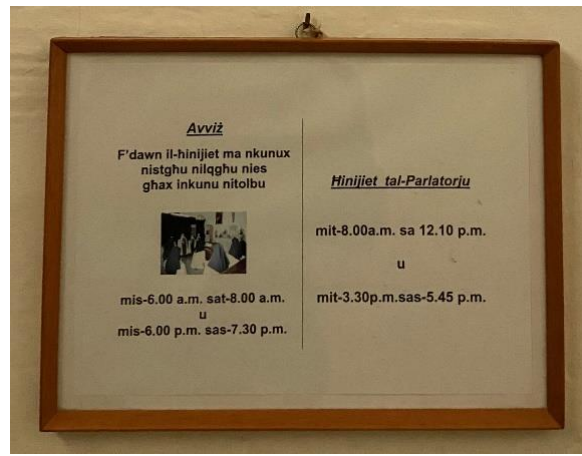


Figure 27. Notice board announcing opening hours for parlour.

Today, the *parlour* still retains its original functions with modifications of use:

- The *parlour* remains the area for communication with the outside world. Whereas nuns were previously only allowed to visit their family members once a month and on prescribed days, after SVC, more visits were permitted [N30, 60]. These visits are still kept brief and conducted behind gridded windows made of solid materials (Regola, 1991, para112, p.67). Visiting hours are regulated by a schedule that is rigidly maintained [Figure 27]. Apart from family members, a restricted range of visitors are today received, such as people requesting charity or seeking spiritual guidance and counselling [N12]. This monastery also receives acts of charity such as food and monetary donations.

Apart from retaining its function, the use of the *parlour* today also remains largely traditional. A gatekeeper (*gradiera*) approaches the gridded window, draws a beige curtain and asks the purpose of the visit [D73]. She proceeds to call the nuns needed to attend by using a manual internal bell that rings in various parts of the monastery [N12 &37]. Each nun has a particular ringing tone [Figure 30]. The bell is also rung to announce outsiders entering [OS77]. Due to restricted numbers only one nun has recently retained the role of gatekeeper. In the past these duties were assigned on rotation [N31].

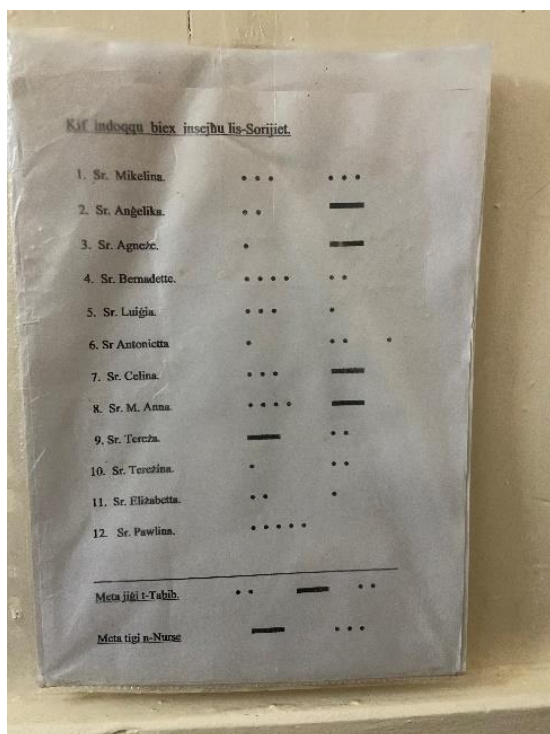


Figure 30. Personalised ringing tones to call members of the community



Figure 29. One of the calling bells situated on the second floor outside loggia.

- Small provisions entering the monastery still pass through the wheel [N12, 31, 37] (Regola,1991, para.114, p.67). Two other service entrances are also still used for larger deliveries. These entrances lead into the *enclosed garden* and the back garden.
- The heavy-set wooden door in the parlour remains the official entrance for any prospective postulant intending to join religious community life. Due to lack of vocations, it hasn't been used for this purpose since 1987. Whereas in the past papal *enclosure* could not be broken, after SVC these rules were relatively relaxed (CICLSA, 2018, para.183 – 203) and the door can now be used for exiting too. Nuns are today permitted to leave *enclosure* to vote, obtain medical care[N4] and to attend to parents in case of illness or death[N30].



Figure 31. Community behind the double squared grille (c. 1986) (Image courtesy of St Margaret's Monastery)

- It also remains the controlled entrance for the outside community. Whereas before entrance was reserved exclusively to the appointed confessors and doctors, today's exigencies require the entrance of a daily staff complement that includes cooks, cleaners, gardeners and nurses [N12, D73]. This is not a change in traditional use, but an exigency dictated by the elderly community.

4.3.3.3 Associative Value

The strongest narratives that emerge when discussing the *parlour* with the community are:

- entering the monastery for the first time
- dwindling vocations
- past and present *enclosure* and
- communication with family members.



Figure 32. Community in enclosed garden, c. 1968. The nuns wearing white veils are novices. (Image courtesy of St Margaret's Monastery)

Interviewees clearly remember entering the monastery from the heavy-set doors of the *parlour* for the first time [N30]. In the past, aspirants were not given the opportunity to physically experience the monastery before entering as postulants, therefore in these cases, the day they entered papal *enclosure* marked their first experience of the space [N30]. Prior to entering, mass would have been celebrated in the church next door after which the aspirant together with all family members, friends, work colleagues and clergy proceeded to the confined space of the *parlour* to renounce their previous life [N30]. After bidding farewell to their families, the postulant kissed the scapular of a Provincial Carmelite monk, entered, and the door was firmly shut. 1987 marks the year when the last nun entered the monastery and successfully completed solemn profession. The community is presently very concerned that vocations are dwindling, and that closure could be a possibility [N4,29 & 55]. The elder interviewees described the communities of the 60s as being made up of nuns of different ages [Figure 32] with a full complement of 21 [N28 & 41].

Memories of past use of the *parlour* still exist with imagery of large family groups attending once a month on pre-established days [N30]. *Enclosure* was much stricter [N37], and nuns never left the monastery not even in the event of serious illness, which led to dying long and painful deaths. In case of illness only doctors and dentists were admitted within when needed

[N56]. After the SVC, nuns started leaving the monastery to seek medical attention. Some set foot for this after 20 years of constant *enclosure* [N56], describing their experience of the outside world as traumatic.

A nun who visited the monastery frequently as a child described three phases in the evolution of the communication windows [N37]. In the earliest phase (c.1950s), the windowsills of these spaces are described as being higher than today and the two metal grilles were overlapping in such a way that no one could be seen properly unless standing at a certain distance. At some point after 1967, the windows were possibly enlarged, and two square shaped grilles inserted [Figure 31] with the eventual removal of one grille in recent years as it stands today [Figure 28].

4.3.3.4 Social and *Spiritual Values*

The *parlour* at St Margaret's Monastery is still regarded as the space where the two social spheres of sacred and secular meet in a highly controlled environment. The level of control has been moderated over the years and today it survives as a means of participating and interacting with society, be it by maintaining familial relationships or providing counselling, spiritual advice, or prayer.

The impregnable nature of monastic architecture materially and symbolically refers to the role of nuns as brides of Christ whose chastity needs to be protected and conserved for their celestial spouse (Evangelisti, 2007; Hill, 1999). The latter role surfaced often during the researchers' conversations with the community. The *parlour* participates in this general meaning through the various architectural elements, traditional use and rituals for entering and exiting. For a nun who has freely chosen a cloistered life, this physical separation is essential and deemed necessary to achieve a contemplative life without interferences.

4.3.3.5 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

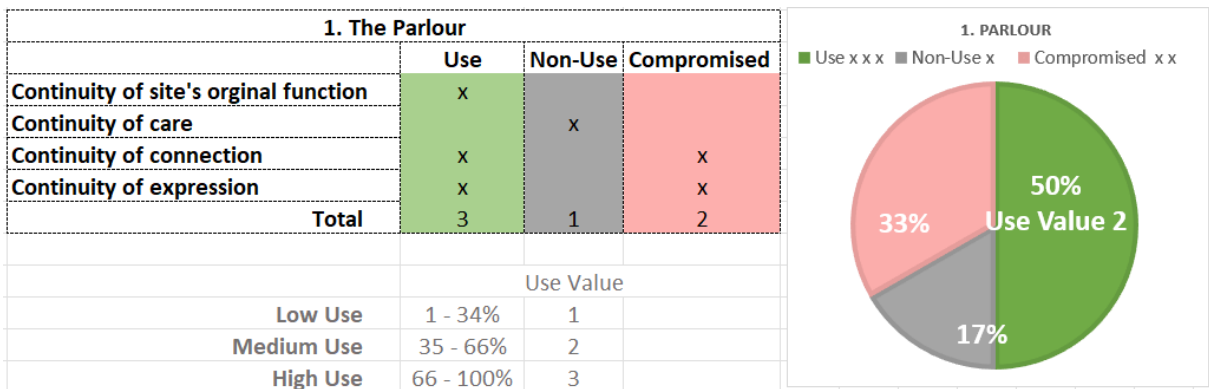


Table 26. Current Use Value – Parlour [November 2021]

The functions of the *parlour* today have been maintained indicating continuity of original use. The community is still connected to this space through traditional use, however lack of numbers attending has compromised the connection since only one nun is today in charge of the area. Over the years, traditional use had undergone changes that either highlight continuity of expression intended to update tradition to more modern approaches or changes as by-products of diminishing communities.

4.3.4. The Choir (Area 2)

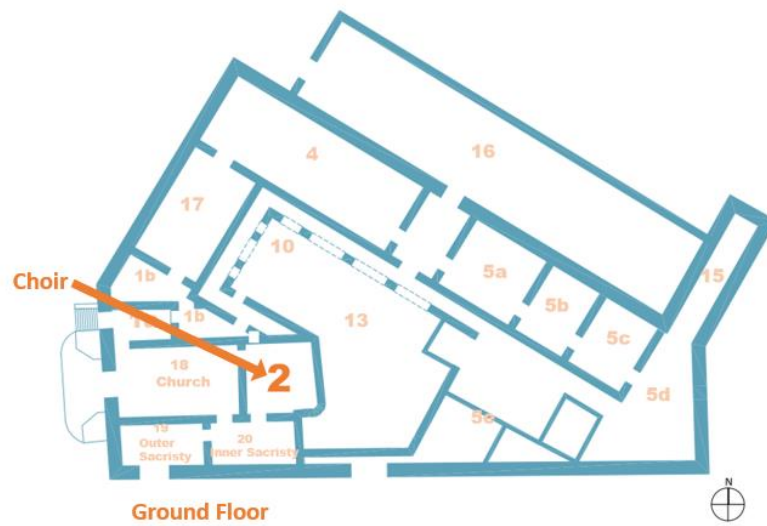


Figure 33. Choir (Area 2) on ground floor plan

4.3.4.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 34. Choir (side view).

- Built along the same axis of the church [Area 18, Figure 33] behind the main altar. It leads onto the inner sacristy [Area 20, Figure 33].
- Square floor plan with period black and white floor tiles
- Original 18th century wall-mounted ebonized double stalls

- 20th century altar and tabernacle
- Communion windows altered post-SVC into connecting doors [IM5]
- Contains two large former altar paintings, a small collection of reliquaries and other devotional paintings
- Three large windows on the east wall provide ample light
- Most elaborately decorated space within *enclosure*

4.3.4.2 Functional Value

As with all other cloistered monasteries, this *choir* is the most significant space used by the community for communal prayers as dictated by the Liturgy of the Hours. Similar to other monasteries, before SVC, the *choir* at St Margaret's was also considered as the inner church where mass was heard and communion received from the communion windows flanking the present church altar [IM5]. In the past, this area was also used for spiritual exercises and other monthly talks [N66]. In these cases, the priest would be alone in the church delivering his speech facing an empty church and the nuns would be within [N66]. After SVC, these practices were no longer necessary since a large communion window was opened into the church from the inner sacristy increasing the nun's visibility. Another change that occurred as a result of SVC was the introduction of a tabernacle in this space [N50]. Prior to the council women "were not allowed to enter the sanctuary, approach the altar and tabernacle" (Coomans, 2018, p.100).

Today, traditional use of this space still applies to a certain degree and is characterized by strict scheduling and rituals (Table 27). According to the schedule below, the *choir* is visited 7 times a day. Prayer and attendance in the *choir* is announced by means of a bell that calls the community within [N54]. Precise rituals that determined attire, gestures, voice projection, comportment in approaching the *choir*, seating within the organised *choir* stalls and specifics regarding conducting and responding to prayer are all pre-determined making this area a highly ritualised location (DCD, 1898).

- 5:30am - Clapper rings for wake up (Cells, Corridor)
- 5:50am - Morning prayers (Choir)
- 6:15am - Meditation (Anywhere in the monastery)
- 7:15am - Mass (Inner Sacristy) followed by prayer (Choir)
- 8:00am - Breakfast (Refectory)
- 8:15am - Work (Depending on task)
- 12:15am - Midday prayers (Choir)
- 12:30pm - Lunch (Refectory) followed by Community Recreation (Recreational Hall)
- 1:45pm - Resting time (Cell)
- 3:15pm - Mid-afternoon prayers and spiritual reading (Choir)
- 4:30pm - Work (Depending on task)
- 5:45pm - Evening prayers (Choir)
- 6:00pm - Meditation (Anywhere in the monastery)
- 7:00pm - Dinner (Refectory) followed by Community Recreation (Recreational Hall)
- 8:30pm - Rosary, Compline (Choir) and free time (Anywhere)
- 9:45pm - Matins (Choir) after which retirement to the Cell

Table 27. Daily schedule at St Margaret’s Monastery indicating use of choir.

All matters concerning the above would generally be specified in a ceremonial that treats these matters at great length [DCN,1898]. Teresian prayer schedules have their own specificities which include: two hours silent meditation (morning and afternoon) and reciting matins in the evening to anticipate prayers the following morning. In the past, these prayers took place at 21:45 [N6&50] and have now been removed due to the ageing community.



Figure 35. Board with various monastic offices in areas throughout the monastery.

The *Choir's* original use today has been retained but has become restricted and in certain cases the *Recreational Hall* upstairs is used for prayer [N20]. Since only three or four members attend communal prayers, ceremonial roles always fall on the same three members of the community (Figure 35). Therefore, chanting and responses do not have the same effect as in the past due to restricted numbers [see Aquilina, 2014. 20:00].

4.3.4.3 Associative Value



Figure 36. Nuns in choir (c.1990). (Image courtesy, St Margaret's Monastery)

The *choir* is referred to by the community as the most significant space [N7&32]. Attendance to the Liturgy of the Hours forms the pillar of existence within *enclosure*. As a community space, it conjures memories of the past when *choir* stalls were full and when traditional use that included processions to and from the *choir*, chanting, organ playing and unison of voices in prayer was still relevant [N14,50,55,66].

4.3.4.4 Social and Spiritual Values

This was the most frequented space in the monastery and is now slowly losing its relevance. When in use, prayer and chanting in unison are ritualised through descriptive ceremonials. Conducting these age-old traditional rituals necessitated the distribution of roles (Figure 35) which today although present have diminished.

4.3.4.5 Current Use Value – 1 (Low)

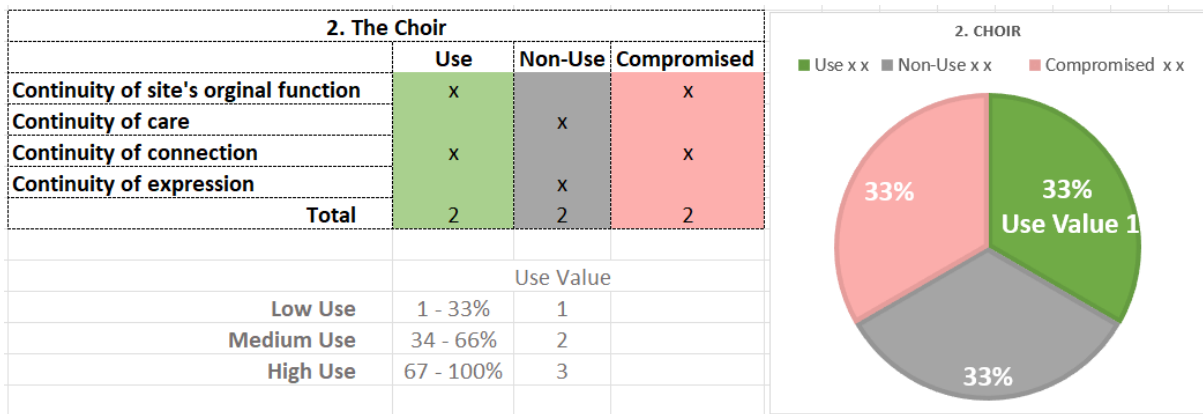


Table 28. Current Use Value – Choir [November 2021]

This space is intended for prescribed communal activity. When numbers are lacking, original use and connection although present becomes compromised whilst expression becomes majorly focused on ways of incorporating the elderly within the daily schedules.

4.3.5 Upper Choir (Area 3)

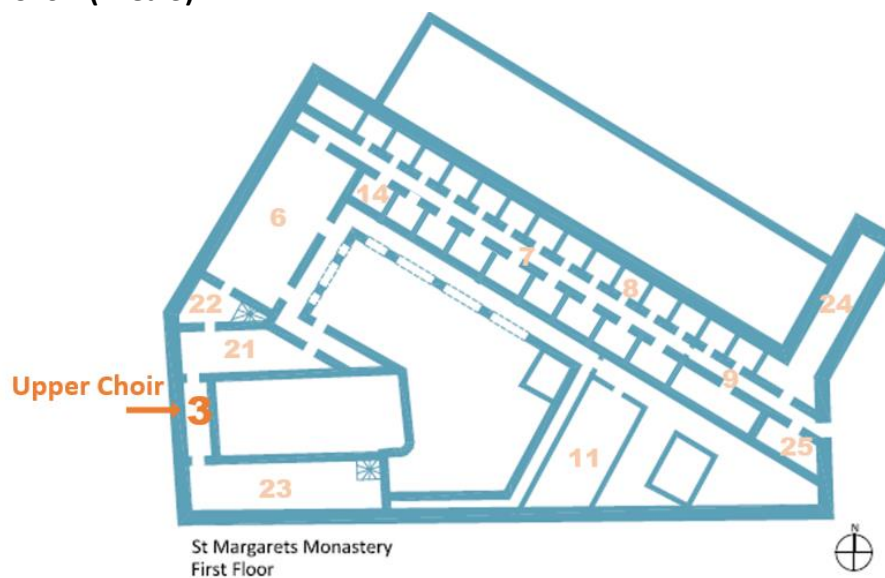


Figure 37. Upper choir (Area 3) situated between the chapter hall/ library (Area 21) and the upper sacristy (Area 23)

4.3.5.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 38. Upper choir (top) and musician's balcony situated above church entrance.

- Elevated wooden structure with 5 tightly woven latticed screens, articulated with finials, situated above the musician's balcony
- It can be accessed from the upper sacristy (Area 23) and from the chapter hall/ library (Area 21) on the first floor.

4.3.5.2 Historic Value

Till recently, the *upper choir* at St Margaret's was used as a contemplative space for private prayer [N20&24].

The PVR of 1739 refers to the "chorum superiorem" (AAM, VP, f.1123) and indicates that the screens with the addition of curtains made this structure *enclosure* proof. Being in view of the lay community, these areas possess symbolic attributes related to separation that are generally highly visible and intended as "advertisements of confinement" (Hills, 1999, p. 34).

Further research would be necessary to find out whether this area was originally intended as a separate contemplative space for converse nuns, aspirants or novices at a time when social hierarchy still existed within the monasteries. It would also be interesting to ascertain whether being in proximity to the musicians' balcony this area had a past use as an acoustic box where nuns could chant without being seen. An example of this still survives at St Peter's Monastery in Mdina.

This space no longer retains its original use. It has been abandoned due to its difficult access.

4.3.5.3 Associative Value

The nuns refer to this space mainly as an area for private prayer but also as a space used during public liturgical functions such as the traditional procession of the Risen Christ (*L-Irxoxt*) on Easter Sunday [N24]. They explained that during this procession the statue of the Risen Christ from the Parish of Bormla, would stop in front of the church saluting the nuns who followed the procession from behind the grilled oval window on the façade. The priests and clerics accompanying the statue would enter the monastery church and together sing the antiphony of St Margaret. A festive peal (*mota*) in honour of the feast being celebrated would be rung from the monastery's belfry. This tradition stopped during covid, however since the nuns no

longer frequent this area due to difficult access, it is most likely that this tradition will be dropped.

4.3.5.4 Current Use Value = 0 (Negligible)

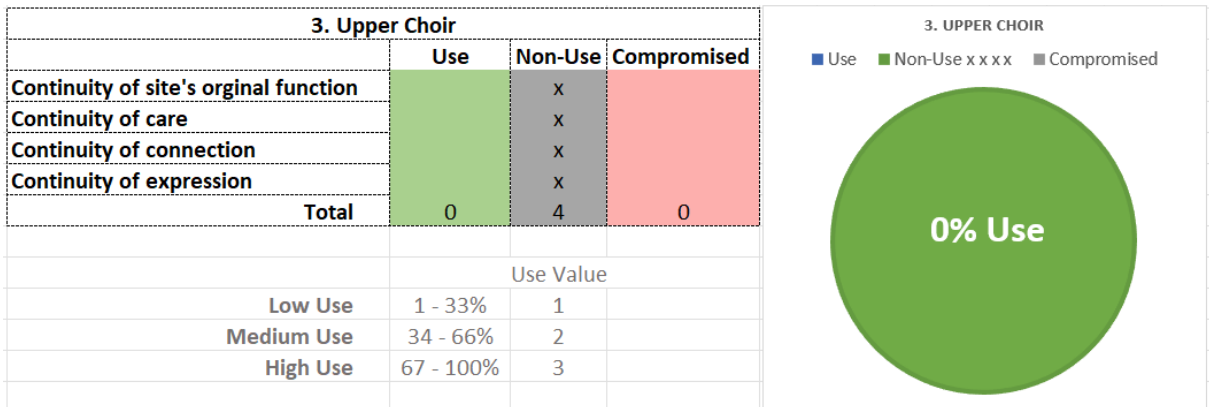


Table 29. Current Use Value – Upper Choir [November 2021]

This space is no longer in use.

4.3.6 Refectory (Area 4)

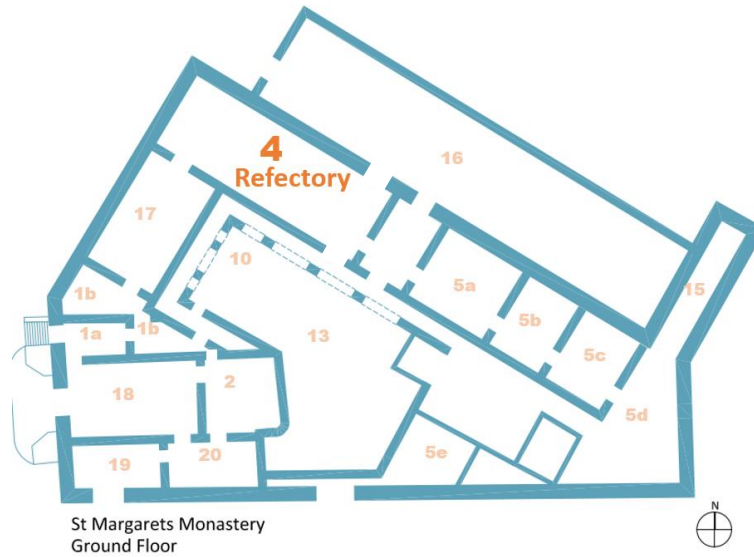


Figure 39. The refectory (Area 4) on ground floor. The refectory has access to the main hall (Area 17), the enclosed garden (Area 13) and the back garden (Area 16)

4.3.6.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 41. Refectory. (Facing entrance to kitchen, Area 5)



Figure 40. Refectory. (Door leading to the large hall Area 17)

- Large, bare barrel vaulted room with three high windows on the northwest façade with access to the enclosed (area 13) and back garden (area 16). In close proximity to the kitchen area.

- Furnishings include modern utilitarian tables and chairs, a wall inserted cupboard, a bare cross flanked by devotional images with latin inscriptions underneath.
- This space is built in line with the recommendations reproduced in the *instructions* (Borromeo, 1577, p.117)

4.3.6.2 Functional Value

No details are given with regards to specific use of the *refectory* in the pastoral reports of 1739 and 1741 however, its function was clearly that of a communal gathering space intended for timed organised meals eaten for the purpose of sustenance and also spiritual enhancement. Although this function has been retained, its use has been compromised since several of the intangible elements associated with this space can no longer be performed.



Figure 42. Mortification in the *refectory* as depicted in the Cistercian nunnery of Port-Royal des Champs (France), after Louise-Magdeleine Horthemels, c. 1710. Source: Coomans, 2018, p.26. (Image courtesy of Musée de Port-Royal des Champs, Magny-les-Hameaux/photoRMN-Grand Palais, Gerard Blot)

As attested by the rule and narratives collected from the participants, the *refectory* is a place heavily prescribed with traditional use and rituals. Since only three to four nuns [N14] attend this space, the traditional use that requires coordination in numbers is gradually being abandoned.



Figure 43. The pulpit that is no longer in use and stored in the hermitage.

In the past, approaching the *refectory* was done in procession [Aquilina, 2014. 19:26]. During meal times, strict silence was maintained, and still is. (Regola, 1991, p.53, para.82, p.59, para.93-94). A nun was selected as reader of the *refectory* to accompany meals with spiritual readings that took place on a wooden 18th century pulpit (Figure43). After SVC, the pulpit was replaced by a reader's desk. Today the role of the reader is no longer possible and a mobile phone is used to hear mass or prayers instead.

At St Margaret's consumption of food exclusively takes place in the *refectory* and strictly during the times dictated by the schedule and their rule (Table 27)(Regola, 1991,p.59,para.59).

Since the Teresian rule relies on providance, food is considered as a means of sustenance and not enjoyment. The consumption of meat was prohibited all year round (Regola,1991,p.14,para.15) (AAM, VP, 1739, f.1114) and strict fasting was maintained for approximately eight months of the year with exceptions on Sunday and other liturgical feasts (Regola,1991, p.38,para.50). Today this still takes place but all sick members of the community are exempt from these rules.

In line with their tradition, the *refectory* is a place intended for spiritual penance through the execution of mortifications [Figure 42]. These are quick actions that involve rituals such as kneeling during part of the meals, kissing the feet of the prioress, reenactments of scenes from the life of Christ and others which today have all been abandoned with reluctance as they require mobility [N41&62].

For the *refectory* to function, the offices of cook, server of the *refectory* and reader are also necessary. These roles no longer exist [N14].

In the past, this *refectory* was embellished with traditional furnishings such as wall mounted elevated stalls, benches and a pulpit for readings [N40&62]. These furnishings were specified as requisites in the 1577 *Instructiones* (Borromeo, p.117). As with several other monasteries, post-SVC, these furnishings were replaced with chairs, tables and desks making the area more comfortable for contemporary use [N14, 40&62].

4.3.6.3 Associative Value

When discussing the *refectory*, participants reminisced to the days when this space was full of nuns. Words such as ‘emptiness’ and ‘solitude’ have been used to describe the current situation [N55].

The narratives on use of this space include precise descriptions of rituals such as the processions on entering the *refectory*. These would happen when the nuns left the *choir* and walked in twos whilst reciting prayers [N14]. At the entrance a basin with water was used to wash their hands [N62]. Mortifications were also explained as rituals conducted by choice that provided them with the opportunity of attaining deeper spiritual meanings [N41&62].

Other narratives frequently mentioned were the fact that they do not eat meat [N14], they eat in silence [N5], conduct strict fasting [N40] and the reading from the pulpit in the past [N62].

4.3.6.4 Social and *Spiritual Values*

As a communal space, this area has obvious *social value* to the community that makes use of it. As attested above, past traditional use, elaborate rituals together with the bare cross on the wall are reminders that the consumption of food in this space has profound spiritual meaning and is not intended as a means of satisfying the palette [N62].

4.3.6.5 Current Use Value – 1(Low)

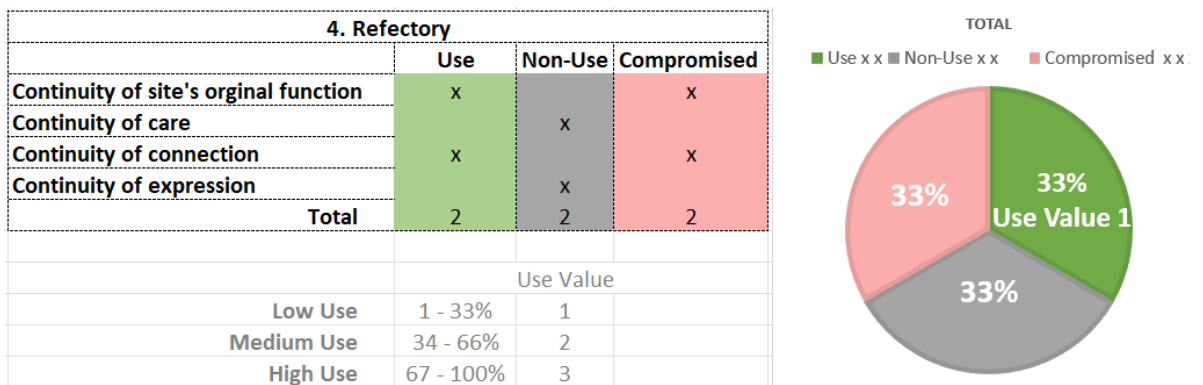


Table 30. Current Use Value – Refectory [November 2021]

This space is intended for prescribed communal activity. Once again since numbers are lacking, original use and connection although present become compromised whilst expression is solely focused on ways of incorporating the elderly within the daily schedules.

4.3.7 Kitchens & Workspaces (Area 5)



Figure 44. Kitchen (Area 5a) preparation room (Area 5b) dispensary (Area 5c), laundry (Area 5d) and other random rooms.

4.3.7.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 45. Kitchen, laundry, drying room, possibly ironing room, store, and exit (left to right, top to bottom)

- A series of less imposing rooms all grouped in one section marked Area 5a – 5e on ground plan (Figure 44)¹¹.
- The distribution and nature of these rooms are very similar to the instructions laid out in the *Instructiones* (Borromeo, 1577, pp.117-118).

4.2.7.2 Historic Value

The areas in focus are related to areas where monastic manual work takes place. This work depends on a rotation of offices. These offices are designations of clearly defined tasks that took place at specific times and within specific areas in the monastery. The areas under study in this section are those reserved for manual labour that require the posts of cook, assistant cook, cleaners, dishwashers, *refectory* server and food-storekeeper (*dispensiera*).

The PVRs do not refer to these roles, as in the past, manual labour was conducted by the *conversae* (converse nun), or socially inferior nuns who resided within the monastery (Evangelisti, 2007). The choir nuns were entrusted with different and more elevated roles such as the *klavarie* (key-keeper and possibly gatekeeper in the *parlour*), *sagrestana* (sacristan in charge of bell ringing and assisting in mass), *spenditrice* (in charge of monastery accounts), *zelatrice* (a form of correctional officer), *maestra delle novizze* (mistress of the novices) (AAM, VP. Ff.1113 – 1114) and possibly the *infermiera* (nurse).

After SVC, all offices were equally distributed and the communities' lives became dependent on maintaining the perfect balance between work (monastic office) and prayer (spiritual duty) (Evangelisti, 2007) (Regola, 1991, p.15, para 17).

4.2.7.3 Associative Value

Since traditional life was built around the perfect balance of work and prayer, the participants were particularly sensitive to this subject as their community can no longer care for the monastery and maintain this balance. They explained that introducing lay members to cook,

¹¹ The uncertainty in the floor plan is due to the distribution and nature of the areas in question that were too intricate to grasp from one onsite visit.

clean, wash clothes, take care of the sick, perform heavy maintenance work and do gardening is to them considered a personal defeat [N4&33].

The narratives about use of workspace have ranged between general descriptions to details that are more space specific. One particular nun remembers the last remaining *conversa* of the monastery who was 95 years of age when she joined [N28]. This reference provides insight to the social composition of female monastic houses prior to the SVC. *Conversae* or servant nuns were generally illiterate and therefore considered lower in rank to Choir nuns. For this reason, their role was exclusively that of doing chores such as cooking, cleaning, tending to the animals and washing among other chores (Evangelisti, 2007). At St Margaret and at other monasteries on the island, these nuns wore a white veil instead of black [N28]. From an interview conducted with a *conversa* at St Scholastica it transpires that they prayed in separate areas such as the *upper choir* area, slept in *dormitories* away from choir nuns and ate aside. Evidence of inferior cells intended for use by these converse nuns still exists and have been encountered at St Peter's Monastery. Distinction between classes was abolished after SVC and the harder chores were distributed generally among the younger members of the community [N31]. In the recent past, these harder chores were rotated every six months, eventually this time bracket was reduced to four and then one. In the end the community resigned to the fact that help was needed [N63].

In the past, work in the monastery also involved various commissions in return for an income. The commissions included making liturgical vestments [N22], embroidery [N51], the production of uniforms [N51], wedding souvenirs and washing clothes for religious communities [N22]. Since generating an income from sales of manual work is no longer possible, they decided to sell all their properties to the government and live off the interests generated [N25].

The subject of traditional preparation of food was a common nostalgic narrative among the participants. They described making *ravioli* in the ravioli room on the roof [N34], *biskuttini* for the patrons [N15, 42] marmalade and pies [N40]. Memories of using old petroleum cookers (*spiritieri*) [N15] were also mentioned as was the change from old ovens with chimneys, to more modern gas cookers [N42].

4.3.7.4 Current Use Value – 0 (Negligible)

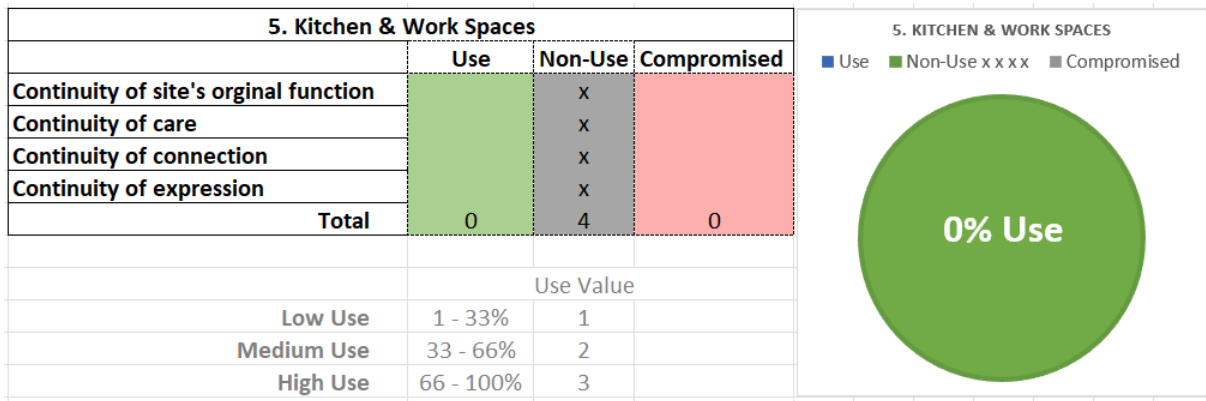


Table 31. Current Use Value – Kitchen & Workspaces [November 2021]

Although the spaces retain their function they are no longer being used by the core-community.

4.3.8 Recreational Hall (Area 6)

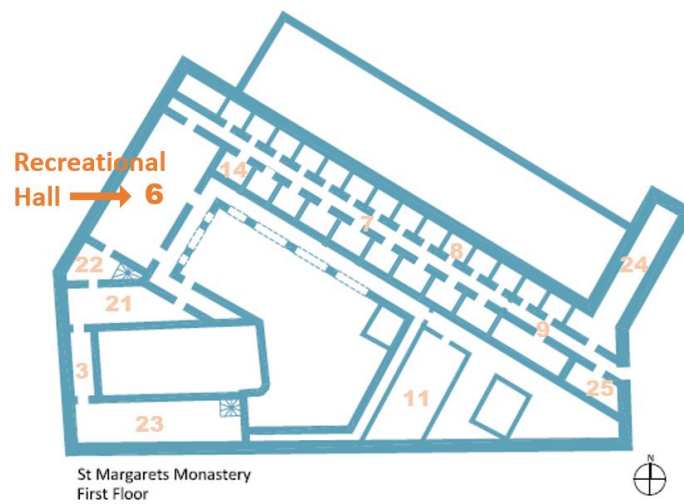


Figure 46. Recreational Hall (Area 6) is situated on the first floor between the doctor's room (Area 22) and the dormitory (Area 7).

4.3.8.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 47. Recreational Hall

- Large rectangular floor plan, flat ceiling with cornice moulding all round.
- Three large windows on the west side and windows and doors leading to the first-floor loggia on the other.
- Furnishings are largely vernacular and mismatched.
- Two large vernacular devotional paintings hang above the entrances

4.3.8.2 *Functional Value*

It is not certain whether this room retains the original function intended at the time of construction since in 1739 the space was referred to as the “*Oratorio Superiore*” with a corresponding “*Oratorio Inferiore*” beneath [AAM, VP, f.1118]. Its present function is however that of ‘communal space’ intended for recreational time. It was visited twice a day after meals without exceptions. Considering that some members are bed-ridden, community recreational time is not as well attended as it used to be [Figure 48].

Apart from recreational time, this room is also used as the wardrobe area, with each member having their own wardrobe with personal items of clothing. It is interesting to note that the concept of a communal wardrobe is referred to in the 1577 *Instructiones* (Borromeo, p. 125). This concept was not noted or discussed in the other monasteries.

Since the church is presently closed due to Covid-19 restrictions, mass is also celebrated here [ON73]. Being in proximity to the *dormitory*, this encourages the elderly nuns to participate.

4.3.8.3 *Associative Value*



Figure 48. Community engaged in handiwork during recreation, c. 2000 (Image courtesy of St Margaret’s Monastery)

This space brought up memories of working on various crafts together (Figure 48) and on traditions particular to the Carmelite community. One of these traditions took place every year on the liturgical feast of the Epiphany and involved the annual election of the protector saint of their order. According to this tradition five elderly nuns pick a saint by drawing lots [N18]. A whole almond (or bean) is inserted randomly in a cake and baked. The cake is then divided into 5 portions. The nun that receives the almond in their portion elects the chosen

saint and an effigy is taken in procession around the monastery. From surveys conducted in other monasteries, this tradition is particular to this order and still takes place nowadays.

Another memory mentioned was the collection of antique chests of drawers that previously were kept in this room. A chest of drawers formed part of a nun’s dowry on entering [N35]. This tradition was referred to by several participating nuns in other local monasteries hence the vast presence of these furnishings in the main halls and loggias of these monastic spaces. At St Margaret’s the old chests of drawers were sold and replaced by modern wardrobes. A small collection of chests of drawers still survives in the large hall downstairs [Area 18].

4.3.8.4 Social and Spiritual Values

Recreational time is stipulated as a requisite in the rules (Regola, 1991, Para. 94, p. 59). Their life incorporates ‘eremitic elements’ (such as retirement within a cell, the use of a hermitage [Area 16] solitary work and solitary meditation) together with community life. The charism of this order relies on maintaining a small community of socially equal nuns who commit to maintaining good relationships for life. Behaviour during recreational time is generally also prescribed and regulated (DCN, 1898, p. 19). It is interesting to note however, that this is the only place where ‘silence’ is not necessary.

4.3.8.5 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

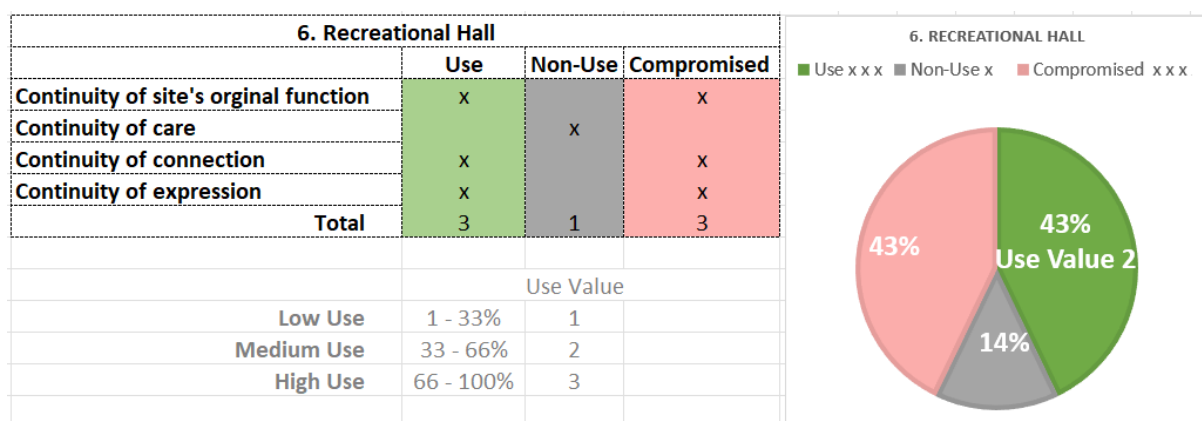


Table 32. Current Use Value – Recreational Hall [November 2021]

Although used by only a few members, the area still retains its original function as a recreational space. The connection is still present but rapidly decreasing.

4.3.9 Corridors (Area 7)

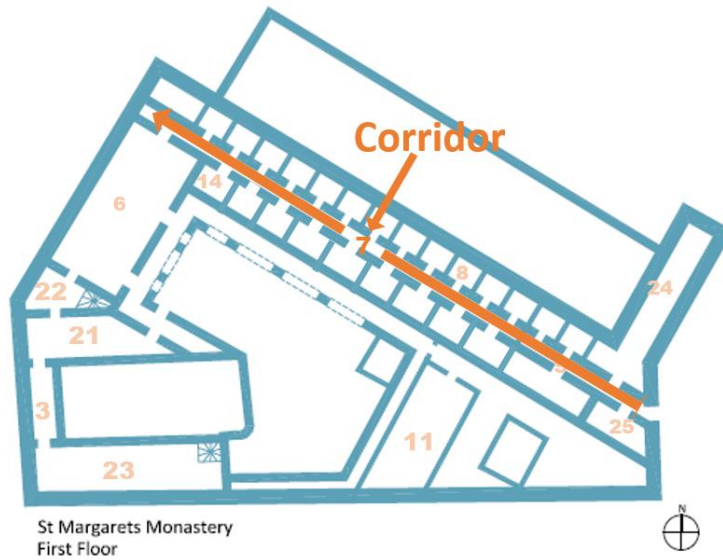


Figure 49. The corridor (Area 7). This is situated along the length of the dormitory that includes the *novitiate* area (Area 9) and the room to the roof formerly the correctional room (Area 25).

4.3.9.1 Typological Characteristics

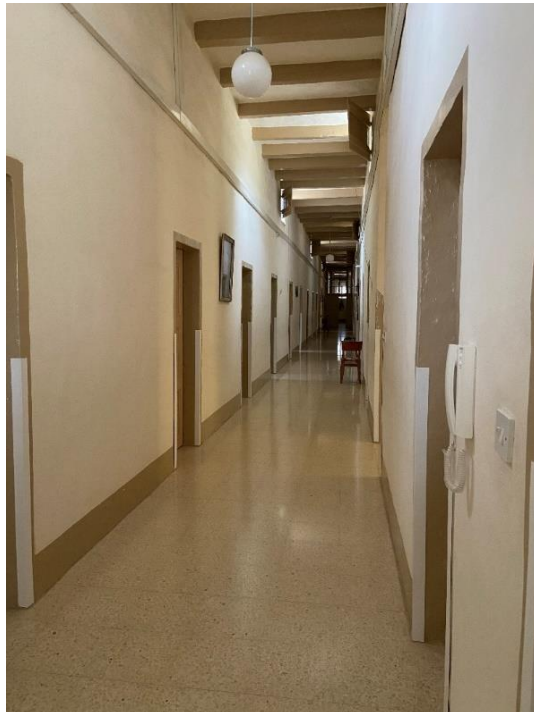


Figure 50. Corridor in Dormitory

- The monastery has only one corridor.
- The east end of the corridor is partitioned, demarcating the areas intended for use by professed nuns and those for novices.

- High windows pierce the corridor at intervals and two windows are situated at either end.

4.3.9.2 Functional Value

Its use today remains that of a passageway from the *recreational hall* to the *dormitory*, *novitiate* and correctional room that today is a kitchenette leading onto the roof. A clapper (*čuqlajta*) [IM42] hangs on the wall. This is still used to wake up the community every morning. The tradition of using it to announce retirement in the cells at night has been stopped due to the sick nuns resting.

4.3.9.3 Associative Value

On mentioning the use of the corridor, the rule of silence is always brought up [N5&46]. The importance of silence was inherited from the order's primitive rule, which is still incorporated presently in the 1991 rules and constitutions (p. 15, para 18). The participants all mentioned the past tradition of maintaining the '*grande silenzio*' which meant a period of total silence from evening prayers to morning prayers the following day. If communication was needed at these times, hand-written notes were passed on [N5,18&59]. This is no longer possible since the sick nuns require assistance at all hours.

Reference to traditional use included a series of processions that took place in all parts of the monastery, including the corridor within the *dormitory*. These processions are replete with rituals and generally entail wearing their ceremonial habit, whilst reciting specific prayers and chanting. The processions referred to are as follows:

- Corpus Christi procession [N18] – A monstrance is carried around the entire monastery by a priest. Today this only happens on the ground floor.
- Advent processions [N21&47] – An effigy of baby Jesus is carried in procession whilst singing hymns and praying and eventually taken to a cell for the day. The effigy moves from cell to cell daily, until all have kept the effigy in their room. This procession still happens with modifications.

When windows [N38] or views from the monastery were discussed, the window at the west end of the corridor was described as having a beautiful distant view capturing the sight of Mdina.

4.3.9.4 Social and *Spiritual Values*

As with other spaces in the monastery, this corridor has its own use as a silent collective passageway. Apart from being a space of organisational relevance for the community, the application of traditional use and rituals performed once again imbues this space with spiritual meaning.

4.3.9.5 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

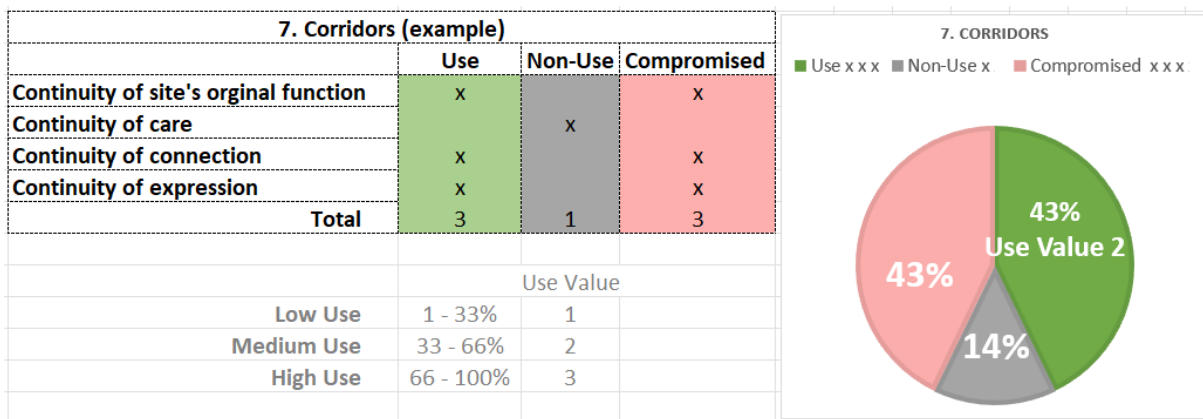


Table 33. Current Use Value – Corridor [November 2021]

Original use has been maintained. Connection and expression although present have been compromised as attested by diminishing traditional use.

4.3.10 Dormitory and Cells [Area 8]

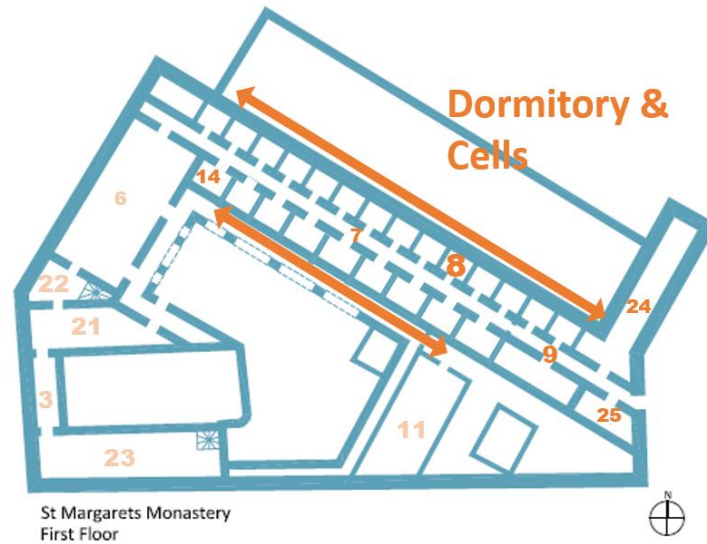


Figure 51. The Dormitory and cells (Area 8). This area includes the office (Area 14), the corridor (Area 7) and part of the novitiate (Area 9).

4.3.10.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 53. Bed and commode in cell



Figure 52. Window in cell

- 21 cells for professed nuns (Fig. 51) and 4 for novices¹². The PVR refers to 33 cells [ACM, VP, 1739, f.1123]. The inconsistency in numbers will require further historical research.

¹²To respect the element of privacy in this area, the cells could not all be physically visited and counted.

- Fourteen cells are situated facing the garden wall. The rest face the *enclosed garden*. Participants confirmed that all rooms are identical [N38].
- The cells have a rectangular floor plan (8ft x 10ft) with a small high window
- Furnishings include a simple bed (mattress laid on wooden strips), desk, chair and commode.

4.3.10.2 Functional Value

The cell is today still used as a private space intended for solitary spiritual meditation (Regola,1991, p.21, para.3b) but also rest. Use of this space is prescribed by time of day and must be visited twice a day, once after recreational time in the early afternoon for a short nap and at night after evening prayers [N38]. The rule also specifies that if a nun finds herself idle due to having completed her office, she is obliged to retire to her cell until the schedule dictates otherwise. All cells are equal in size and comfort [N13]. No other member of the community is allowed to enter this space [Regola,1991, p.54, para.83] Exceptions are made to tend to the sick or if a nun passes away [N23].

Unlike the other monasteries visited, the windows in their cells were purely intended to provide light and not a restful view [N13]. This is reflected in a 1739 architectural report that states "*finestre....in forma che le Tertiare non possono da detta cella goder la veduta del Giardino*" (ACM,VP, 1739, f.1119). After SVC, the community requested planning permission to enlarge their windows, but this was refused [N38].

In cases when nuns are bed ridden, radios and speakers for communicating prayers or transmitting mass have been installed in their rooms [N37].

Notwithstanding the severity in style, the participants look forward to spending time in their room (N13).

4.3.10.3 Social and Spiritual Values

As explained above, their use for privacy and prayer gives these spaces their social and spiritual value. The simplicity, poverty and austerity of the rooms are in line with the Teresian teachings (Regola,1991, p. 33, para 35).

4.3.10.4 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

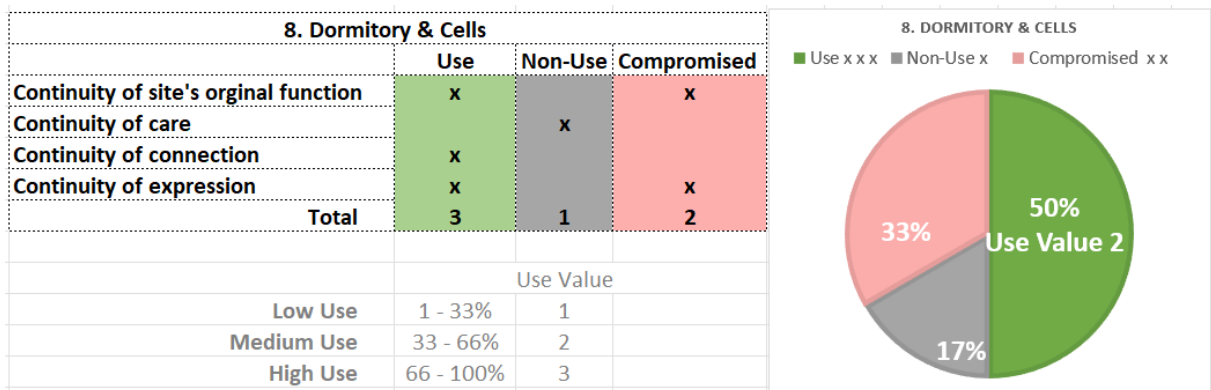


Table 34. Current Use Value – Dormitory & cells [November 2021]

To date all functions have been maintained, however traditional use has been compromised since the cells are being used instead of the *infirmarium* [N16]. The sick nuns are attended by outside staff employed by the monastery.

4.3.11. Novitiate (Area 9)

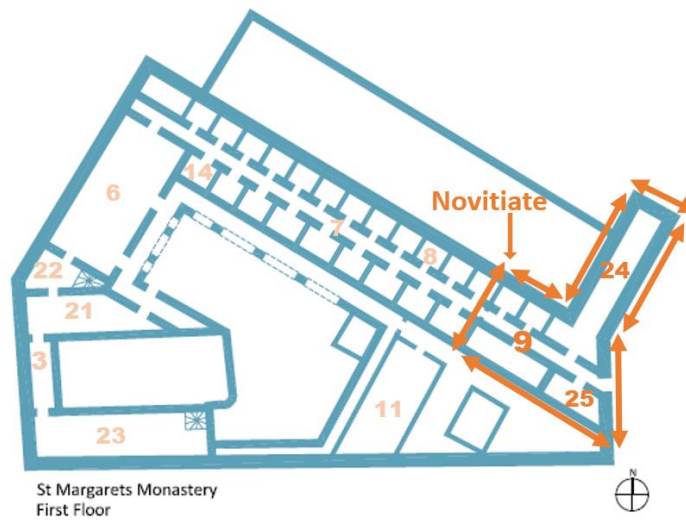


Figure 54. Novitiate (Area 9). This area also includes an oratory (Area 24) and a correctional room (Area 25)



Figure 56. The Oratory in the novitiate



Figure 55. Detail, Priou-Dieu

4.3.11.1 Typological Characteristics

- Situated in the *dormitory* wing, this area is made up of cells, an oratory for instruction [Area 24] and a correctional room [Area 25] [IM46] converted into an upstairs kitchenette with access to the roof.

4.3.11.2 Historic Value

The function of the *novitiate* has always been that of a segregated location within the complex dedicated to instruction (AAM, VP. 1739, f.1113). The segregation was a prerequisite of the 1577 *Instructiones* (Borromeo, p. 125). A mistress of the novices was appointed by the Prioress, and she remains the person responsible for the novices' instruction during the prescribed period (Regola,1991, p. 84, para 84). Her office is considered of importance and is defined in the 1739 report. [AAM,VP, f.1114].

The oratory [Figure 56] is conveniently situated in proximity to the cells. This area was used as a place for instruction of the novices and prayer. A wooden prie-dieu [Figure 55], altar and niche are evidence of its previous function as a contemplative and didactic space. Today it reveals signs of abandonment.



Figure 57. Door with peep window from the corridor into the correctional room.

Typical of monastic complexes are correctional rooms or prisons. The participants had no recollection of narratives related to its function. They however remember the older nuns referring to this as being in use in the past. With reference to past use, the PVR refers to the role of a *zelatrici*, an appointed nun with responsibilities related to corrective action (ACM1739, f.1113). According the *Instructiones*, a prison inside a monastery was needed “to

incarcerate any nun...who has strayed from discipline and behaved badly” (Borromeo, 1577, p.127).

4.3.11.3 Associative Value

Today, the *novitiate* is an unused space. The participants reminisced back to the days when they themselves were novices and received instruction here. They mentioned the impossibly high windows in this area [N39], the fact that cells were changed periodically to avoid creating habits of attachment [N38], the fees that their parents had to pay during the years of training [N35] and the damage incurred after a direct hit in WWII [ON85].

4.3.11.4 Current Use Value – 0 (Negligible)

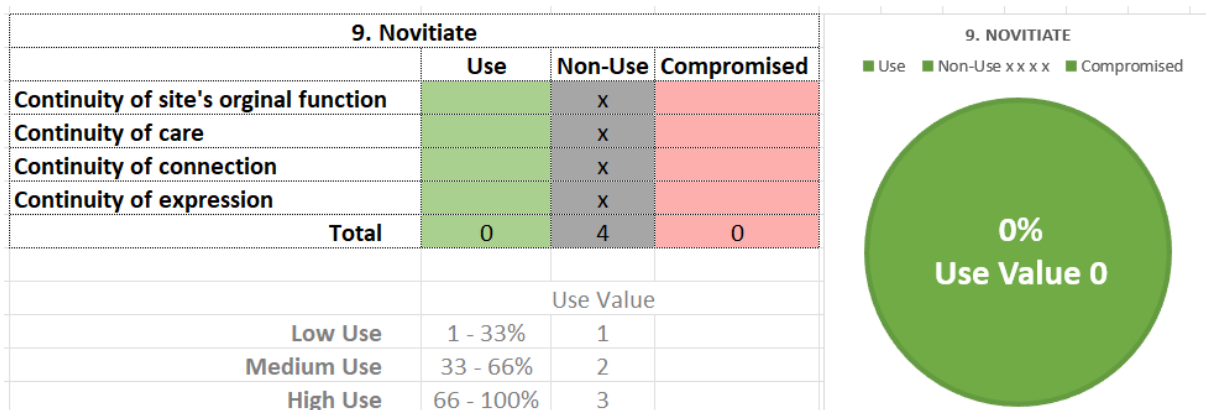


Table 35. Current Use Value – *Novitiate* [November 2021]

The use value is negligible.

4.3.12 Crypt (Area 10)

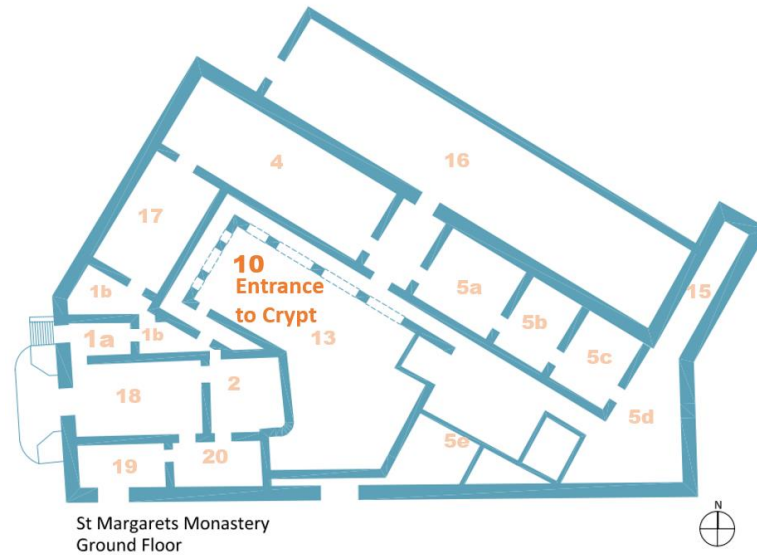


Figure 58. The entrance to the crypt (Area 10) is situated in the enclosed garden.

4.3.12.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 59. Gate to crypt



Figure 60. Crypt

- Accessed through a wooden gate (Figure 9) situated in the *enclosed garden* (Area 13).
- Arched vaulted area consisting of 6 marked elevated tombs, typical of burial systems used in the other local monasteries

4.3.12.2 Functional Value

The *crypt* retains its original function as a burial site for the community. During research it transpired that burial initially took place in the inner sacristy area (AAM, VP, 1739. F1123).

The procedure surrounding death entails tradition and ritual. In the rules and constitutions of the order, emphasis is given to recording the names of deceased nuns accompanied by biographical information in the monastery's registers (Regola,1991, p.62, para101). Coomans suggests that that the insistence on maintaining these registers is the "communities' attempt at maintaining memory" (2018, p.102). The participants were all familiar with the rituals involved during burials. Some members had witnessed sixteen burials during their time in *enclosure*[N53]. The rituals [N23,51&67] involved dressing the deceased (*inkeffnuha*) in full habit, cape, and socks. Not burying in sandals is part of the Discalced Carmelite tradition. The open coffin is placed on custom-made benches within the *Choir* giving the lay community an opportunity to pay their respects through the communion windows. During mass, the coffin is closed and later carried by Carmelite friars down to the *Crypt*. In the past, burial was a private affair, but nowadays the families are allowed to participate [N23&51]. All bones are eventually stored in the ossuary at the centre of the *crypt*.

During the month of November, candles were lit, and daily prayers said. This tradition has stopped due to difficult access.

4.3.12.3 Social & Spiritual Values

The death of a member of a community obviously conjures memories of times spent together and the relationships created in *enclosure* [N51]. Death and burial also symbolise the end of a contemplative nun's "pilgrimage to earth" that will "finally bring her to Christ, her mystical husband" (Coomans, 2018, p.102).

4.3.12.4 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

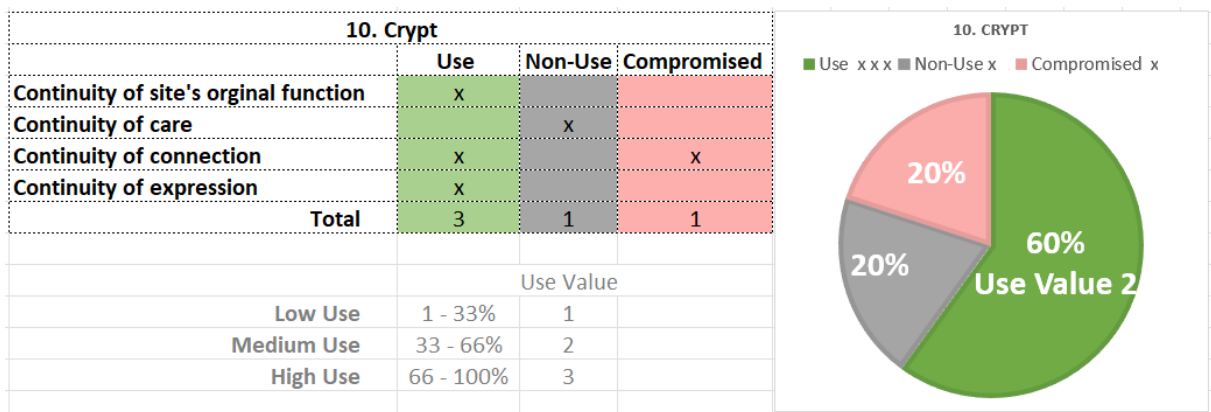


Table 36. Current Use Value – Crypt [November 2021]

The *crypt* retains its original function and expression has evolved after SVC. Certain aspects of connection through traditional use, such as the daily prayers in the month of November, have been abandoned.

4.3.13 Infirmary (Area 11)

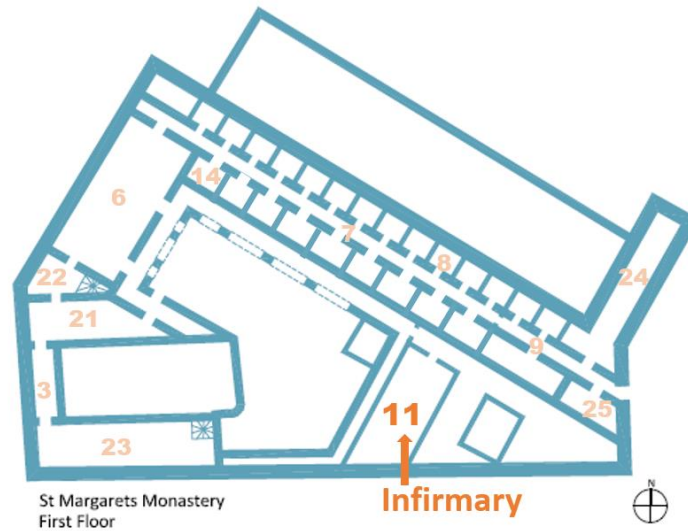


Figure 61. The infirmary (Area 11). Access to the infirmary was independent.

4.3.13.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 62. Infirmary (area 11)

- The *infirmary* is a large hall with steel beams spanning its entire length.
- The area is well lit with windows on either side and a door to the loggia
- Medical equipment and aids for assisted walking are stored in this area.

4.3.13.2 Historic Value

Importance in caring for the sick, keeping them company and tending to their needs is referred to in the rule (1991, p.61, para 98-99) The original function for this area was that of providing a collective area for care for the infirm. A nurse (*infermiera*) would be appointed to care for the sick. Like other offices in the monastery, this task would happen on rotation. Today, this space is redundant and used mainly for hanging laundry [N43].

4.3.13.3 Associative Value

Brief descriptions of this area in use were imparted during the onsite visit [ON100].

4.3.13.4 Current use value – 0 (Negligible)

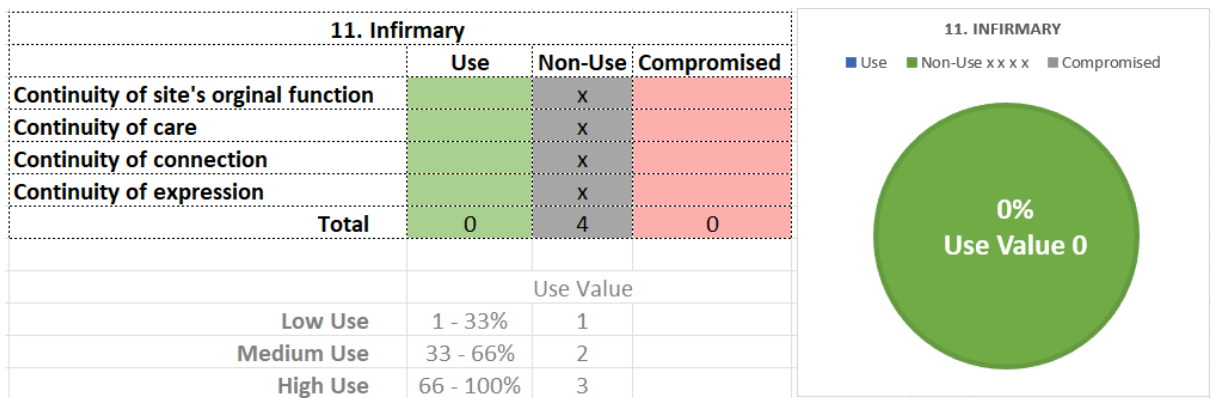


Table 37. Current Use Value – Infirmary [November 2021]

The space does not retain its original use.

4.3.14 Roof/ *Belvedere* (Area 12)

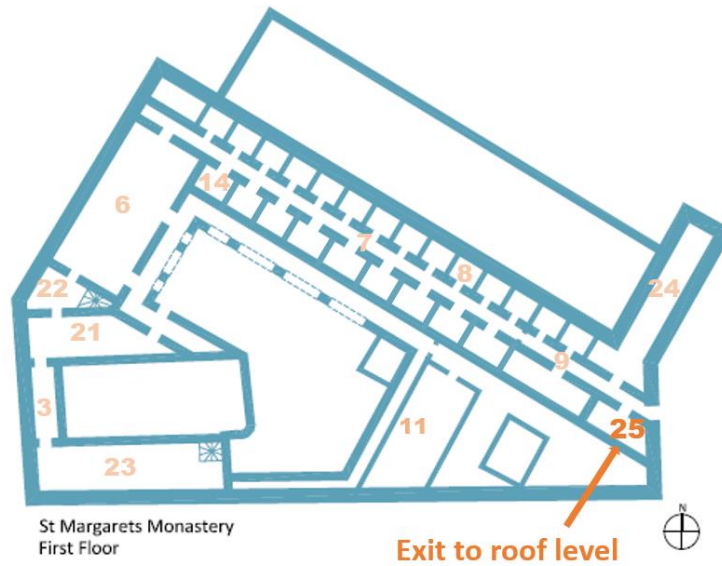


Figure 63. Exit to roof level (Area 12)

4.3.14.1 Typological Characteristics

- Access to the roof is through the correctional room (Area 25) via a temporary modern metal staircase
- Distant views of the harbour and neighbouring Birgu are visible (Figure 64). The streets below become visible when walking towards the north-western façade (Figure 65).



Figure 64. Distant view Senglea (left) and Birgu (right)



Figure 65. View of streetscapes and houses in the immediate vicinity

4.3.14.2 Historic Value

Views from Maltese cloistered monasteries form a topic of interest which has largely been understudied. This topic would contribute to the discourse of the planning and execution of cloistered spaces that co-existed as separate microcosms within the dense urban fabric of the towns and cities in which they were built (Coomans, 2018). Views from the roof occupied a special place in the narratives elicited from the communities. All monasteries except St Margaret's have a *Belvedere*. This is a specific structure built for the enjoyment of distant views surrounding the monastery. These spaces were presumably meditative areas possibly compensating for the lack of land within the footprint of these constructions. Despite not having a specific structure the nuns at St Margaret's mentioned regular past use of the roof, however it is doubtful whether the roof at St Margaret's was intended for use at the time of construction mainly because:

- Access to this area is not logically planned and there exists no specific structure
- A detailed survey was commissioned from Architect Clemente Zahra in the 18th century to ensure that the nuns could not be seen or see anyone from any part of their monastery. This report provides interesting details about the cultural landscape at the time of construction (ACM, VP 1739 f.1116-1119).

4.3.14.3 Associative Value



Figure 66. Arrow indicating the limit of the footprint allowed in the past whilst using the roof.

The roof was referred to as a favourite space [N8 & 57] for meditation, oration and spiritual reading. It is interesting to note that during the on-site visit, the researcher was shown an area on the roof that in the past demarcated an imaginary boundary, setting a limitation on the footprint allowed [ON99](Figure 66). This would ensure that only distant views (Figure 64) could be enjoyed. In more recent years this limitation was abolished, and the footprint was extended allowing the nuns to walk the entire length and see views of the immediate neighbourhood (Figure 65).

4.3.14.4 Current Use Value – 0 Negligible

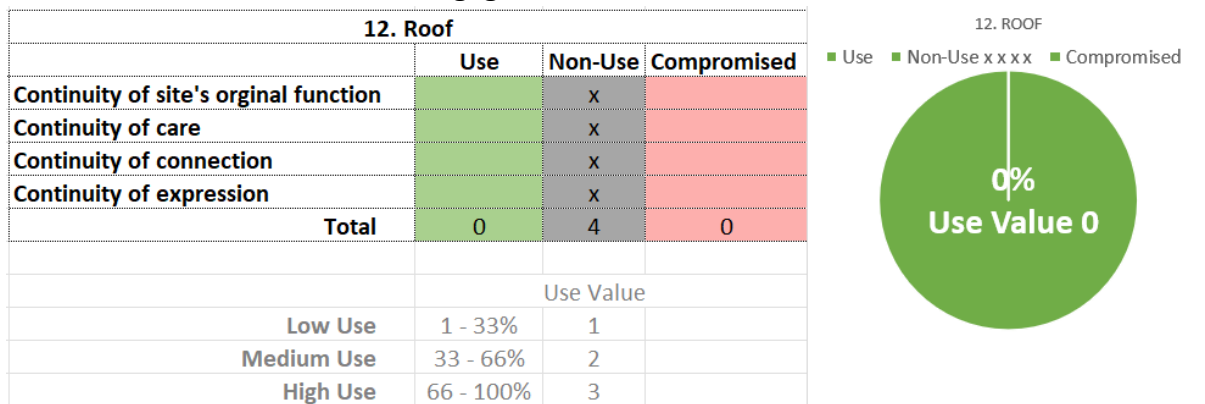


Table 38. Current Use-Value – Roof [November 2021]

This roof is no longer in use due to difficult access.

4.3.15 Enclosed Garden (Area 13)

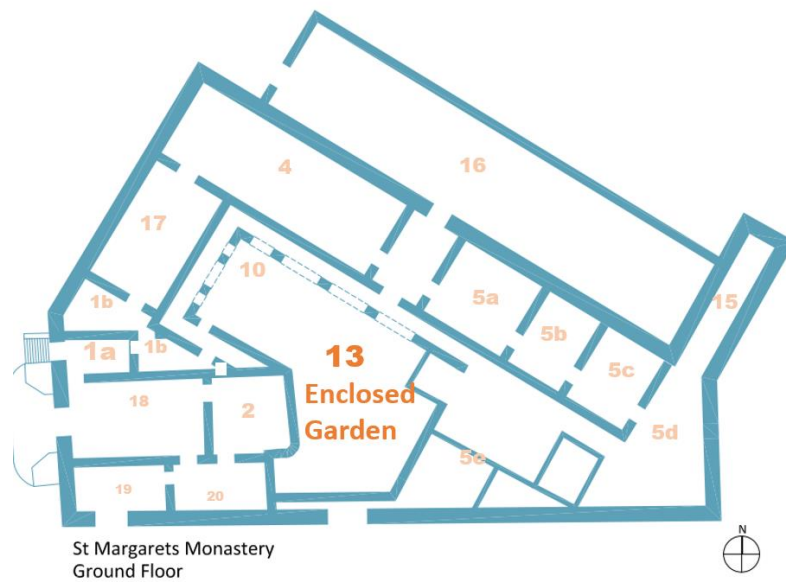


Figure 67. Enclosed garden (Area 13)

4.3.15.1 Typological Characteristics



Figure 68. View of the enclosed garden from the second-floor loggia (left) and view from ground floor (right)

- This is the central courtyard and is surrounded by an upstairs and downstairs open loggia
- The external walls are high ensuring that the monastery remains un-overlooked by third parties

- The floor plan is sectioned into areas containing various fruit trees and flower bushes.
- A collection of marble mortars, antique terracotta pots, modern religious statuary and well heads are scattered around this space.
- The walls are painted in a utilitarian oil-based paint and tiled with modern cement tiles.
- The east-wall contains a door used as access for bulky produce.

4.3.15.2 Functional Value

This is an exterior, inward-looking space intended to provide light and fresh air within the monastery. It also functions as a place of passage, either in circulation under the loggia or in the open from one side to the other. The trees provide seasonal fruit for consumption and flowers are grown to decorate the church and monastery. Wells, provide water for washing and watering. In the past, well water was also used for drinking [N44]. Conservation of water in monasteries is also another important topic of use frequently met with during interviews. This monastery has four well-heads situated in the *kitchen, enclosed garden, washroom and back garden*[N44].

Stemming from the concept of the 'medieval cloister' this is considered as a quiet contemplative space ideal for meditation and oration.

During the hot summer months, recreational activities as per daily schedule are sometimes carried out here [N7].

4.3.15.3 Social and Spiritual Values

As described above this space is intended for solitary use for oration and meditation but also as a seasonal alternative for recreational activities.

4.3.15.4 Current Use Value – 2 (Medium)

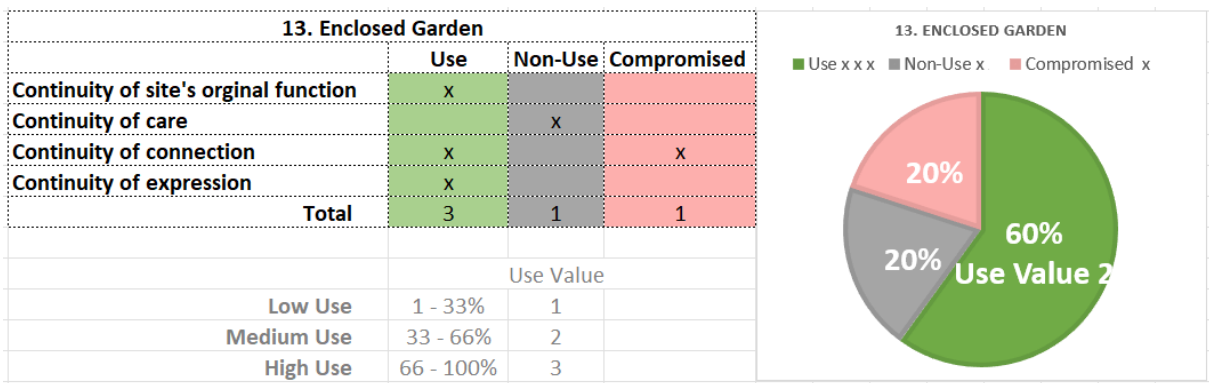


Table 39. Current Use Value – Enclosed Garden [November 2021]

The *enclosed garden* is taken care of by an external gardener and not an appointed nun. It however retains its original functions and is also regularly frequented by the community.

Chapter 5. Result Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The objectives (section 1.2) and research questions (section 1.3) laid out at the beginning of this study necessitated a two-fold approach in the presentation of data, mainly:

- An initial approach that introduces the reader to the prevalent values assigned to specific spaces as dictated by current use (section 4.2). This enabled the researcher to quantify current use numerically and classify the four monasteries into categories of low, medium, and high use for the purpose of discussion. These results shall be discussed in section 5.2.
- The second approach demonstrates the application of a methodology intended for eliciting heritage values from within the living community of religious monuments (section 4.3). The results shall be discussed in section 5.3.

5.2 Analysis of Data in Section 4.2 and Discussion

5.2.1 Community Numbers, Age Distribution and Health

In the conclusion to section 4.2, a classification of the current use of the four monasteries was given with St Peter's Monastery having a 'low use value', St Margaret and Scholastica having a 'medium use value' and St Ursula registering the 'highest use value' from the four under study (Table 24, p. 67). Since original use by the primary custodians of a living monument is central to its survival, lack of use is here being regarded as indicative of risk (Figure 69) with St Peter's Monastery demonstrating a high incidence of risk followed by St Margaret, St Scholastica and St Ursula's Monastery respectively.

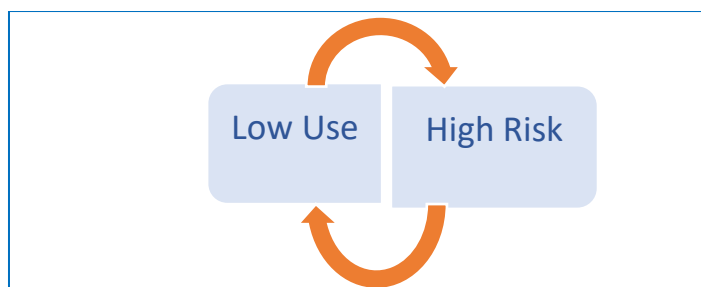


Figure 69. Low use by the primary custodians poses a risk to the living heritage

Factors that determined use were the number of community members that reside within the monastery but also the distribution of age (Table 40, below) and the state of health of the resident communities. St Ursula has an ideal age distribution among the 11 members with the youngest cloistered nuns from the four monasteries under study.

Monastery	Total current use value	Age groups							Res. Nos*	Age Avg.
		30 - 40	40 -50	50 - 60	60-70	70 - 80	80 - 90	90+		
St. Peter	low (6)					1		1	2	80
St. Margaret	medium (14)			1		4	2	1	8	80
St. Scholastica	medium (19)			4	2	3		1	10	66
St. Ursula	high (33)	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	11	65
*Total number of nuns residing in the monastery										

Table 40. Coincidence of age brackets in each respective monastery and an age average based on the total number of resident nuns (November 2021 – January 2022).

That, coupled with the state of health of its members has enabled St Ursula’s to maintain the ideal balance for a traditional life of prayer and work as dictated by their rules and constitutions. To a lesser extent, St Scholastica has managed to maintain the balance too but the strain on the younger bracket of nuns in the age range between 50 – 60 and the general health of the community is creating an imbalance that is presently being felt (Appendix 5, N197,204,212,232). On the other hand, although St Margaret’s is deemed as displaying ‘medium use value’, the elevated age combination as portrayed in Table 40, the present state of health (Appendix 2, N73), together with the innate unpredictability of health issues renders the current use value as highly unstable.

The survival of this form of living heritage relies on a steady intake of new community members. In a recent study, Luigi Bartolomei published data that demonstrates a decline of 39% in numbers of female cloistered communities in Italy over a period of 30 years, between 1989 – 2019 (2021, p. 24). Based on the data presented in Table 1, p.5, the average decline of female cloistered communities in the five monasteries of high-heritage value in Malta over a period of 30 years (1992 -2022) works out to an average of 62% (Table 41). These statistics suggest that the rate with which these traditional forms of religious life are dwindling is at an elevated rate.

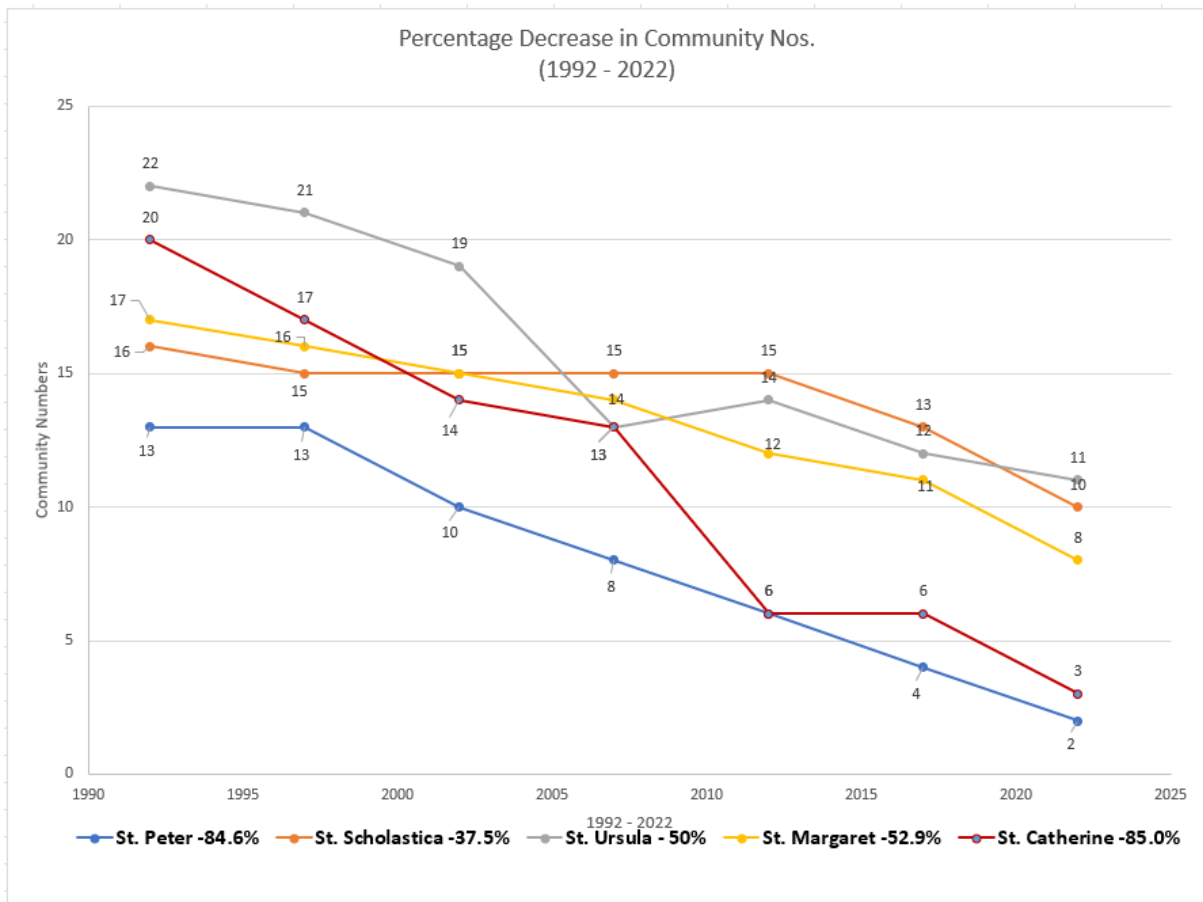


Table 41. Percentage decline in female cloistered communities residing in monasteries of high heritage value in Malta (1992 – 2022).

As established in the cases highlighted above, when the lack of vocations is the main cause for decline, the process that leads to closure can be very gradual. This slow process is also possibly due to the fact that all four monasteries still retain financial autonomy giving the community the possibility to employ staff (as in the case of St Margaret’s) and to maintain the premises. The latter was most apparent at St Ursula’s and St Peter’s Monastery. In the cases when monasteries suffer financial instability or when the rules as established by the Pontifical Commission and published in the document *Vultum dei Quaere* (Holy See Press Office, Article 8, 2016) (Bartolomei, 2019) dictate “affiliation, transfer or suppression” (Tadie, 2020) due to restricted numbers, these monasteries can end up unguarded by their primary custodians posing a variety of risks to the tangible and intangible heritage.

5.2.3 Collective Values; Interpreting the results.

Based on the collective value results illustrated in Table 25, section 4.2.5, all the monasteries in question demonstrate high *typological* value (section 1, Table. 42). This value relates directly to the architectural structure as the ‘static medium’ in which the ‘dynamic medium’ evolves (concept referred to in section 1.5.1). The former will outlive the latter should *secularisation* reach its full process. An understanding of this relationship is fundamental as it provides the context in which to analyze past and present use of space.

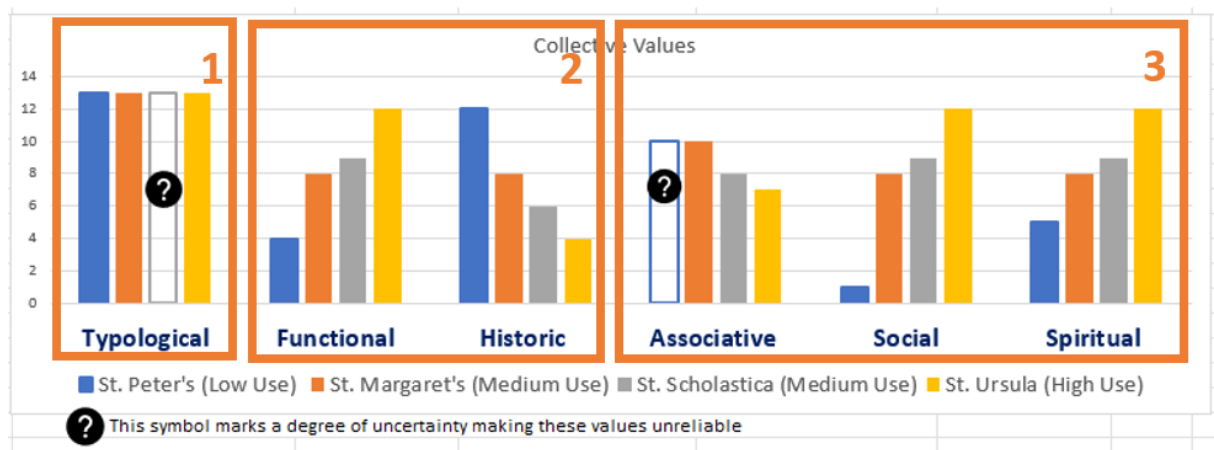


Table 42. The collective values from the four monasteries divided in three sections for the purpose of discussion

As outlined in the methodology (section 3.3, p.38-39) the collective *functional* and historic values (section 2, Table 42) have emerged as generally inversely related. A monastery of low function has been assigned a higher historic value, whereas high function (in the case of a living heritage monument) has been interpreted as surpassing its historic values. As explained in section 3.3, when current use is still relevant to the living community and the space retains its function, then the evolution of the practices through time form part of its *functional value*, whereas when use has ended, function is incorporated within the historic narrative. It is therefore not surprising that at St Peter's Monastery, where traditional function is waning, the visit to the monastic complex was accompanied by a lay member of the community who is presently researching various aspects of the past socio-cultural and historical background of this monastery rather than a member of the community itself.

The fact that these values are inversely related essentially illustrates the shift in values that will occur should the ‘living’ element cease to exist. Essentially, what remains is the ‘static medium’ or the ‘monumental’ and its accumulated significance. The discourse in shifts between these paradigms (monumental versus living) recalls the early debates on the

broadening of the scope of heritage (Ahmad, 2006) and the 1994 Global Strategy programmes launched by UNESCO, when the acknowledgement of the intangible debate was rising in importance. These developments highlighted the need “to develop management strategies” that included the living element be it “vegetal, organisms or cultural expression” (Bortolotto, 2007,p.40). The shift of values in this study is in reverse since the living element is at imminent risk.

The collective *associative*, *social* and *spiritual values* have emerged as the values intrinsic to the ‘dynamic medium’. Except for the case of St Peter’s Monastery whereby the interview and visit did not fulfill the objectives set out at the on-set, these values were mainly dependent on the information imparted during the semi-structured interviews. *Associative value* in this study refers to the communities’ past connections with the site. Past connections that no longer exist between the communities and their spaces are either due to elements of continuity of expression (such as the changes implemented after SVC) or due to the cessation of traditions and rituals that have become impossible to enact due to the elevated age and reduced numbers of the community. For the latter reason, it follows that the *associative value* at St Margaret’s Monastery is the highest from the three in review (Section 3, Table 42) (St Peter’s value is dubious and not part of this discussion) as it is inversely relative to the concept of use. It also follows that the *social* and *spiritual values* of St Margaret, St Scholastica and St Ursula are correspondingly equal in occurrence since their traditional way of life revolves around the coordination of a group of individuals performing intangible expressions. From the conversations held with the community, the intangible expressions that cover every aspect of monastic life are all deeply spiritual. Every gesture, be it waking up in the morning, working in the *kitchen*, washing hands before eating in the *refectory*, praying alone in one’s cell or in the *choir* with the community, tending to the garden etc. has a spiritual dimension. On the other hand, the *social* and *spiritual values* attributed to St Peter’s do not display the same responses mainly because as it stands today, with only one active member within the community, community life no longer exists in a traditional way.

5.2.4 Patterns of Cessation and their Current Use Value

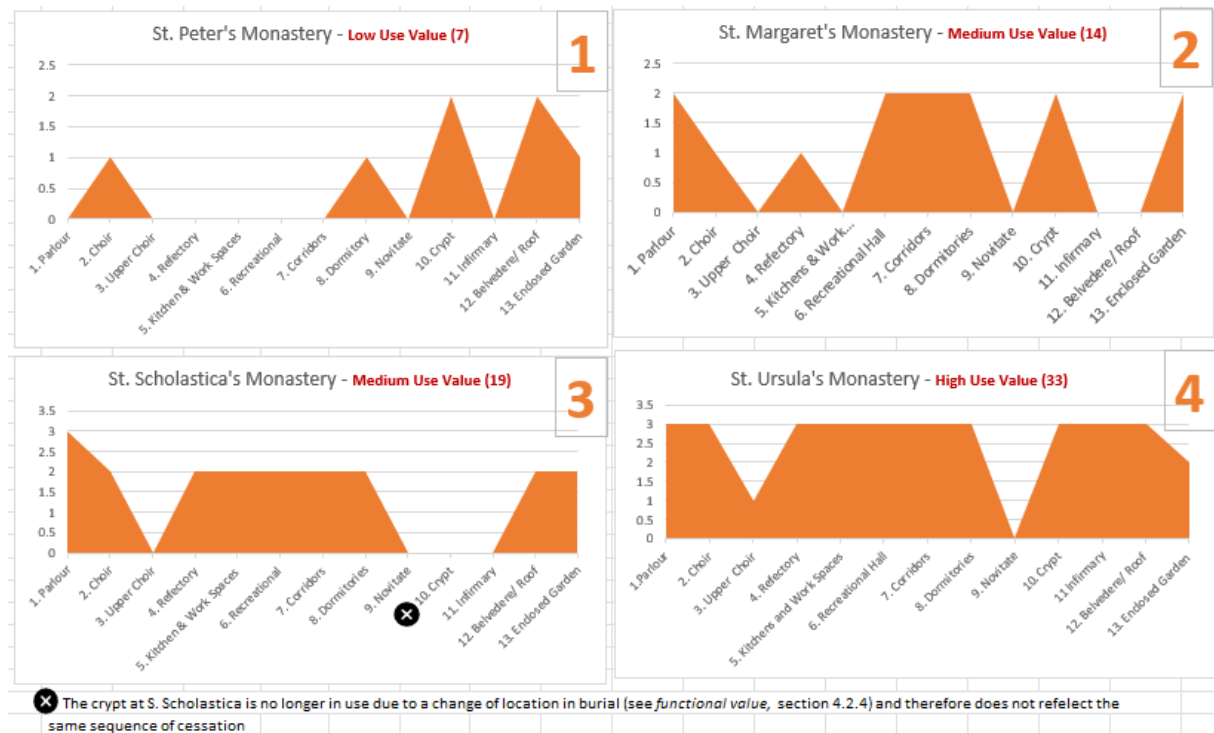


Table 43. Graphics showing current use value in spaces at St Peter (Case 1), St Margaret (Case 2), St Scholastica (Case 3) & St Ursula (Case 4). The cases are listed from low current total use to high current total use

The collection of data in section 4.2 also permits looking into the patterns of cessation of use of spaces. These are:

- The *novitiate* is unused in all 4 cases and is symptomatic of the lack of vocations experienced by all monasteries.
- The reason behind the diminished use of the *upper choir* in 2,3 & 4 is due to a number of facts, mainly the change of use as a result of SVC but also a question of typology which generally makes these areas difficult to access and therefore not ideal for the older members of the community.
- The *infirmary* (Case 2 & 3) is another area that played a diminishing role within the monastic spaces as a result of SVC. This council relaxed the concepts of *enclosure* which in turn permitted exiting for medical care therefore allowing hospitalisation. It also increased the permissible access footprint to lay persons such as doctors and nurses within *enclosure* making tending to the nuns in their cells a possibility.
- The first area to suffer the loss of traditional care practices due to diminishing and ageing communities appeared to be the *enclosed garden* and garden spaces. All monasteries now employ a gardener for this. Gardening and other heavy maintenance

was generally conducted by the nuns. Examples of such works have been discussed at various monasteries with a clear example still in practice at St Scholastica (see, cleaning of well in Appendix 5, N207).

- The next areas to suffer loss in traditional care practices are the *kitchen* and laundry areas which require outsourced help when there are no longer enough nuns that can withstand manual labour as in the case at St Margaret's. This diminishing of use generally happens in tandem with the diminishing use of areas that require communal orchestrated rituals such as the *choir* and *refectory* area. For obvious reasons, the last to survive are areas with meditative *functional value* such as the cells, *crypt*, *enclosed garden* and when access is favourable, the *belvedere*. St Peter's is a clear example of this.

5.3 Analysis of Data in Section 4.3 and Discussion

Although the research methodology was designed and applied to the four monasteries, St Margaret's case-study permitted the application of the full range of research tools specified at the on-set in section 3.4. The outcomes of this research are as follows:

1. Conducting the semi-structured interviews with the core-communities before physically experiencing the monastic spaces provides an optimum platform for valorizing living heritage space and establishing the community's role as central to the site's significance.

In all cases, the researcher had never visited the monastic spaces prior to the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were designed to encourage conversation about past and present traditional uses whilst allowing the participants to physically describe the spaces, architectural features, lighting, size, comfort levels, furnishings and any other specificities deemed of interest. Since the interviews at St Margaret's were conducted with three different participants, the repetitive format and the various verbal accretions added, resulted in the researcher obtaining an authentic and unbiased introduction to these spaces. This strategy supports the methods suggested by a living heritage approach that "prioritizes the core-community's connection" with the site above anything else (Poulios, 2014, p.130) (Section 2.3.3).

2. Visits to the physical monastic spaces in living heritage monuments should be accompanied by a member of the community. This aids in understanding ‘the spirit of the place’.

The visit to St Margaret’s was accompanied by a member of the community. Her contribution to the visit was essential in obtaining a deeper understanding of the community’s past and present association with the site. Apart from the information imparted throughout the visit, elements such as: the swift tempo of the itinerary (necessary to remain within the boundaries of her strict schedule), the changing tonalities of her voice from one area to the next, her concerns about specific diminishing use, the precise descriptions of usage, the reverence in comportment from one space to the next and several other elements contributed to understanding the monastery’s spirit of place.

This same level of insight was captured during the visit to St Ursula’s Monastery. Since from the four monasteries, St Ursula has an ideal age distribution as explained above, comparatively, this monastery presented a far greater display of activity with several nuns engaged in traditional care practices in the *kitchens, refectory, corridors, enclosed gardens, parlour* etc. The level of activity at St Ursula also heightened other elements that included smell (cooked coffee with cloves) and sound (conversations in the *parlours*, constant bells ringing from the *loggia*, conversation among community members etc.). This level of understanding was not attained at St Peter’s Monastery.

Outcomes 1 and 2 support the discourse of applying *phenomenological approaches* to research that entails collecting information about existential spaces and the individual’s perception of place (Low, 2002). It also reinforces the discourse that as suggested by Pierre Lucier (Figure 70) in order to understand the spirit of the place of a living heritage monument, engaging with the core-communities is essential. Therefore, if the ‘living’ element is at risk or becomes unstable, part of the preventive measures for loss of significance should entail engaging with the communities to elicit values from within.

It is this spirit of place that constitutes the foundation of the cultural significance of religious houses that, if their authentic heritage value is recognized, it can provide guidelines for profane reuse likely to respect and prolong their symbolic potential (as cited in Coomans, 2018, p.154).

Figure 70. Quote by Pierre Lucier (as cited in Coomans, 2018, p.154) referred to in section 2.4.2.3

3. A minimum of three participants covering a wide range of years spent within *enclosure* is required to successfully conduct this research.

The concept of continuity is central to living religious heritage, therefore interviewing members of the community based on the duration of time spent in *enclosure* was deemed relevant. SVC was taken as a landmark event that caused various changes to tangible and intangible aspects, consequently, interviewing nuns that experienced *enclosure* before SVC and after was a preferred option by the researcher. The question of having at least three participants was also considered as a means of corroborating information for inaccuracies and inconsistencies. More participants would have been preferable, but not feasible for this study.

Due to the low number of residents (two in total) at St Peter’s Monastery, the research objectives were not achieved. This highlights the fact that it is not possible to understand the accumulated site significance from the communities’ perspective once numbers are depleted.

4. Monastic spaces as sites of memory.

From the eleven interviews carried out across the four monasteries it has become amply clear that *communicative*, *cultural memory* and *passive forgetting* (section 2.4.2.4) play an essential role in this research. Based on these interviews, the incidence of this type of memory as related to use is summarily indicated in Table 44.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS - MEMORIES			
	Communicative	Active Cultural	Passive Forgetting
Present use		X	
Recently abandoned use (secularisation)	X		
Past use, no longer applies (post-SVC)	X		X
Passed on information about use	X		
Past use known to one participant	X		
Awareness of function with no knowledge of use	X		X
Forgotten function and use			X

Table 44. Incidence of communicative, *cultural memory* and passive forgetting as detected in the four case-studies

From the four case studies, the incidence of *communicative memory* emerged as the strongest as this relies on the autobiographical memory of an individual that in turn mirrors the memory of a *social* group (section 2.4.2.4). This type of memory necessitates a process of socialization (researcher – participant) whereby communication becomes the “media content” extending the memory beyond the lifespan of the individual. (Jewdokimow & Markowska, 2013).

Another form of memory that applies to this discourse is that of the active dimension of *cultural memory* (see section 2.4.2.4). Aleida Assmann refers to religion as one of the core areas of active *cultural memory* (2008, p.100) mainly because the repetitive actions associated with traditional use possess a different form of communicative function that when kept relevant is passed down “across the abyss of time” (Assmann, A, 2008, p.97). The same concepts are repeated in recent writings (Bartolomei, 2021; Coomans, 2018; Poullos, 2014b) whereby the constant reenactment of rituals by communities in monastic spaces brings the past into the present giving it relevance and transforming these spaces into sites of memory.

In terms of values, communicative memories are the main contributors to the *associative values* ascribed to the monastic spaces. Based on the elevated age of the communities at present, *communicative memory* must be considered as one of the factors at risk of extinction. In this respect, the loss of a community will initiate a chain reaction of events such as passive and active forgetting (see section 2.4.2.4) the outcome of which can be ‘managed’ depending on how well prepared this cessation is handled. In support of this, the methods applied during research have been tested as a valorization tool with which to record these memories in an attempt at mitigating loss of valuable information.

It is interesting to point out a parallelism between the concept of fostering memory as proposed by this research and the concept of practicing remembrance in monasteries through their recordings of biographical details in registers when a nun is deceased. This traditional practice was highlighted as a point of interest by Coomans (2018). It is also interesting to note that despite the limitations imposed by *enclosure*, the act of permitting these interviews today indicates an attitude conducive to preserving memory of the traditions they consider intrinsic to their life. These favourable attitudes towards preserving a legacy were noted in all monasteries and in particular St Ursula, where apart from being actively engaged in displaying old artefacts and utensils, restoring works of art and digitising their archival collection the Prioress of this monastery related that she is actively taking photographs of community life for record purposes.

5. ‘Continuity’ as a Measure of Risk

Female cloistered monasteries are considered as heritage at risk due to dwindling vocations. Unless reversed by natural intake, this phenomenon could lead to closure. In this study, the theory of continuity (section 2.3.3) of original function, care, connection, and expression (Wijesuriya, 2015; Poullos, 2014b) is here proposed as a measure for quantifying the risk factor

of this living heritage (methodology highlighted in section 3.5.2.2). This method enables monastery classification by use level and may assist in initiating dialogue and formulating strategies aimed at preserving the accumulated significance of a site.

5.4 Limitations

The innate nature of this heritage posed certain limitations to the research. The first limitation was the denied access within *enclosure* at St Scholastica's Monastery. This rendered assigning the full range of value criteria as incomplete. The second limitation was the ongoing maintenance works on the *dormitories* and common areas at St Ursula. Due to the latter, the nuns were making use of temporary spaces thus obfuscating the legibility of usage. To a certain extent, in both cases, the assigning of values for certain spaces relied exclusively on the semi-structured interviews. Other limitations included the lack of architectural drawings for both St Scholastica and St Margaret's Monastery.

An obvious constraint was also the depleted community at St Peter's Monastery.

The processing of data retrieved from the semi-structured interviews also presented a number of limitations. Rendering audio-files usable for this dissertation entailed an initial process of translation from Maltese to English, followed by the removal of all sensitive material or information that could pose a breach to the ethical code of practice and a final process of paraphrasing all texts for annexing to the research. During these processes narratives and linguistic nuances of interest to the *associative, social and spiritual values* could have been lost to this research. Regarding the latter, certain Maltese terminologies that could be deemed of interest have been reproduced in the appendixes for future reference.

Another limitation encountered was the lack of apparent comparative material on qualitative-type research related with the eliciting of heritage values from within the communities of female cloistered monasteries. This led to a degree of experimentation.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

This research set out to actively acknowledge female cloistered monasteries as living heritage at risk. In doing so, focus was centered on the main element of risk, i.e., the loss of traditional

associations of a community with a site intended solely for its use. Unless risk is reversed by the natural renewal of community members, *secularisation* will take its course eventually ending up in closure. In the event of closure, the concerns with these monasteries shift to the issue of adaptive reuse of architectural spaces that once served these communities. No matter what direction this debate takes, understanding the accumulated site significance of living religious heritage at risk whilst still in use becomes an essential preemptive step in projecting the building's future use. For this reason, a value-based approach that saw the community at the center of eliciting values was the main objective of this study, mainly because it is understood that the significance of living religious heritage is intrinsic to the living element. This understanding is in line with the recent statement at the FRH conference that proposed that, "the approaches of Living Heritage and Heritage Values are complementary" (Lindblad, 2021, 27:17) In turn, the living element that constitutes the intangible within this religious heritage gives relevance to the tangible, reaffirming inseparability as its main characteristic. For the reasons above, it has been proposed that, in the case of risk of depletion, apart from tackling the issues of safeguarding the movable and immovable tangibles, safeguarding must be extended to valorization systems of the intangible at risk of loss.

5.6 Further Research

The selection of female-cloistered monasteries adopted for the purpose of this study were chosen by the researcher based on factors of accessibility, time-constraints and within the limitations permitted by this research. Notwithstanding an element of diversity within the sample of religious orders selected, all monasteries under study belong to a similar socio-cultural and geographic context and display similar characteristics, mainly that their settings are all within highly historic, panoramic and dense urban landscapes and that the causes for decline in use are broadly similar. It would therefore be of interest to apply both the qualitative methodologies and the quantitative assessment of the 'current use value' as suggested by this study to a more diverse selection of female cloistered communities distributed worldwide.

This study also focused on applying qualitative methodologies intended at identifying and safeguarding the accumulated significance of a living heritage site at risk, by valorizing the central role of their core- communities. Despite the fact that value-based research is a widely

encountered topic amidst the plethora of present-day academia, research on value assessment intended as a preemptive method for preserving site significance on this specific living typology, i.e. female cloistered communities, remains relatively scarce. For this reason, it would be interesting to further perfect these qualitative methodologies for collecting and processing data, by opening up this research to a multi-disciplinary team of experts (anthropologists, art historians, conservation specialists, theologians etc.).

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Appendix 1

Geographical Contexts

Contents

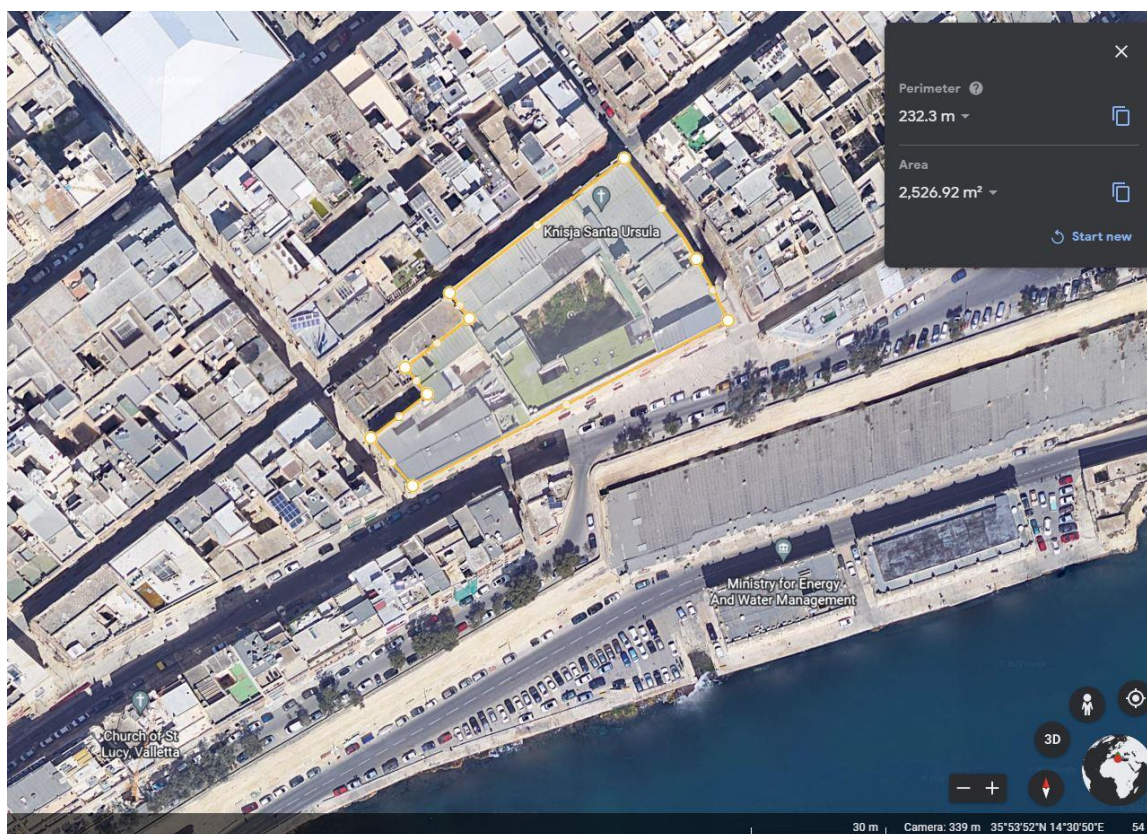
1.1 Context A – St Ursula’s Monastery, Valletta

1.2 Context B – St Scholastica’s Monastery, Birgu

1.3 Context C – St Margaret’s Monastery’s Bormla

1.4 Context D – St Peter’s Monastery, Mdina

1.1 Context A – St Ursula’s Monastery, Valletta



Source

Google Earth. (n.d.). *St Ursula’s Monastery*. Retrieved April 18, 2022, from:

https://earth.google.com/web/search/St+Ursula+Church,+StUrsula+Street,+Valletta/@35.89743386,14.51544328,50.65949841a,225.79686829d,35y,0h,0t,0r/data=CpcBGm0SZwoIMHgxMzBNDUyYmE5YzFiYzZmOjB4NTIINjc2NDQwZDdkMTI4MhkPut_84fJBQCEJJ-y9QctQCosU3QgVXJzdWxhIENodXJjaCwgU3QuVXJzdWxhIFN0cmVldCwgVmFsbGV0dGEYAIBliYKJApZuQ-uvFBQBEBReKDSfFBQBgmgWoqo5NAsQCHSTXld-M0sQA

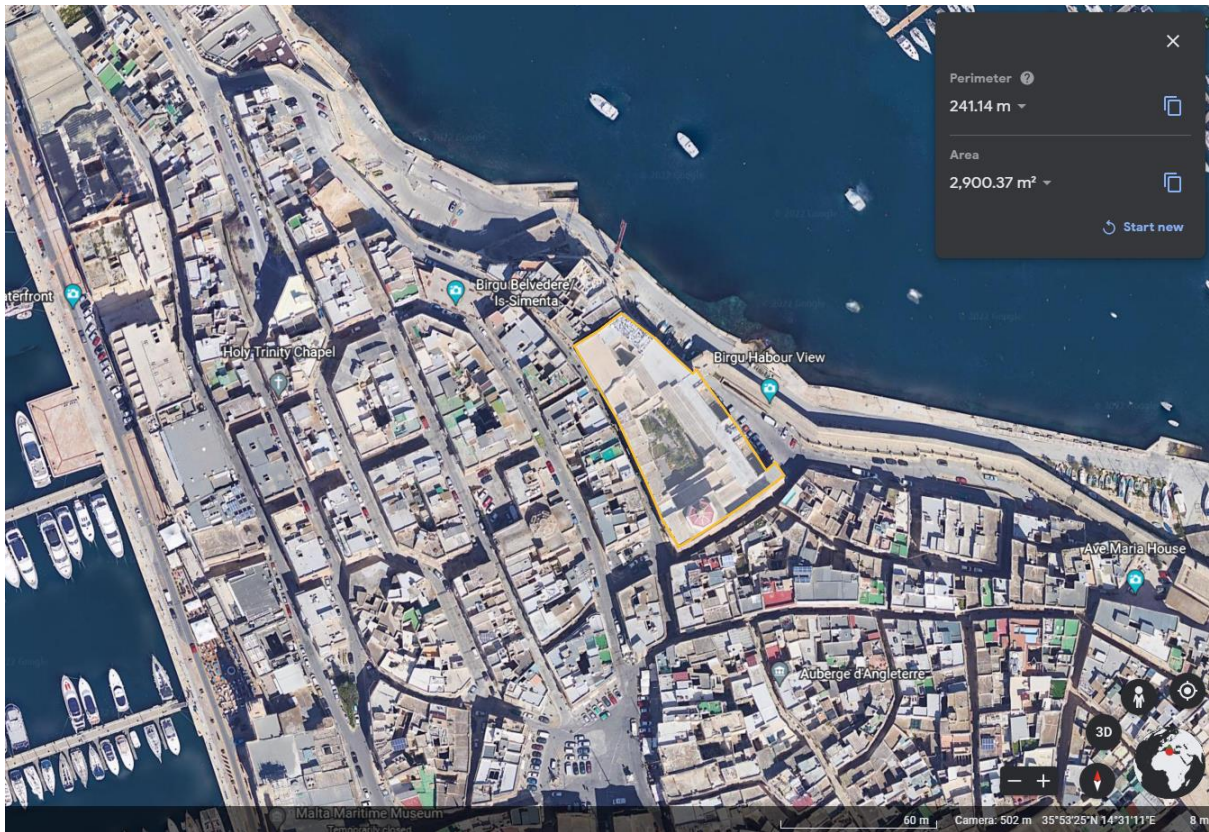
Location

St Ursula’s Monastery is built within the UNESCO world heritage fortified city of Valletta. Set within the Island’s capital, it occupies a vast footprint on multiple floors exploiting the steep formation of the street levels that dramatically descend towards the sea. On its south side and from its panoramic roof the monastery enjoys sweeping views of the Grand Harbour and the towns of Birgu, Senglea and Kalkara.

Coordinates 35°53'51.1"N 14°30'56.0"E

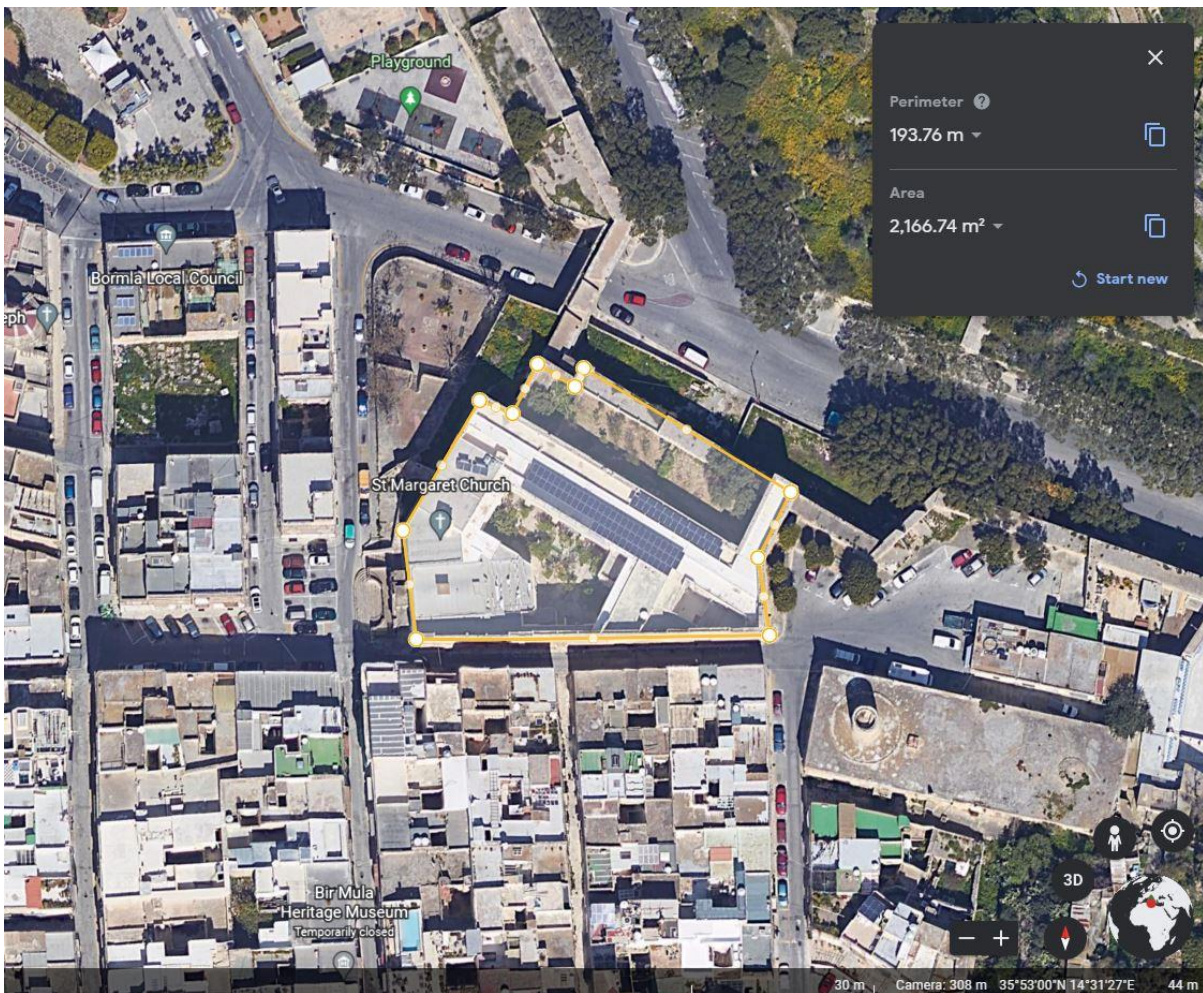
Perimeter Line Qualifier The perimeter delineation drawn on the image above is based on the first-floor plan of the monastery reproduced by Aquilina (2004, p. 106). The other floors do not retain the same area since various spaces are rented out to third parties as dwellings and various small commercial entities. The total area of 2,526.92m² is only indicative.

1.2 Context B – St Scholastica’s Monastery, Birgu



Source	Google Earth. (n.d.) <i>St Scholastica’s Monastery</i> . Retrieved April 18, 2022, from: https://earth.google.com/web/search/St+Anne+Chapel,+Birgu/@35.88920121,14.52214939,12.79816648a,270.97830702d,35y,76.68857379h,0t,0r/data=CigiJgokCQd-g1T08kFAEQ6NrVG18kFAGcOPKnHaCC1AISOG9OfcBi1A
Location	The monastery is situated in the town of Birgu (Citta Vittoriosa). This densely historic promontory situated to the south of the Grand Harbour was the initial location of choice for settlement by the Knight of St John playing an important role in the victory of the Great Siege of 1565. The main entrance to the monastery is situated in a narrow road on the west facade at St Scholastica Street and its east façade overlooks Kalkara Creek and the neighbouring town of Kalkara.
Coordinates	35°53'19.5"N 14°31'22.0"E
Perimeter Line Qualifier	At the time of this study no floor plans for the monastery were located therefore the perimeter lines drawn and the total area of 2,900.37m ² are only indicative and based on external observations.

1.3 Context C – St Margaret’s Monastery’s Bormla



Source Google Earth. (n.d.). [St Margaret’s Monastery]. Retrieved April 18, 2022 from:

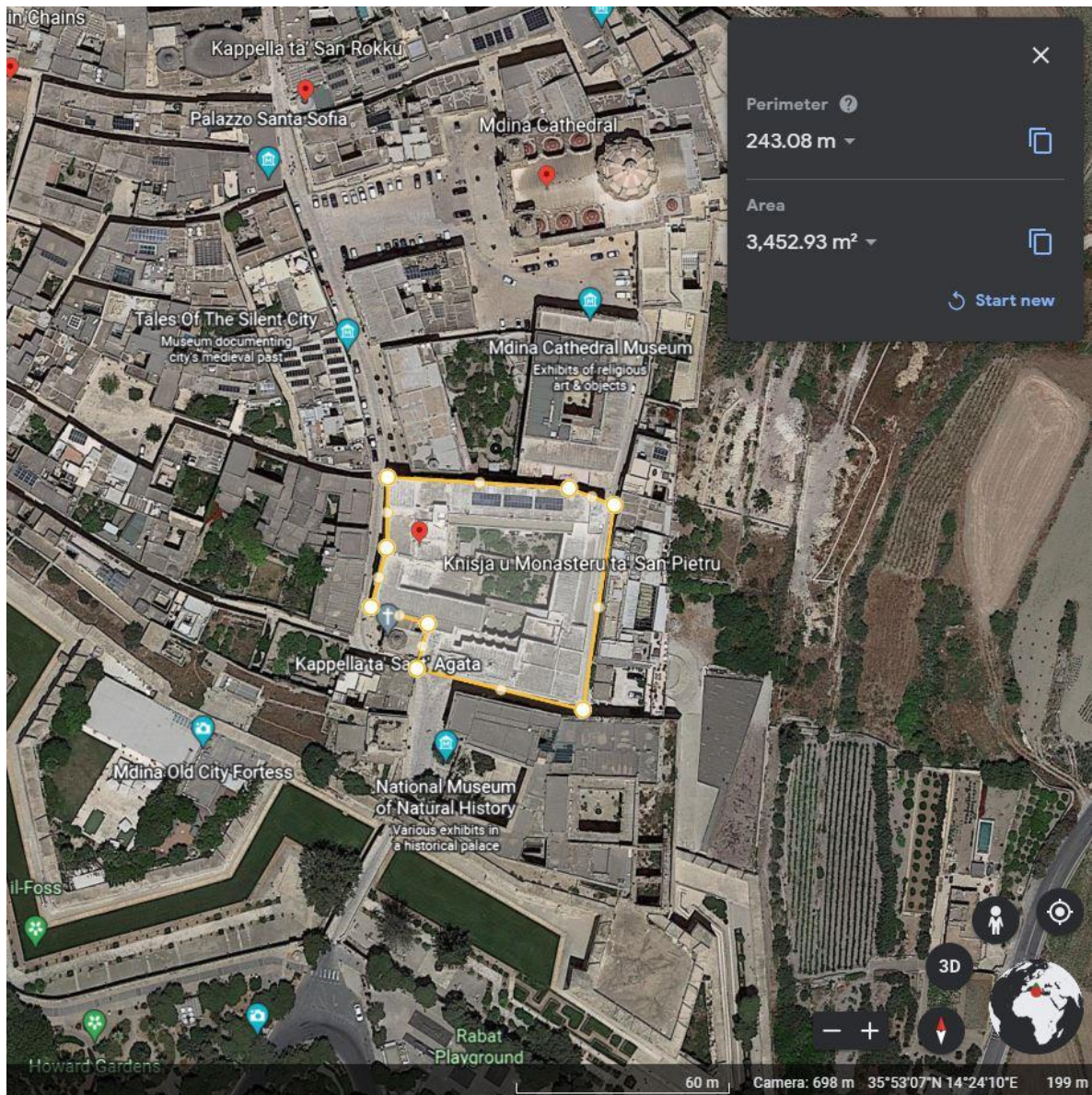
<https://earth.google.com/web/search/St+Margaret+Church,+Triq+Santa+Margerita,+Cospicua/@35.8836671,14.5238617,41.0694714a,836.54300197d,35y,0h,45t,0r/data=Cp0BGnMSbQoIMHgxMzBINWlyNjFiNzJiODA3OjB4NjE1NzFIYTY0N2VIYmU0MRmMhucAHPFBQCEBQcZnwwtQCoyU3QgTWFyZ2FyZXQgQ2h1cmNoLCBUcmliIFNhbRhlE1hcmdlcmI0YSwgQ29zcGljdWEYAiaBliiYKJAl-spaExvBBQBE2qwTgcvBBQBliKitQQKg4tQCEomNEEhgotQCgC>

Location Situated on high ground, in the harbour fortified city of Bormla, this monastery was built abutting St Margaret’s bastion on the Cottonera lines. It occupies an entire block at the extremity of the urban grid of Bormla. It is detached on all four sides.

Coordinates 35°53'01.3"N 14°31'25.8"E

Perimeter Line Qualifier The perimeter lines drawn above are a true representation of the monastery’s dimensions. These are based on on-site inspections by the researcher. The land area measures 2,166.74m².

1.4 Context D – St Peter’s Monastery, Mdina



Source

Google Earth. (n.d.). [St Peter’s Monastery]. Retrieved April 18, 2022 from:

<https://earth.google.com/web/search/St+peter+monastery+mdina/@35.88537314,14.40357673,199.96708202a,694.2852206d,35y,-41.05159612h,44.35783832t,0r/data=CoQBGloSVAoIMHgxmzBINTFiZmMOMTFkM2JkOjB4OTA4ZWU5NDRkNThkNjM4MRmMjS-QVvFBQCFBnlcTmM4sQCoZc3QuIHBlGVyIG1vbmFzdGVyeSBtZGluYRgCIAEilgokCf6YaeIB8kFAEYU51khp8UFAGRdfy5OtDC1AIS-O-2KqCS1A>

Location

St Peter’s is the oldest and largest monastery from the four under study. It is situated on high ground and occupies almost an entire block on the east side of the fortified city of Mdina, Malta’s former capital from antiquity to the arrival of the Knights of St John.

Coordinates

35°53'07.6"N 14°24'16.2"E

Perimeter Line Qualifier

The perimeter lines drawn above are based on plans reproduced by Prof Dennis de Lucca (1955, p. 67). The land area measures approximately 3452.93m².

Appendix 2

Research Data - St Margaret's Monastery, Bormla

Contents

2.1 Extracts of Narratives from Semi-Structured interviews [N1 - 71]

2.2 Diary Entries [D72 – 76]

2.3 On-site visit to Monastery accompanied by a member of the community – 27th November at 10:00am

2.4 Images [IM1 – 58]

2.1 Extracts of Narratives from Semi-Structured interviews [N1 - 71]

2.1.1 Interview 1 - Dated 13th November 2021 @ 10:00 Narratives 1 – 26.

1. Time spent in enclosure - The participant lived within enclosure for **over 25 years**
2. Community – She joined the monastery at a time when **18 nuns** resided within the community. Today only 8 are in residence. The ages vary between 74 and 93 with one community member aged 55. The numbers have always been reducing. Their religious order only **permits 21 nuns to live at any given point in time in residence**. In the past, when community members were aging, a request was made for a dispensation that would allow more members to join thus bringing the total community numbers above the established limit of 21 community members. This was a measure that catered for eventual future deaths.
3. Choice of living at St Margaret's – Her decision was not linked to the location or architecture of the monastery. The choice was based on vocation.
4. Dwindling Vocations - Due to the issue of dwindling vocations she relates that the **biggest change they had to endure was that of admitting lay people** on the premises to work for them. She explains that this decision was necessary since the community could no longer maintain the traditional balanced life of work and prayer. The older nuns found this change very difficult to accept. **They felt defeated as they had been self-sufficient for over 300 years and in those years, there was always a steady flow of young members joining. Today the monastery employs staff that includes a cook, cleaner, and nurses to take care of the sick.** The jobs fulfilled by outsiders were their tasks and part of their daily traditional life. She relates that in the past the only people to enter were the doctor and a maintenance person. A maintenance person was only used when they could not carry out the **works** on their own. A substantial amount of maintenance work was carried out by the community. Before, gardening was done by the nuns, but today, they employ a gardener. The dentist used to visit

them too. Now they go to hospital and dental visits are allowed. **She repeats that admitting staff into the monastery was not an easy change for them.**

5. Silence - **They do not speak** in the **corridors** or **refectory** during meals. On Sundays and feastdays the Prioress grants a dispensation allowing conversation. **They maintain silence from evening prayers to the following morning. This period is referred to as the *grande silenzio*.** In the past maintaining silence was more rigid and if anyone needed to say something urgently when silence was necessary, hand-written notes would be passed on. **This tradition was stopped recently out of necessity due to the ageing community.** When asked about the provenance of a tradition that dictates maintaining silence in corridors, she replied that this **tradition became assimilated over the years.**

6. Schedule – After going through their daily **schedule, she explained that today they no longer follow a traditional one.** The Discalced Carmelites traditionally recite their morning prayers (*matutine*) late at night. This is done to anticipate them from the morning prayers. When such a tradition took place, prayer time in the choir ended very late at night. This was considered too rigid for the ageing community. Since they belong to an association based in England, permission was sought from the President of the order to change prayer time and approve a change in schedule. Joining an association is a recent way of managing matters. She explains that joining an association was in line with the Papal guidelines issued in the *Voltum dei Quereri and Cor Orans* documents. Every monastery was to remain *sui juris* but had to join an association.

She described their life as one of **prayer** and **work**. She said that work is necessary for every household. Today, lay people do most of their work and a few nuns try to contribute and help when they can.

7. Significant space - She described the **choir as the most significant space** to the community.

8. Favourite space - Her favourite spaces are the **garden and the roof.**

9. Media - Radios have been introduced to keep the elderly company when spending all day in their rooms. The radios are used for community prayer. Television is only switched on for papal blessings. Internet is necessary to pay online bills and correspond.

10. Private space and community space - The **cell** is their private space. Community time is spent in the **refectory, the recreational hall and choir.**

11. Paintings and works of art – She described the monastery as **bare, with a small collection of paintings** in the Chapter Hall which is also the library.

12. Parlour – She describes this space as having an **inner and outer area** with communication windows and grilles. There is a door from the outer parlour that leads to a **musician’s balcony**. A removable ladder is needed to access this area. This area is no longer in use.

Nowadays, access to the monastery is given **on a regular basis to the helpers, cleaners and the Priest**. For all other persons entering, the Prioress evaluates and grants permission.

The elderly nuns told her that **in the past two nuns would tend to people in the parlour**. The persons occupying this post were the gatekeepers (*gradiera*). She said that they didn’t have an electric bell on the outside façade and that the front door would be kept open. The person would enter and ring a manual bell in the corner. **In the past, people needing counselling or charity** visited. **These diminished. Even visiting families diminished especially since they are an ageing community. The covid-19 pandemic affected visiting immensely.** They still use the traditional system of **ringing a bell** to call the nuns. The wheel (*rota*) is used for small deliveries, whilst larger stuff is passed through the monastery door. They have another **access** point into the monastery for the deliveries of produce.

When speaking about the communication windows she does not recall seeing two metal grilles but has heard this detail from the older companions.

Parlour hours are strictly adhered to. After SVC they opened **another parlour**. This is situated downstairs.

13. Dormitory and Cells - There are **21 cells** for professed nuns and other cells in the **novitiate**. They still refer to their room as the **cell**. **She described the room as being 8 feet by 10 feet. The mattress rests on planks (zewg twavel u zewg strippi) as dictated by their tradition. The furnishings include a commode, table, chair and a small window. From her window she can see a section of the garden. The view is described as insignificant.** She says that some rooms do not even have a view as the function of the window is mainly for light. These rooms still retain that **traditional austerity typical of Teresian eremitic communities. All cells are identical and there is no difference in size or comfort.** She enjoys being in her room. It is her personal space. No one is permitted to enter in each other’s rooms. This does not apply in cases of illness.

14. Refectory – This is described as being large and plain. It is used twice a day. Food is not consumed anywhere else. Fasting takes place for seven months - from the 14th September till Easter. Exceptions are made on Sundays, feastdays and in the event of illness. **She described the past rituals involved in the use of the refectory.** The nuns would go for lunch from the

choir and walk in a procession of two whilst praying (*de profundis*). This procession is no longer possible since numbers have diminished and only 3 or 4 eat in the refectory. The refectory was tended to by a number of people - the cook, server and reader. None of these roles still exist today.

The Discalced Carmelites **do not traditionally eat meat**. This is stipulated in their rule. Meat is only given to the sick and **food consumption** depends on providence. Eating takes place in silence. The only sound is that of the readings. **Today, a mobile phone is used instead of the reader.**

In the past, furnishings in the refectory were different. Her descriptions are based on the stories related by the older nuns. She said that the walls were wood panelled and to access the refectory table one had to climb a step, meaning the furniture was set on a plinth.

15. Kitchen - This area is made up of the cooking room (*kčina*), the place where crockery is kept and the food store (*dispensa*). The store is essential for storing food in quantity and planning. In the past, biscuits (*biskuttini*) were made for patrons. **This tradition has stopped** as there is no one available to make them. In the past, nuns made marmalade. She didn't recall anyone making medicines or whether the monastery had any traditional recipe book. She mentioned that the kitchen has been modernised and remembers cooking on the *spiritieri* (petroleum cooker). These have been moved to a store within the monastery.

16. Infirmary – She described it as a large room for the sick which is no longer used. The sick remain in their cells.

17. Enclosed Garden – The **enclosed garden is sometimes used in summer as a community space**. She mentioned four wells one of which was in the past used for drinking water. This was stopped due to the waterproofing membrane placed recently which ruined the quality of the water.

18. Corridor – There is one empty corridor, and this is in the dormitory. There is a **clapper (*čuqlajta*)** hanging on the wall which is used by the appointed **sacristan to wake up the community at 5:30. This was also used in the evening** to announce cell time **but was stopped** as the elderly and the sick are generally sleeping already. She described the corridor as a very quiet space. **They have traditions that happen in these spaces** such as the **procession of *Corpus Christi***. A priest would carry a monstrance around the entire monastery. **Today they only conduct these processions downstairs. During processions they wear their ceremonial cape, light candles and sing.** During the feast of the **Epiphany**, the community **elect the patron saint of the year**. The selection of saints is among five specific saints related with the Order.

These are - St Teresa, St John of the cross, St Joseph, Our Lady of Carmel and the Infant Jesus of Prague. According to this tradition 5 elderly nuns pick a saint from the five. A whole almond is inserted randomly in cake batter and baked. The cake is then divided into five portions. The nun that receives the almond in her portion elects her chosen saint. **This tradition still happens to this very day.**

19. Office – She says that the Prioress’ **office** doubles up as the **archive**. The Prioress is responsible for these documents.

20. Choir – The choir is used for prayer according to their schedule. As explained praying time has been modified. **Sometimes they pray in the recreation hall upstairs. This enables the participation of more elderly nuns.** When the Church was open to the public (pre-Covid 19), they heard mass in the **inner sacristy**. This change happened as a result of the modifications that took place post SVC enabling the nuns a clear visual of the priest. **The choir stalls are original. They wanted to change the stalls as they find them very uncomfortable and do not reflect the austerity associated with Teresian life.**

She refers to the **upper choir** as situated above the musician’s balcony and previously used as a space for private prayer.

21. Processions – They hold a **procession during the time of Advent**. This procession entails carrying an effigy of the Infant Jesus from the refectory to a nun’s cell. The choice of cell is dependent on an election which establishes a sequence of who can keep the effigy in their room for the day. They sing Christmas carols during this procession. In the past the statue was kept in the room for one day each. Today the statue is kept for 8 days. They have an antique wax figurine of the Infant Jesus which they keep in the choir during Advent.

22. Crafts – Before they made hand-made products which were **sold as income**. They also washed vestments and liturgical items such as altar cloths, albs, chasubles etc. They enjoyed this work as it was befitting the life of a nun and provided an income. Today they employ people to wash their clothes.

23. Crypt – When a nun dies, **the community enters the cell** of the deceased and prays there. They dress the body (*inkeffnuha*) in full habit complete with cape. Sandals aren’t worn in line with the Discalced Carmelite tradition. After preparing the body, the undertaker makes all necessary arrangements. Mass takes place at the Church annexed to the monastery. The coffin is usually carried by Carmelite monks to the crypt. Nowadays they allow family members to participate and witness the burial in the crypt. **They stopped the traditions of praying daily**

in the crypt during the month of November. This was stopped due to difficult access caused by the number of stairs.

24. Church – **In the past, nuns would use the upper choir in the church for personal prayer. Due to difficult access, this no longer happens.** The upper choir was also used when external processions were taking place. She described the **Easter Sunday procession (*Irxox*)** which is a local traditional feast The statue stops in front of the church and the nuns would peep from behind the grilled window in the upper choir and the church bells would be rung. The priests and public would enter the church and sing the antiphony of St Margaret. **This tradition stopped because of the pandemic. Before Covid, they listened to mass in the inner sacristy.**

She explains that at their monastery, the future nuns take their vows behind the grille in the choir. Unlike other profession ceremonies, the future candidates do not wear a bridal dress during this ceremony as theirs is a very simple life.

25. Income – All properties have been sold to the government and they live off the interests on these sales.

26. Bells – **The use of church bells has diminished.** They no longer ring for evening prayers. The feast day *Moti* (ringing sessions) used to take place at eight and twelve. **All these traditions are finishing.** A sacristan nun was responsible for this office. This role was changed weekly. **Now they only use the internal bell to call the nuns to common acts.** For feastdays outsiders are being called in to ring the bells. This too has been interrupted due to Covid.

2.1.2 Interview 2 - Dated 17th November 2021 @ 10:00. Narratives 27 – 51

27. Time spent in enclosure – The participant spent more than **55 years within enclosure.**

28. Community – When she entered, there were 21 nuns. Seventeen nuns died whilst living there. Today she says that the average age is 80. She remembers nuns who were younger than herself when she joined and that a very elderly nun who joined as a **converse nun (servant nun)** was then still alive. The converse nun didn't know how to read and her duties were exclusively in the kitchen and doing chores. These nuns wore white veils and not black like a choir nun. She was a very holy woman who died at the age of 94. In the past all nuns did not eat meat, except in cases of sickness and she refused to eat any meat till the very end. Converse nuns were abolished during the Second Vatican Council since no difference in social rank was allowed.

29. Dwindling vocations - She is aware that **vocations are dying-out** and monasteries are closing. She mentioned a monastery she knew of in Rome that closed recently. She continued by saying that when the number reduces to 5 nuns, a mechanism for closure begins.

30. Enclosure – This is described as less strict than the past. Before, **parlour was only allowed once a month and this time was reserved for seeing family members**. It was so strict that even though certain family members would go to the parlour frequently to deliver provisions, seeing them outside the stipulated appointment would not be allowed. Before exiting was prohibited even in the event of parents dying. Today, leave is given to spend time with dying parents. In the past, even hospitalisation was prohibited.

She describes **entering the monastery for the first time**. When this took place, another girl entered with her at the same time and the parlour was packed with family, relatives, friends and colleagues from her previous workplace. She recalls that after hearing mass in the church next door, everyone moved to the parlour. When the door to the monastery inside the parlour opened, they kissed the scapular of the provincial and entered. They had never been given the opportunity to see the monastery inside before joining. The concept of enclosure didn't worry her and she was fully aware that on entering she would never leave, not even in death, as they are buried within the walls.

31. Work - **She liked working** in the monastery and was willing to do any duty requested from her. Cooking, making sweets, tending to the garden and several other tasks. She described that these tasks (office) were rotated every 6 months and the designations were cooking duties (*kćina*), serving at the refectory (*refettorju*), responsible for food supplies (*dispensiera*), nurse (*infermiera*), gatekeeper (*gradiera*), sacristan (*sagristana*), washing of clothes (*ħasil ta' ħwejjeg*) and gardening (*ġennien*). She misses working in the garden the most. When rotating of chores took place after six months, they would wash the monastery from top to bottom. The harder chores were given to the younger nuns, mainly nuns not older than 40 or 50.

32. Significant space - The most significant space for religious life is the **choir**

33. Favourite space – Her personal favourite was the **back garden, enclosed garden and the kitchen** as she loved to cook. **The fact that the monastery needed to employ an outsider to cook meals was upsetting.**

34. Places no longer in use – She says that there are several places no longer in use, especially passages. The **novitiate** is unused. She believes that this monastery wasn't built as a monastery initially and that the areas built during the time of the knights were the cells,

refectory and the lower large hall (is-sala ta' isfel). She described the lower large hall as the **niciest room architecturally with a beautiful ceiling. The washroom is no longer being used as the sala tal-ravjul.** She said that in the past this room was known as the ravioli room since it was specifically used to make handmade ravioli. She describes long wooden strips covered in white cloth which were used for the drying of this type of pasta. She couldn't remember the specific name of these strips. She also mentioned a laundry room (*kamra fejn naħslu il-ħwejjeg*) and an ironing room. She believes that these rooms predate the construction of the monastery and that the rooms specifically built for the monastery are easy to identify. She also says that when standing in the enclosed garden you can identify arched areas that would have been open in the past. According to her, all the loggia openings were arched. These were altered fairly recently by their benefactor Baron Mario Galea Testaferrata who helped them maintain the premises. She says that in the past the monastery was under the Archbishop's jurisdiction and not the Carmelite Order, therefore finances were taken care of by the Parish Priest of Bormla. The shift from local Archbishop to their Order happened during Archbishop Gonzi's time.

35. Dowry - In the past every nun brought a **chest of drawers (gredenża)** as dowry. All these chests of drawers were stored upstairs but have been sold and replaced with more convenient identical cupboards. Bringing a chest of drawers as dowry when joining the monastery was a tradition that happened before her time, but the elderly nuns would mention this detail. She also said that in the past, family would **pay fees during the postulancy and the novitiate** periods.

36. Paintings and works of art - There are **paintings** in the **choir area** and in the **library**. The latter represent the founders of the monastery and the first Mother Superior Portelli. The two priests are buried in the church. She mentions also a portrait of a Grand Master. She describes their monastery as being **very modest (semplicità kbira)** with silver only used to decorate the church during the feast of Our Lady of Carmel and St Margaret.

37. Parlour - This is described as having a public area and inner section. **In the past nuns could never go out to shop, they didn't even have a telephone.** If someone's sister or even mother gave birth to a child, they would wait for their monthly appointment to see the newborn.

She also referred to another parlour which was a recent addition to the monastery and was placed in a section below the main hall that was previously occupied by a **family who served the monastery**. She had heard that a family of 13 members once lived in this very small space.

There was no contact between the family and the nuns, the area was completely detached. After the last family living there left, they decided to open another parlour area so that there would be more space available during professions. This area now has a staircase from the large room above leading to it. The staircase is not very practical, so the area is no longer used.

Access to the monastery is through the door in the main parlour, a service door that leads to the enclosed garden and another door into the new parlour that is no longer used.

Before the door to the outer parlour was always open and a gatekeeper (*gradiera*) would be in charge. Visitors would pull on the bell in the outer parlour and the gatekeeper would respond. This bell is still present in the outer parlour, but it is no longer in use since an electric one is sounded. When a **particular nun is needed to attend parlour, the gatekeeper rings a manual bell. The bell is rung in a sequence known as tokki. Each nun has their own particular ringing sequence.** They have also recently installed an **electric bell** which is sounded when a telephone call is received. Sick nuns have speakers in their cells so that they can hear the buzzers and transmissions like mass and prayer.

They still use the wheel (*rota*) to pass on provisions and the entrance door for larger stuff.

She remembers alterations to the parlour. She says that when she was a little girl, she would visit the parlour with her family and the communication windows were much higher than today. She believed that the ledges were lowered at some point. When she joined, the windows had double grilles with overlapping motifs which were placed in such a way that seeing through them was very hard. Family members would ask the nuns to stay far back from the windows to be able to see them. They eventually removed these grilles and placed two other ones with square holes. In recent years, the inner grille was removed, leaving only the outer one.

38. Dormitories and Cells - She says that their cells are small with a **very small window**. In the past they had requested planning permission to enlarge these windows, but this was refused. The room contains a sink with running water, a desk, bed and bedside table. **The cell is only used for short naps and nighttime.** The cells are relatively well lit but they face north west (*Majjistral*) and can get very cold in winter. From the bedroom window there is a distant view of the sea. She dwells upon a **window** in the dormitory corridor that has a **distant view all the way to Mdina**. The rooms with windows onto the enclosed gardens have slightly larger windows otherwise all rooms are identical. Her room remained the same one, as given to her after her profession. This wasn't the case in the **novitiate**. She **believes that rooms were changed in the novitiate to avoid attachment.**

39. Novitiate – Rooms in the novitiate had **very high windows**. To catch a glimpse of the street outside, one would need very high ladders.

40. Refectory – This is described as long and wide with tables and chairs. **In the past there were benches by the wall which were very uncomfortable**. Meals were taken three times a day and all food was consumed in the refectory. Eating elsewhere is not allowed. **In the past fasting was followed by everyone** but today, the elderly are sick so exceptions are made. They do not fast on Sunday and feast days.

She remembers a small basin in the refectory used to wash hands on entering. This is no longer there. The **spiritual reading during lunch has stopped**. A mobile is used to listen to mass instead since only a few nuns attend. **They still observe silence**. Talking is permitted on feast days and only after the Prioress says, “Blessed be to God”. This is the sign that they can talk normally when seated at table.

She mentions that on **feast days they would eat something more special like lasagna or ravioli**. On **Sundays and Tuesdays three biscuits** are eaten with their tea and in **summer they eat ice cream**. She reminisces on the spinach and tuna pies she made in the past.

41. Past traditions – She remembers a time when there were 21 nuns in the monastery and entering the refectory would happen in processions of two. In the past they also practiced **mortifications** as dictated by their rules. These practices were varied and included eating on their knees on a smaller table in the middle of the refectory or staying at the door with a pebble in one hand and a cross in the other. They would ask the other nuns to pray for them during these rituals. These mortifications stopped mainly because of the physicality involved making them impossible to conduct due to age. They were stopped recently.

42. Kitchen- The kitchen includes a store-area also known as *dispensa*. Like everything else in the monastery cooking was done in silence. **She says that their spirituality is made up of silence**.

She doesn't recall any recipe books. They used to make biscuits (*biskuttini*) for their patrons. They never sold their produce. Jams were made for use internally and she also described an apple and date cake which was her specialty.

She remembers an older woodburning oven which was removed thanks to their patron Mario Testaferrata. The old oven had a chimney flue which was removed when a modern oven was installed. Instead of the flue, a window was opened for light.

Nowadays they have a woman who prepares everything although some nuns still help with the preparations for refectory at 11:00. Some nuns prepare the food for the sick and a nurse takes the food to feed them.

43. Infirmary – This is no longer used for the sick. Sometimes they hang wet laundry in it.

44. Enclosed Garden - The **enclosed garden** is not used as a collective space by the community. She says that she enjoys this space and sometimes on a sunny day or even in summer she does her oration and meditation there.

In the past, the water from the **well** in the enclosed garden was used for drinking. They have four well heads – One in the **kitchen**, another in the **enclosed garden**, another in the **washroom** and **back garden**.

45. Garden - This garden is situated by the bastion wall and has outside **access** that was used for **wheeling in carts (karrettuni)**. The door has been changed to aluminum. They also arranged the garden room which was previously used for keeping chickens.

46. Corridors/ Staircases - **Silence** is observed in these spaces. There are also a number of traditional uses linked here such as the use of the clapper (*čuqlajta*) as an alarm system to wake up the nuns in the morning and processions.

47. Processions: First Sunday of Advent – An effigy of the infant Jesus is taken in procession from the large hall downstairs to the recreational hall and eventually a cell in the monastery. After lots are drawn establishing a sequence, every nun keeps the effigy of the Infant Jesus in the cell for one day. Whilst moving in procession the *Te Deum* is sung and prayers read out from a book. The statuette is kept in the cell and placed opposite the open door to the room with two candles lit. On passing this room the nuns genuflect. On other days, the doors to their cells are usually kept ajar.

Tre Re – This is the election of the protector saint of the year. It involves the tradition of baking a cake and hiding an almond or bean within the cake. The cake is divided into five portions. Each portion represents a saint of the Discalced Carmelite order. Five elderly nuns draw the names and the person receiving the portion of cake with the almond or bean is entitled to elect their saint. **This ritual takes place in the recreational room.** Once the winning saint is announced, an image is taken in procession whilst singing hymns around the monastery. The cake is eaten for tea.

Hamis ix-Xirka – It involves the reenactment of the washing of the feet. The Mother Superior would wash the feet of all the nuns using a jug and water whilst kneeling in front of them.

Another nun would assist her and read the gospel. The feet are dried and kissed. **This no longer happens.**

48. Library - She described a **large collection** of books in the library. A personal collection of books is also kept in their rooms. The books in the library are mainly spiritual readings. The collection includes antique books and newer ones.

49. Archives -Whilst mentioning the archives she recalls what the older nuns had said to her. During WWII the nuns were moved out of the monastery and went to live at Ta' Saura in Rabat. She said that before leaving the monastery, a nun had just passed away and since they were in a hurry, they buried her without a coffin. On returning to the monastery, they found nothing left and everything was broken. She believes that some registers must have gone missing then. The only nun who might recall this is now 93 years old and unfortunately isn't lucid enough to communicate.

50. Choir - She described the time in the choir as being schedule based: *Laudi* are said first thing in the morning, then *Terza*, then *Sesta*, *Nona*, *L-Ghasar*, *Kompieta*, *Matutini*. **They used to say the *Matutini* at 9:45 in the evening to prepare for the next day.** She explained that this is a Teresian tradition. This tradition was stopped since the nuns are now too old to remain up at that late hour. These prayers were eventually incorporated in the 7:00 am chants. In the past, between *Kompieta* and *Matutini* there was an hour where the nuns could stay in their cell and work.

She joined the monastery after Second Vatican Council and mass was always heard from the **inner sacristy**. She never heard mass in the choir. Due to Covid, mass is no longer being said in the church.

She referred to the installation of a Tabernacle in the choir funded by Baron Mario Testaferrata.

The nuns wanted to remove the wall-mounted choir stalls as they found them very uncomfortable, but permission to alter was never granted. Other alterations include the installation of air-conditioning.

51. Crypt - When a community member dies, her coffin is placed on benches in the choir. These are purpose made with different heights to compensate for the choir step. The coffin is kept open, and people can see her through the communion windows. This ritual takes place before the mass starts. During mass, the coffin is closed and after it is taken to the crypt via the enclosed garden. In the past, burial was a private affair, however recently, family members are permitted to enter the choir but not the crypt. The nuns and Carmelite friars accompany

the coffin to the crypt. The community does not generally stay there whilst the undertaker lowers her body. She thinks that two coffins can stay on top of each other. The undertaker comes to clean the chamber and any bones are placed in the ossuary in the floor.

There was a time when nuns were not buried in the crypt. She said that the prime minister at the time, Dom Mintoff, had passed a law refusing permission for private burial. Four nuns were buried at the Addolorata Cemetery. Once the law was reversed, they were brought back. The place conjured many memories related to all the community members who passed away. She mentions the prioress before the present one who passed away after two months of illness. She mentioned a Sr. Luigia who was the mistress of the novices (*majjistra*) when she herself was a novice. She was an artist and painted pictures for people. She mentioned **Sr. Beatrice who was very good at embroidery and Sr. Anastasia who embroidered gold thread on liturgical vestments**. She then reminisced on the fact that in the past they **had started making uniforms with a special machine**.

They prayed daily in the crypt during the month of November, **but this no longer happens**.

2.1.3 Interview 3 – Dated 18th November 2021 @ 10:00. Narratives 52 – 71.

52. Time spent in enclosure – The participant had been living in the monastery for over **55 years**

53. Community – When she joined there were **22 nuns**. The community at the time was elderly so **special permission** was given for her to enter since younger nuns were needed. She mentions that anyone entering would be recorded on registers. The ones at the monastery date back to 1720. Only a few other nuns entered the monastery after her. Before her time at least one to two nuns a year were interested in entering. During her time in the monastery approximately **sixteen nuns passed away**.

54. Work - She related that her job at the moment is that of sacristan. She rings the bell downstairs for common acts and wakes up the nuns at 5:30 using a clapper (*ċuqlajta*) which she claps 3 times whilst reciting a prayer.

55. Dwindling Vocations - She starts **reminiscing** about the past. She describes scenes of the choir stalls **full of nuns of different ages**. **The refectory would be full** too. She says that now it is very depleted and sometimes only **three eat in the refectory**. She refers to this as emptiness bringing on a sense of solitude due to lack of vocations.

56. Enclosure – She describes enclosure as being **stricter in the past**. Doctors and dentists were admitted for health reasons, and no one exited for any medical care. Eventually the rules relaxed, and she recalls the first time she exited after twenty years. Changes were made based on exigency.

57. Favourite space - The **cell** is described as her favourite space in the monastery. She likes to meditate in the **choir, garden or roof**. She says that cloistered life permits them to focus without distractions. Even manual work is a form of meditation.

58. The architecture of the monastery - She discussed the architecture with me saying that unlike other monasteries abroad where grounds are abundant, this monastery has more buildings than garden. She enjoyed meditating on the **roof, but now this is beyond reach because of difficult access**.

59. Silence – When asked about silence she recalled the bell after recreation that announced '*silenzju rigorus*' which meant no talking from that point onwards till after morning prayers. If something urgent cropped up they would pass handwritten notes to each other.

60. Parlour – Regarding access within enclosure she said that the Prioress had main authority on the matter after seeking council with her two councilors. In the past the council was made up of four nuns. When the **doctor entered** the monastery, a **bell** was sounded to inform the others of his presence. If someone was needed in the parlour a bell was rung with a sequence of detached ringing tones referred to as *tokki* and multiple fast pulls referred to as a *čempila*. Every nun had their own specific sequence of ringing tone.

In the past, family members were only permitted to visit the monastery once a month. Now things have changed, however family members are still not permitted entry into the monastery. They stay behind the parlour windows.

She **recalls the iron grilles of the past that were so dense that no one could see each other**.

61. Cell – The furnishings she keeps in her room are a table, chair, bedside table and bed. She pointed out the fact that their window is small and the authorities did not grant permission to enlarge them.

62. Refectory – She describes the refectory as being a large empty space and **that the bare cross on the wall is a reminder that time in the refectory has profound spiritual meaning as eating is not intended to satisfy the palette**. The food they eat is provided by providence which does not seem to be lacking. The refectory is visited 3 times - at 8:00 for breakfast, 12:00 lunch and 7:30 supper. A cup of tea can be taken as soon as one wakes up and also at 3:30. Eating is only permitted in the refectory.

When asked about **rituals** related to the refectory, she said that on entering there was a **tripod with a basin and water was placed at the entrance to wash one's hands**. This ritual has long since been abandoned. They also practiced mortifications and describes them as rituals she enjoyed performing. She also referred to the traditional practice of entering the refectory in procession whilst wearing a small rope with a pebble and cross. **Mortifications** were by choice, and they were also occasions to ask fellow members of the community to pray for them. Mortifications were removed because the community was getting too old to carry them out. Another tradition she mentioned was **reading from the pulpit** and more recently using a desk for this. She recalls the **pulpit being removed and it being stored in the hermitage**. The readings were chosen according to the day, for example on Monday and Tuesday, the Constitutions were read, and on Wednesday and Friday the Rule, focusing on silence, prayer and other things. They removed the readings since numbers are few and now they listen to prayer or mass from a mobile phone.

She also **referred to the wall mounted benches that were removed**.

63. Kitchen – She says that they no longer cook. In the past kitchen duties were kept for six months at a stretch and two nuns would work in the kitchen. The role of main food planner and helper in the kitchen was reversed weekly within the six-month time frame. Due to the elderly, they eventually started modifying the schedule from six months to four months and eventually to one month until they finally resigned and admitted on needing help.

64. Enclosed Garden – She refers to the water in the well. She said that in the past, the **water** was so good that people would bring jerrycans for them to fill on their behalf.

65. Corridors – They are described as **quiet spaces**. If they needed to talk an empty room was found nearby for a discussion to be held.

66. Choir – When she was a postulant and the side window in the inner sacristy didn't exist yet, mass and talks were heard from the choir. She recalled an episode when Lenten talks were being held by the priest who was situated in an empty church, facing the empty chairs of the congregation and the nuns were listening from within the choir. She admitted that this system was a struggle and that on that occasion she struggled to remain awake.

67. Crypt – She remembers the burial chambers in the crypt being cleaned and bones placed in the ossuary. The **chambers are marked with numbers** that correspond with the registers on which the deceased are registered. In the past, candles were lit, flowers taken down, and the rosary recited between the 1st of November and 14th November. This tradition has stopped.

68. Church - The grilled window in the inner sacristy was placed a little bit after she arrived. She was the first one to take the habit using this window after the SVC.
69. Bells – They used to play *moti* (festive peals) only during feasts. On a normal day in the past, they would ring the bells of the belfry to announce vespers in the morning and in the evening, they would announce the *matutini*, which as has been explained is anticipated prayer. All belfry bellringing has now stopped. They used to also ring for daily mass at 7:15.
70. Chapter - The Chapter convened once a week.
71. Hermitage – According to the rule every nun should find time to stay alone and cut off from the community. In foreign monasteries they have much larger grounds and can have areas of detachment whilst she said that in this monastery this is not really possible. The hermitage is too close to the washroom to function as a solitary place. She never used this area and is not aware of what happened in the past.

2.2 Diary Entries [D72 – 76]

2.2.1 Introductory unscheduled meeting - Friday 5th November 2021 at 4:00pm

72. I (the researcher) arrived unannounced at St Margaret's monastery and noticed that the main façade of the church and entrance door to the Monastery were not as well maintained as the Monasteries in Valletta. I rang the doorbell of the hall porter situated on the outside and a nun immediately answered and asked me in. On entering, a lay woman was exiting from within the monastery and into the parlour from a central door. This space was unadorned and simple. The grilled communication windows had white curtains covering the interior of the inner parlour.

73. **A nun eventually approached and drew the curtain. She switched on the light of the room (inner parlour) she was in.** I remained in semi-darkness. She looked concerned from the onset so I reassured her that I would not be taking too much of her time. She listened while I explained my background and the research I intended to conduct. I informed her that to continue with my research I would ideally be granted permission to enter the monastery, interview four nuns of different ages, preferably old and young, and that I would need to consult an updated floor plan of the premises. I informed her that I already approached the monasteries in Valletta and that my research has been vetted by the archbishop who had given me the 'all clear' to proceed from their end. **She explained that although the**

community amounts to 10 nuns, only 8 remain within the monastery. The other 2 convalesce at St Vincent de Paul. She explained that almost everyone is now on assisted walking. Her time is taken up taking care of the community. Schedules for chores have been disrupted and they have inside help for cooking, cleaning and helpers to assist with the sick nuns. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they currently no longer open the church for mass and a priest is admitted to the second floor of the monastery where mass is said in the recreational hall at 5pm. She was in fact waiting for him to admit him into the monastery. She informed me that she will discuss the questionnaire with the other members of the community to see who will be willing to participate. An email address was handed to me to send my request with the attached questionnaire. She also informed me that to her knowledge a floor plan of the monastery does not exist.

2.2.2 Semi-structured Interview - Saturday 13th November 2021 at 10:00am

74. I arrived at 10:00am after having received confirmation that this interview was possible. I was welcomed in the parlour, and I was asked where I wished to conduct the interview. She suggested the parlour, however I asked if we could stay in a quieter place due to the recording. She admitted me into the monastery and led me into the church, which is an area in the immediate vicinity to the parlour. Being the first visit and not having seen a ground plan for this monastery I wasn't aware of my whereabouts. We walked from the entrance, into an area that was very low, presumably under a staircase, walked through the choir and into the church. The access chosen was very unimposing and didn't betray any specific planning. The areas leading to the choir and church seemed bare, with 70's flooring and not very well lit. The choir, however, was well lit, and retained the original black and white flooring with 18th century choir stalls still in place. The passage through the choir was fleeting so I didn't have time to assess the paintings on the wall. I chose not to linger as the pace was rushed and also since I hoped to be granted permission for an official tour of the monastery after a couple of interviews. The church had a titular altar and 2 side altars. The titular was attributed to Francesco Zahra (this was stated in an information panel outside the church). The church looked relatively bare.

2.2.3 Semi-structured Interview - Wednesday 17th November 2021 @ 10:00

75. Was met by a cheerful nun who led me straight to the church. She produced a bag and proudly displayed works she had made by hand. She said that in the past her work was sold as income for the monastery.

2.2.4 Semi-Structured Interview - Thursday 18th November 2021 @ 10:00

76. I met with the third and final nun who seemed willing to chat with me. We proceeded to the church as usual. At the end of this visit I noticed that 2 of the parlour windows were occupied with visits.

2.3 On-site visit to Monastery accompanied by a member of the community – 27th November at 10:00am [ON77 – 102]

77. On announcing my arrival on the intercom [IM2], I was admitted into the outer parlour. The monastery manual bell inside rang three times before the parlour door opened [IM3]. **This bell was announcing my entrance into enclosure.** The door opened [IM4] and I was welcomed in the monastery with a smile. Since they lived on charity, I donated food on entering. She accepted it and went to sort it out in the kitchen whilst I waited in the entrance.

78. This area was part of the inner parlour. It was a rather small area with a plain ribbed barrel vault. An 18th century painting of St Theresa hung above the entrance that lead to the rest of the monastery. Above the painting, I noticed an alteration to a **lunette window**. I found out later that this area was altered when a lift was introduced. The entrance is completely unimposing.

79. She decided to start the visit of the premises with the **church**, which is an area I am familiar with. She informed me that the main altar table is new and that most of the marble of the high altar has been changed [IM5]. She pointed out the confessional that has also been altered due to the construction of the lift. She stopped to point out the commemorative marble plaques on either side of the Church's front door and the post-Vatican Council communion window which were all duly photographed [IM6]. I noticed a door to the side underneath the musicians' balcony. She explained that this led to the parlour.

80. From here, we proceeded to the **outer sacristy** [IM7] with its lovely black and white period tiles and lavabo adapted to modern use. This feature was flanked by the sacristy *rota*.

She pointed out the sacristy bell and the new device set in the window of the sacristy. This device was installed by the local council and is connected to an app that provides information about the monastery. The roofing of the sacristy and church are simple ribbed barrel vaults similar to the roofing in the entrance to the monastery.

81. Moved onto the **choir** [IM8], with its original floor, ebonized 18th century choir stalls and two altar sized paintings. Regarding these paintings, could these have been the original paintings in an earlier church? The Virgin and child and St John the Baptist in the painting on the left are a direct reference to the painting of Mattia Preti at Verdala although this is stylistically later. Saints Margaret and Catherine are also represented in this work. This could have been the titular painting that hung before the present altarpiece was commissioned. The work on the opposite wall is another altar-sized painting that I am attributing to Enrico Regnaud. The altar table and tabernacle in the choir are modern and a recent addition. In one of the interviews, reference was made to this as an alteration funded by their patron and benefactor Mario Galea Testaferrata. The furnishings and architecture of the choir were the most ornate. The ceiling mouldings were embossed, and large thick beams held the roofing in place.

82. The **inner sacristy** [IM9] did not have period furnishings. An area in this sacristy led to the sitting area of the nuns behind the large grilled post Vatican Council II window. An armoire mentioned in the 1730's pastoral visitation report could not be found. The sacristy wheel was visible at one end and at the other a spiral staircase [IM32] provided access to the *sopra sagristija* which was an area we would be visiting later. A utilities room (possibly built later) was situated at the back.

83. We proceeded onto the **enclosed garden** [IM10] '*bitha*'. I noticed several additions to the original fabric such as the addition of rooms, closing of loggia arches etc. The layout of the trees seemed disorganised, and modern materials were used for practicality such as the magnolia-coloured oil paint, cement tiles, aluminum doors etc. Well heads seemed new. Statuary also seemed relatively recent. Scattered antique pottery and a collection of mortars were seen. It is interesting to note that they were not aware that the marble mortars were kitchen utensils. I spotted a lot of citrus trees and medlar fruit (*naspli*).

84. The entrance [IM12] to the **crypt** [IM13] was through this area. It was marked by a humble wooden gate surmounted by a cross. A short flight of stairs led to an anteroom and the crypt was visible behind a gate. There were six raised burial places, three on either side. The floor was modern terracotta ceramic tiles.

85. We proceeded quickly through the monastery and into the **garden** [IM14][IM15]. The garden is narrow and long and I feel it is more utilitarian than a place to idle in. The walls were very high, and the garden felt sunken in. It was situated directly on the bastions. Here one could see a service door at one end and the hermitage [IM15] at the other. Above the hermitage was the novitiate which according to the accompanying nun was re-built after suffering a direct hit in WWII. She asked me to look up at the windows to see that the rebuilt windows on the left had different iron grilles to the ones on the right. The garden wasn't landscaped and had more citrus, olive and medlar fruit.

86. We proceeded to the **refectory** [IM16] which was austere and had modern floors. At one end there was a bare cross and prints showing St Theresa and St John of the cross. Two signs in Latin were placed at the base of these prints. On the other side were 3 high windows. Furnishings seemed new. The roofing was a large barrel vault with a functional rim that demarcated the beginning of the walls. There were high windows and ample lighting. Hatches at the sides of the vault and a hole in the barrel vault are curious and need to be investigated.

87. Between the refectory and kitchen was an indoor **passage** that joined the outside garden and enclosed garden. A very elderly nun was feeding an injured bird in a cage. She smiled when I passed by her. As we entered the kitchen, a helper was cleaning up busily. She attends to the nuns needs for three hours a day.

88. The **kitchen**[IM17] was constructed with a barrel-vault ceiling similar to the roofing in the refectory. All furnishings were new. Evidence of the chimney flue of the original oven (*fuklar*) was still visible. Other rooms adjacent to the kitchen could be seen but we retraced our steps through the refectory and into a large room that led to the inner parlour. This room didn't seem to have an official purpose.

89. The vaulted ceiling of this **large room** [IM18] was the nicest in the monastery. It had a central stone niche with pilaster motifs on one side of its walls. The room must have had a definite function that got lost over the years. It contained random furnishings such as chest of drawers, a beautiful sacristy cabinet [IM19] (possibly the armoire mentioned in the PVR that was originally kept in the inner sacristy), gilt niches with wax scenes, an interesting painting of St Anne which is a copy of a Stefano Erardi painting also found at the Jesuit Church, Valletta, and a vernacular painting of a Teresian nun (possibly St Theresa).

90. A recent alteration to the room was an opening in the floor that leads to a lower area [IM20]. **This area was originally the home of a family who assisted the monastery.** The Prioress explained that a hole existed in the floor through which food was passed down and

other communications were made. In recent years this area was transformed into another parlour as the original parlour was considered too small for professions. Due to the difficult access to this area, this parlour is now closed. This area consists of an arched room, with little natural light. The accompanying nun explained that in the past a large family of almost ten people lived here. It is hard to believe that this is possible as the area is really small. I noted some interesting wooden benches that could have been the original seating of the refectory. We climbed up the stairs to the ground floor once again and entered the inner parlour.

91. The **inner parlour** [IM21] is divided into 2 areas, a triangular section that has one parlour window, the sacristy rota and an area with ropes to ring the bells in the belfry [IM22]. The other area is the actual entrance that also doubles up as parlour. In the first area hangs a recent photo of the nuns outside the monastery participating in the procession of the Immaculate Conception. There is also an 18th century portrait of the Madre Suor Geltruda di Gesu Maria (della Famiglia d'Anatasi) who presumably lived in the Monastery of St Theresa in Palermo as per inscription underneath the portrait.

92. We moved upstairs [IM23], using a staircase with stone balustrade handrails. On the way up I re-spotted the altered lunette window seen in the entrance which was this time at my same level. A polychromized statue of the infant Jesus was also to be found in this area. So far, I had noticed that most areas were painted in a utilitarian oil-based paint until we entered a larger room with beams that was on stone giving it a statelier appearance. She referred to this area as the **library** [IM24] and in it were kept two modern metal shelve cabinets with old and new books. The room had a collection of paintings. These were the patrons and founders of this monastery. The portrait of *Grand Master Vilhena* (patron) [IM25] and that of *Dun Anton Barbara* (founder) [IM28] are probably the works of Enrico Regnaud, an 18th century painter. *Dun Petro Saliba* (founder) [IM26] and *Suor Maria Madallena Portelli* [wrongly referred to as Purcelli and not portelli], the monastery's first Prioress [IM27] are another pair probably also painted by Regnaud. There was also a small, good period portrait of *Bishop Alpheran* which hung too far up for me to see properly and a pair of St Peter and Paul. It is interesting to note that collectively these works are all mid-18th century works, probably dating to the time of construction. From here we accessed the upper choir (**sopra chor**). To get to it, we descended a small flight of stairs situated in the thickness of the wall between the library (chapter hall) and the church [IM29]. The screens of the upper choir [IM30] were made of wood and seeing through them proved to be very difficult. The structure looked authentic and had finialed decorative motifs all along. I forgot to check whether there

was an oval window to the right referred to in the semi-structured interviews! We walked down another small flight of stairs in the thickness of the wall and proceeded straight into another room that contained various furnishings. There was also a wooden flat case that contained altar frontals. This room was the **upper sacristy** [IM31] situated above the inner and outer sacristy and had a **spiral staircase** [IM32] at one end providing access to the inner sacristy below.

93. We retraced our steps, crossed the library and into a small room [IM33] which the accompanying nun referred to as the **doctor's room** [IM34]. I am not convinced that this was the case as it is rather far from the infirmary. This room and the library were the only two rooms on stone and had 19th century patterned tiles. A small collection of paintings that included an 18th century *Immaculate Conception*, a *Reliquary* in gilt wood frame, and an 18th century painting of St *Theresa*) and various furnishings were also found in this room. This room had an original wooden door that led to a spiral staircase [IM35] to the belfry. All doors in this area are authentic.

94. The next room was the rectangular **recreational hall** [IM36]. There was a large cornice moulding surrounding a flat ceiling. The room was bright and had windows on one side and doors leading to the upstairs loggia on the other. A large wooden table with laminate top was placed at the center of the room. This is the place where nuns congregate during recreational time. During the pandemic, this area also served as a make-shift chapel with altar table. Identical wardrobes line the walls of this room. These contain all the clothing of the nuns in residence. Two period paintings hang at either end of the room. One painting represents the Immaculate Conception and the other a group of saints with the souls in purgatory. An old singer sewing machine [IM37] and grandfathers' clock were also present in the room.

95. Whilst standing in the loggia, it was possible to understand the height of the walls of the monastery [IM38]. No third parties were looking within [IM39]. It was also possible to make out the original articulation of the loggia windows and comprehend later additions.

96. Once back inside, the recreational room led straight into the **dormitory** area. This corridor was bare [IM40] and at the far end a partition delineated the separation to the novitiate. The **novitiate** contained four cells and an oratory. The **office** and **archive** were miniscule [IM41]. The archive didn't look intact to me. The Prioress' office had a copy of the ringing calls for the nuns, the doctor's visit and the nurse's visit. Outside the office hung the clapper [IM42] used to wake up the congregation.

97. The **cells** were as described during our interviews. The dormitories were seen fleetingly, and the nun explained that we must not linger as elderly nuns were resting in their rooms. The whole area, but especially the cells were austere, they were very small, and they had a small high window [IM44]. The rooms were painted in an oil-based colour. The bed was made up of wooden strips and a mattress. There was a commode, desk and chair [IM43].

98. The **oratory** [IM45] was a large rectangular room. It had metal beams holding up the ceiling. This is the area that suffered during the war. The flooring was 20th century patterned tiles. There were a couple of chest of drawers and a small altar at the end of the room. The chest of drawers reminded me of what was said during an interview, mainly that a quantity of chest of drawers were disposed of at some point. The room also contained an 18th century plain pre-Dieu. The monastery cat was present in this room and was very affectionate with the accompanying nun.

99. Opposite the oratory was the room referred to as *il-karcri* [IM46] which means prison. It was a correctional room intended for solitary confinement. No one remembers this in use; however its function was referred to by the older nuns. The doors to this room from the corridor and from this room to the roof had evidence of heightened security. This room was converted into a kitchenette and led to the roof that had distant sweeping views. A temporary metal staircase was used to access the roofs. The views were distant and sweeping towards Birgu and Senglea [IM47]. **Whilst walking on the roof, the Prioress showed me a particular notch on the wall which indicated the extent of footprint allowed on the roof by the resident nuns in the past [IM48]. This limitation changed and the nuns were allowed to walk along the entire surface.** The fact that a temporary staircase is used probably indicates that in the past, access to the roof was denied.

100. At this point understanding the floor plan became a little confusing. We went down a flight of stairs [IM49] and headed to the infirmary. The **infirmary** [IM50] is now a redundant place. It is rather large and has a door onto the loggia at the side, flanked by windows. The beams are modern and must have been replaced after WWII. No one mentioned this detail to me. A room at the end of the infirmary hadn't been investigated. Then followed a series of **workrooms** with barrel vaults. The first room was referred to as the ironing room [IM51], another space used for hanging clothes and the laundry room that had a sign on it that read 'SILENCE' [IM52]. This room led onto the **hermitage** [IM53]. Today this room seemed to be a depository of random furnishings. Here there was the refectory pulpit [IM54]. A small 18th century altar table painted white with the Discalced Carmelite emblem, a wax figurine of the

penitent Magdalene in a glass case (this could have been used for meditation since Mary Magdalene is here portrayed as a penitent saint). Another presumed refectory bench could also be found in this area.

101. A further area of arched low workrooms [IM57] and high vaulted workshops [IM56] were the last set of rooms to be seen.

102. On exiting the monastery, I encountered two nuns in the inner parlour. One was standing behind the wheelchair of an elderly nun. They were having an animated conversation behind the parlour grille with an extended family on the other side, that included an elderly couple and a younger couple with a newborn baby. Both nuns were happy to see me again and wished me luck with my studies on exiting the monastery.

2.4 Images [IM 1 - 58]



Façade: Entrance to parlour (left). Portico to Church (right)



Entrance to parlour



Inner parlour with door to monastery at center right



Monastery door (interior)



Main altar (Church)



Communion Window



Outer sacristy



Choir



Inner sacristy

IM10



View of enclosed garden from second floor loggia



IM12

Entrance to crypt



IM13

Crypt

IM14



Pathway in garden

IM15



Hermitage seen at the back of the garden

IM16



Refectory

IM17



Kitchen



Large hall downstairs



A sacristy cabinet



Downstairs parlour



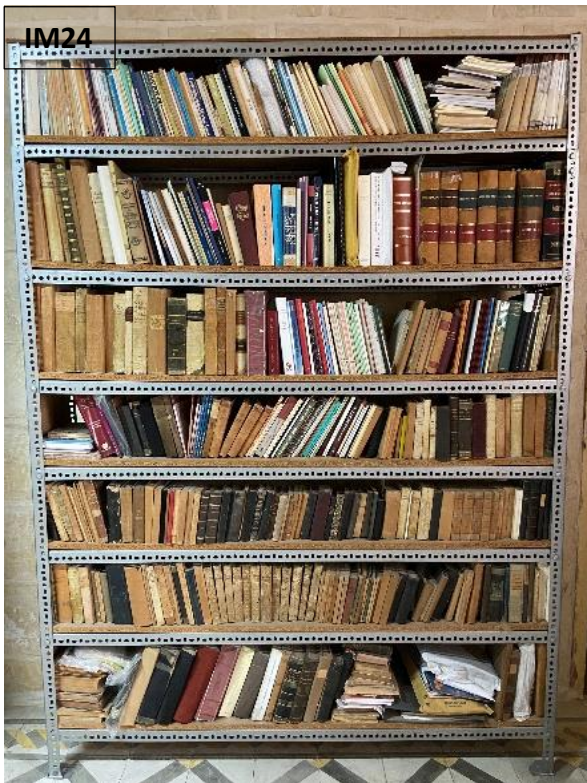
Inner parlour



Inner parlour: Ropes to bells
in belfry



Staircase



Library (detail)



Portrait Manuel de Vilhena
(attributed to Enrico
Regnaud by the author)

IM26



Portrait of Don Pietro Saliba (attributed to Enrico Regnaud by the author)

IM27



Portrait of Sr Maria Madallena Portelli (attributed to Enrico Regnaud by the author)

IM28



Portrait of Don Antonio Barbara (attributed to Enrico Regnaud by the author)

IM29



Staircase to upper choir



Upper choir



Altar frontal case kept in upper sacristy



Spiral staircase joining lower and upper sacristy



Room situated between library (chapter hall) and recreational hall



Room referred to as Doctor's quarters



Spiral staircase to belfry. Ropes presumably used for mortifications seen hanging on the walls.



Recreational room



Sewing machine in recreational room

IM38



Monastery walls facing SW

IM39



Monastery walls facing NE



IM40

Dormitory corridor



IM41

Archive



IM42

Cuqlajta (clapper)



IM43

Cell



IM44

Window in cell



IM45

Oratory in novitiate



IM46

Door to former prison cell (*karçri*)

IM47



View from roof

IM48



Demarcation on roof

IM49



Staircase

IM50



Infirmary

IM51



Workspace

IM52



Laundry with sign reading 'Silence'

IM53



Hermitage

IM54



Refectory pulpit stored in hermitage



Workspace



Workspace



Store



Exit area designated for storage and work

Appendix 3

Research Data - St Peter's Monastery, Mdina

3.1 Images [IM59 – IM104]



Façade: Door to church, parlour & monastery (right to left)



Entrance to monastery

IM61



Outer parlour

IM62



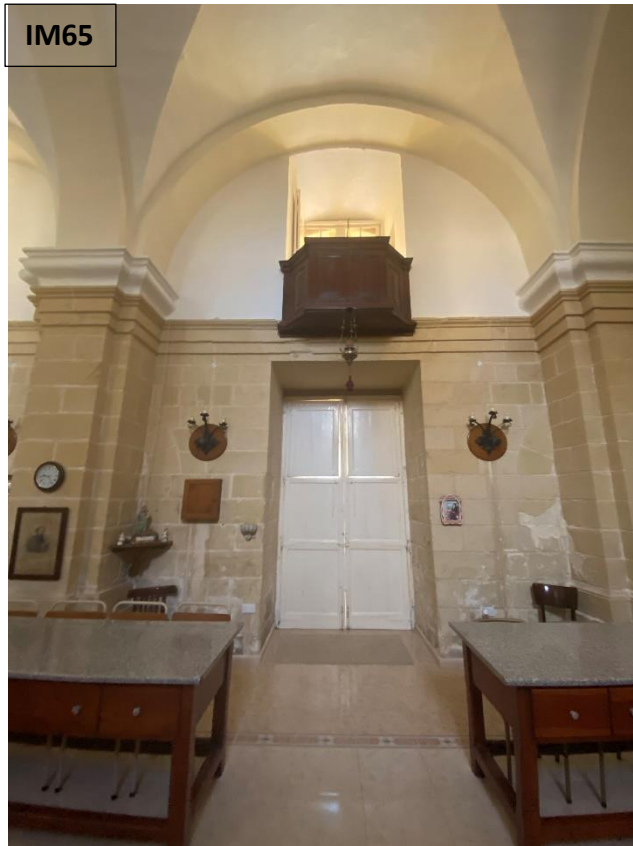
Inner parlour



Musician's balcony accessible from outer parlour



Refectory with quadripartite vaulted ceiling
attribute to architect Lorenzo Gafa (Buhagiar &
Fiorini, 1996)



IM65

Pulpit in refectory



IM66

Kitchen

IM67



Inner sacristy

IM68



Sacristy *rota*



Choir

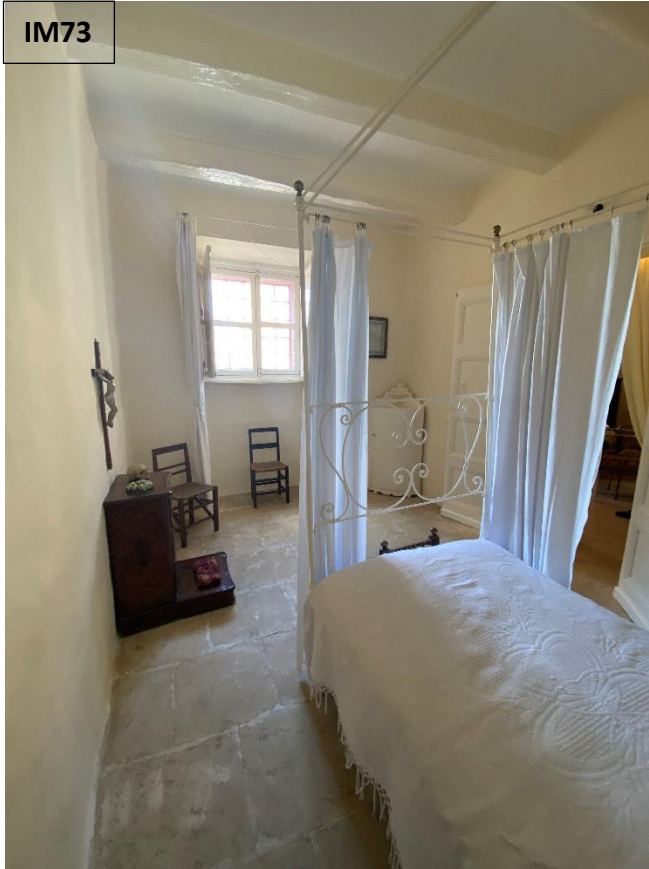


Communion window with double grille still in place



Confessional

IM73



Cell of the Blessed Maria Adeodata Pisani

IM74



As above

IM75



Organ balcony and upper choir area

IM76



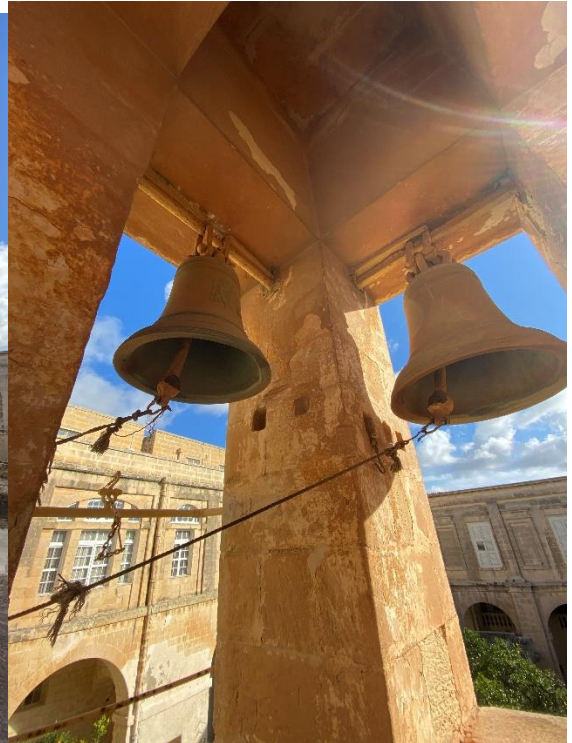
Archives and library



Belvedere



View from Belvedere window



Belfry



Area intended for washing laundry on the roof (Caruana Dingli, VC, 2022)

IM81



Airing room for laundry on roof and observatory area to the streets below

IM82



Upstairs washroom



IM83

Dormitory area



IM84

Another dormitory area



IM85

Dormitory IM84, showing small squat doors on one side (possibly intended for converse nuns) and larger doors on the other



IM86

Large cell with window and adjoining area, presumably intended for choir nuns



IM87

Cell with window onto corridor area presumably for converse nuns (Caruana Dingli, VC, 2022)

IM88



Sign indicating novitiate area

IM89



Cell in novitiate



Dormitory for servants or converse nuns on lower floors



Detail – Cell



Detail - Window onto corridor in cell

IM93



Abandoned spaces surrounding the enclosed gardens,
presumably intended as work areas



IM94

One in a series of rooms full of ethnographic materials. Possibly a previous servant's room



IM95

As above

IM96



Details: Balustraded walkway overlooking the enclosed garden

IM97



Areas previously opened to the public for viewing

IM98



Areas with troughs and terracotta moulded basins reserved for storage or manual labour

IM99



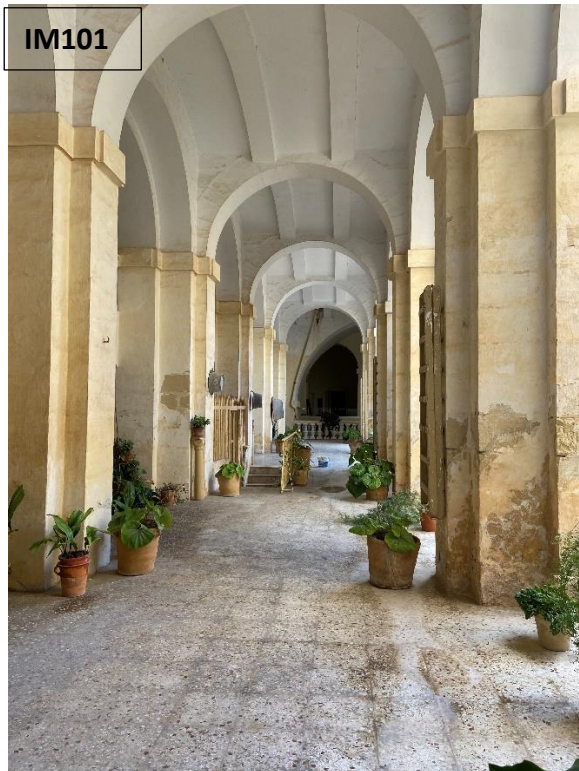
Area leading onto rooms where animals were kept (Caruana Dingli, VC, 2022)

IM100



Lavatorio for washing clothes (Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1996)

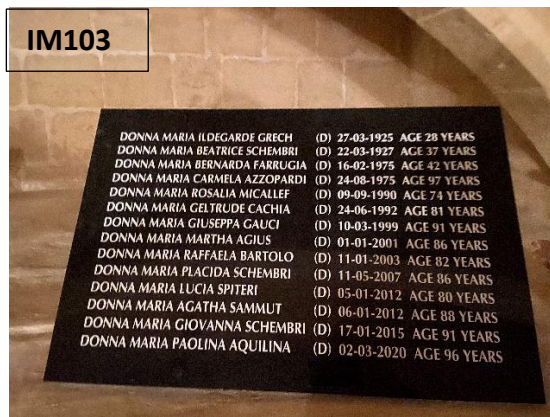
IM101



Cloistered walkway around the enclosed garden. Attributed to Lorenzo Gafa's (Buhagiar & Fiorini, 1996)



Entrance to crypt



Names of deceased nuns from 1925 - 2020



Panoramic shot of crypt

Appendix 4

Research Data - St Ursula's Monastery, Valletta

Contents

4.1 Extracts of Narratives from Semi-Structured interviews [N102 - 154]

4.2 Diary Entries [D155 – 157]

4.3 On-site visit to Monastery accompanied by a member of the community –

3rd December at 9:00am

4.4 Images [IM105 – 170]

4.1 Extracts of Narratives from Semi-Structured interviews [N102 - 154]

4.1.1 Interview 1 – Dated 10th November 2021 @ 4:30. Narratives 102 – 130.

102. Time spent in enclosure – More than 44 years.

103. Community – When she joined, there were 27 nuns in the monastery. Today the community is made up of eleven. The youngest nun is 31 years of age whilst the eldest nun is 91.

104. Dwindling vocations – She is very worried about this. She mentioned the fact that they are refurbishing the dormitories in hope of filling them up with novices.

105. Choice of living at St Ursula – She said that it had nothing to do with the architecture as she had never visited the monastery before entering. The choice was linked to vocation. Nowadays anyone wishing to enter can spend some time at the monastery to give it a try. She remembers entering from the parlour door. When the door to the monastery opened, she remembers the nuns in their black habits carrying candles which she found daunting at first.

106. Enclosure – In the past no one could enter or leave the monastery. Doctors and dentist visited on call. After Second Vatican Council things started to change. She says that even the style of their monastic habit changed after the Council.

107. Schedule – She gave a detailed account of their daily schedule. The details are as follows:

- The bell wakes them up at 5.
- Another bell rings again at 5:30 to announce prayers. When this bell is sounded, they all proceed to the choir for prayer. Here they say Divine Office, they meditate and proceed to mass in the church.
- At 7:30 they leave the choir and have breakfast alone in their room

- After breakfast, chores begin and all nuns including the elderly have a role which so far is fulfilled
- At 11:10 the bell rings again and at 11:15 Divine Offices are said in the choir. At this time, they say the Psalms (*complimentari*) and conduct an examination of conscience before proceeding to the refectory
- AT 11:30 lunch is served after which recreation takes place. Nuns on kitchen duty have to wash the plates and join recreation after fulfilling their tasks.
- At 1:00, the bell rings again and announces perfect silence since it is the restful period. It is obligatory to stay in one's room till 2:00. After 2:00, the nuns can leave their room. When they leave most take up this time with reading since according to their Constitution, they need to read 30 minutes of spiritual readings every day. This is generally done in front of the sacrament.
- At 2:55 the bell rings to announce rosary that is said at 3:00. This is followed by Divine Office, three Psalms and prayers for Malta. She refers to this community's role as nuns of the order with the primary task of praying for Malta.
- Since it is November at 4:00 they go down to the crypt and pray for the deceased nuns
- At 4:05, they return to their work in the monastery.
- The bell rings for prayer at 6:00pm. This time evening prayers are said (*għasar*), followed by 30 minutes of meditation.
- At 7:00, they proceed to the refectory for supper followed by an hour of recreation
- After recreation, a bell is sounded announcing the great silence (*silenzio grande*) followed by the last prayers (*kompjeta*).
- At 9:00 everyone goes to their room.

108. Significant Space – She says that the most significant space is the choir (*kappella*).
109. Favourite Space – She enjoys the recreational hall best.
110. Photography – When asked whether there are photos, she does not recall any, but she is taking photos herself as she would like to leave a legacy.
111. Media – They have recently introduced radios and television. The latter is used from time to time and in the weekends.
112. Work – She said that prayer is their primary job. In fact, their work is also offered as prayer.

113. Works of Art – She is aware that this monastery contains beautiful works. She refers to the reliquary of Algardi and also some rare book bindings and engravings that have recently been restored by Joseph Schiro (a paper conservator). They have recently also restored paintings and furniture at the restoration firm of Prevarti. The nuns themselves are currently regilding a painting under the guidance of a master gilder.

114. Parlour- She says that the parlour has four communication windows. Enclosure isn't as strict as it was. Today a selected group of people are admitted such as some carers and workmen who are currently refurbishing the dormitories upstairs. The Prioress still gives permission for anyone entering, the *rota* (wheel) is still used to pass things through and the bell is still rung to call nuns, or announce anyone entering the monastery. Things are still very traditional, but they have updated certain customs. For example, nowadays when they celebrate a profession, they have a special room downstairs that is detached from the monastery. This room is used for refreshments allowing the family members to celebrate. They also use it for refreshments during the feast of St Ursula. During this feast they bake *qagħaq* (dough biscuits). She was aware that in the past the communication windows had a double grille and curtain. These have been removed.

115. Dormitories – She says that the monastery had three dormitories. One dormitory contains six bedrooms which are situated at the entrance level. Ten other rooms are situated upstairs. Another dormitory, referred to as the Pinto wing (*ta' Pintu*) has been converted into the infirmary, doctor's room, archive, computer hall, recreational area and others. Other rooms have been utilized as stores. There is also the novitiate where the nuns are currently sleeping. They are sleeping here till all alterations are finished. She reckons that half the monastery is presently being used.

116. Cells - They do not refer to their rooms as cells. Nowadays all rooms are identical. This is specified in their constitution. Their furnishings include a wardrobe for clothes, chest of drawers, kneeler and 2 chairs. Their window overlooks the sea. She says that this space is intended to be alone. Permission from the Prioress is needed if access to somebody else's room is required. She informed me that all furniture in their rooms have been stripped from the oil-based paint and have been restored. They have also installed air-conditioning.

117. Refectory – She described the refectory as large with tables all round. They no longer use a pulpit but have an assigned desk for the reader. The pulpit can still be seen in the original refectory. They now eat in the former kitchen. As explained, breakfast is eaten in their room

whilst the two other meals are eaten in the refectory. Eating outside schedule is allowed, they can for example eat fruit from the trees. They also have food in their rooms.

118. Meals are still eaten in silence and whilst eating they listen to the reader of the refectory. Exceptions to silence are made on feast days. They have a tradition whereby the Prioress rings a bell and the community clank their spoons against their plate to symbolise that talking is permitted. They celebrate birthdays fondly and have menus very similar to regular households whereby, meals on Sunday and feastdays are more elaborate than other days. Fasting does take place in Lent.

119. Kitchen and work rooms - She explained that the kitchen area was divided into different rooms in the past. The area known as *preparatorju* is no longer in use. This was used for the preparation of ingredients before cooking. She said that they were renowned for their *biskuttini* and *qagħaq*. They only bake *qagħaq* nowadays which are still done in the *sala tal-ħelu* (bakery). She mentioned a Christmas tradition that the nuns still do amongst themselves. During this celebration they consume *imbuljuta* (chestnuts in orange and chocolate) and sweets. They were also famous for their medicinal *melissa* but they were asked to stop producing it because it was deemed a narcotic. She said that the *lampiki* (utensils used to make melissa) have been placed in a showcase in the kitchen area. The herb was cultivated in the garden. *Ilma zahar* (orange blossom water) was another item they produced. The old ovens in the bakery have now been electrified. She remembers the older nuns mentioning wood-burning ovens. Furnishings in the pantry (*dispensa*) and the kitchen have been modernised. Another work room is the *kamra tal-ħasil* (washroom) which today they refer to as the *ġiebjja* (well) because a large well head for the extraction of water is present in this room. All cooking is prepared in the morning and throughout the day they warm up the food before consuming. She said that talking is permitted in the kitchen area.

120. Loggia – They refer to the loggia area as *lastriku*. This is essentially the covered walkway on ground floor around the enclosed garden. They walk around this area in summer.

121. Enclosed Garden – This is a quiet space. They are very proud of their trees. She mentions that they have 23 orange trees, 3 lemon trees and 2 bananas among others. They also have flowers and a lot of planted pots. They no longer do heavy gardening as they have employed a gardener. She refers to the presence of 2 wells in the monastery.

122. Corridors – She said that they do not have much furniture in the corridors. They have a showcase in which they keep a collection of figurines of the Infant Jesus. The corridors are described as quiet spaces. There is no rule in their constitution that refers to them as quiet.

The constitution refers to processions that happen in the corridors. One of them is *Vexilla Regis*. They walk and sing during these processions. She said that the configuration of the corridors has changed over the years. Alterations took place 40 years ago. She remembers one room in particular that was huge and this was later split into two. The original doctor's quarters became the new lift shaft.

123. Archives – She said that the secretary is responsible for the archive. The archives were in the past organised by Patri George Aquilina. When he passed away, the historian Dr Christine Muscat took over. They are currently scanning all the archives so that they create a digital version of it. They also had a number of precious volumes restored by the conservator Joseph Schiro. The latter told them that their collection has some of the rarest book bindings. The archives were originally in a locked cabinet in a hall. Today they are safely kept in a room arranged for this purpose. In the past, some nuns were interested in researching the archives and one of them had found the original story of the Blessed Gerrard. This is a very important document that has now been restored for posterity. Reading forms part of their daily activities. She tends to enjoy reading in the choir. A lot of books from the library are currently being fumigated at the conservation company Prevarti. She said that nuns do keep diaries here and they also write poetry.

124. Office – She said the office of the Prioress has been modernised and that only the old desk was retained. The rest of the furniture was not suitable for storing files and papers.

125. Choir – They pray in the choir at 5:30, 11:00, 3:00, 6:00 and 9. It is the communal place for prayer in this monastery. Before they listened to mass in the choir through the communion windows. Nowadays they join the congregation in the church. They celebrate the feasts of St Ursula, the Blessed Gerard and St John. During these feasts the Knights of St John come to participate in mass. They are then invited to the hall (the old refectory) to join for refreshments. She said that the choir stalls are all new as the previous ones suffered badly from infestation. There are two special statues of the Immaculate Conception and that of St Joseph that were also heavily infested but these were restored and saved. The choir has a collection of precious paintings. All window frames were changed to aluminum.

126. Crafts – She mentioned a Sr. Elizabetta who still does *ganutell* flowers.

127. Crypt – If a member of the community is in hospital, she is visited daily. She remembers assisting two dying nuns during her time in the monastery. When a nun is dying, they remain with the nun till she draws her last breath and after an hour they dress her in the order's habit and leave hospital. The priest will then escort her back to the monastery. The coffin is

placed in the church. Close family members are permitted to witness the burial in the crypt. She says that the confined space dictates numbers. The day before burial, undertakers open the chamber and clean it from remains and bones that are placed in the ossuary. She discussed the fact that a particular nun was buried in a zinc coffin which takes approximately twenty years to decompose so that chamber was not cleaned. Before burial, the coffin is placed at the center of the crypt for prayers to be said. The burial takes place privately. At the moment two nuns are buried. According to tradition, in the month of November, the nuns pray daily in the crypt and on the first Sunday of every month. These traditions still take place. The crypt has recently been restored.

128. Church – She remembers the days when mass was heard in the choir. No exceptions were made, not even during the feasts of St Ursula. Sometimes they would sit in the upper choir and she said that from this place absolutely nothing could be seen. The change from choir to church happened approximately six years ago. She said that an article was published about what goes on during professions which is a pretty accurate record. (Sunday Times, 7th December 2003. *A year of cloistered life*, p. 59.)

129. Belvedere – She said that this space is frequently used. Apart from hanging clothes they also use it for recreational purposes. When the pope came to Malta, she described how all the community (including an 87 year old nun) climbed on top of the structure to gain better visibility. They built a platform on the roof so that they can sit and sometimes even eat there.

130. Bells – A sacristan is elected every three months. At the moment they only play the angelus since the church is closed due to Covid restrictions.

4.1.2 Interview 2 – Dated 19th November 2021 @ 10:00. Narratives 131 – 141.

131. Time spent in enclosure – Lived for over 65 years in enclosure.

132. Community – There were 27 nuns when she joined. The maximum number of community members she experienced was 27 nuns. She remembers nuns passing away and new ones joining. When she joined the novitiate, they used the upper choir and a large room upstairs for prayer.

133. Significant space - The choir is described as the most significant space.

134. Favourite space - The choir too.

135. Work – She said that as Gerosolimitan nuns their primary aim is to pray for Malta. Work is also part of their life. Every three months their roles of offices change. She mentions

kitchen duties, sacristan, infirmary, gatekeeper and pantry-keeper (*dispensiera*). She confirms that all roles are still happening at this monastery. She says, **“If these roles had to stop then we wouldn’t have order.”** In the past, they also worked for an income. Their jobs varied but were mainly sewing or making ecclesiastical vestments or other ecclesiastical items such as altar tablecloths, albs, etc. She describes that life in the monastery has changed over the years and things were much harder before. She remembers the days when washing clothes was done by hand in the washrooms.

136. Parlour – In the past Parlour took place once a month with minimal communication allowed with one’s family. She said that all nuns had a pre-set day for this appointment and that they weren’t allowed to speak with anyone apart from family. In the past no telephone communication was used and absolutely no one was admitted inside. It was strict papal enclosure that couldn’t be broken. She described the parlour today as frequented by family members, people making food donations, workmen who are currently carrying out maintenance work. Enclosure still applies and she does not go outdoors. Describing use of the parlour in the past she described the downstairs entrance to the outer parlour as being left open during visiting hours. A visitor would come up the stairs and knock on the monastery door. The gatekeeper (*gradiera*) would be permanently stationed in the inner parlour, and she would be responsible for calling the nuns using the inner bell. If the *gradiera* needed to move from her place another nun would replace her. They also still call nuns using the manual bell system. Families still do not enter the monastery and things are discussed behind the communication windows. The wheel (*rota*) is still used for deliveries and big items pass through the monastery door in the parlour. She remembers the days when the windows had two metal grilles and they couldn’t see anything through them.

137. Dormitories & Cells – They don’t call their room cells, they call them rooms. At the moment, she is not sleeping in her room since the dormitories are undergoing refurbishments. She describes her permanent room as having a window with a wonderful view overlooking the sea. They enjoy these views especially from the roof which they use in summer for recreational time. Other furnishings in the room include - a wardrobe, chest of drawers, table, bed and two chairs.

138. Kitchen and refectory – She still remembers when the original kitchen was being used. This room was eventually changed into the refectory. The older refectory had stairs going down to it from the kitchen and wasn’t considered practical for serving food. She described

the original refectory as a beautiful room. The new refectory is full of light with windows onto the sea. [She didn't recall the use of the pulpit]

139. Food - In the past, they abstained from eating meat on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Today she eats in her room because she is too old. She remembers the days when sweets were regularly baked for priests and the archbishop. They used to make biscuits *biskuttini* and *qassatelli* [These weren't mentioned by the other nuns]. The sweets and biscuits were never sold but given to Benefactors.

140. Crypt - Her description of the rituals involved in burial were brief. She said that when a nun died, the coffin is taken into the church and it stays on planks. Mass is said and then the body is taken to the crypt.

141. Church - Nowadays they listen to mass with the congregation but at the moment the church is closed due to Covid restrictions.

4.1.3 Interview 3 – Dated 19th November 2021 @ 4:30. Narratives 142 – 154.

142. Time spent in enclosure – Almost 30 years living in the monastery.

143. Community - The youngest nun in the monastery is 31 and the oldest 91.

144. Changes - She joined at a time when changes were being implemented. She heard the older nuns say that they weren't allowed to visit their parents in case of sickness and that medical care was only received in the monastery with doctors and dentists regularly visiting. Nowadays, they can go out to donate blood, or vote and receive medical care at hospital. They can even leave the monastery to buy food stuffs if there is no one to provide. These changes were necessary. She described the introduction of the phone as being a distraction. Nowadays they only answer it during parlour hours. The Prioress is in charge of the phone.

145. Free time and Work - They have two hours of free time between 4 – 6:00pm. During these hours, nuns can practice a musical instrument or read especially since according to their constitutions they are required to read 30 minutes of spiritual readings a day. During recreation, they spend time working on various crafts. She said that in the past she had various commissions for different tasks such as re-stringing necklaces but today she is too busy with monastery tasks to fulfil outside commissions. The Prioress decides on their behalf whether these commission should be taken on or not. At this stage she refers to the council held by the Prioress. During these sessions the mistress of the novices (*majjistra tan-noviżzi*), the accountant (*l-ekonom*) and the secretary would convene to help the Prioress with various decisions. The decisions taken are discussed among the community. Apart from the members

of council there are other offices that need to be fulfilled and these are: nurse, pantry-keeper, gatekeeper and sacristan. Apart from these tasks there are others that involve manual labour and are divided into the upstairs and downstairs staff. Downstairs office involves tending to the kitchens and refectory whilst upstairs nuns take care of cleaning the rooms at this level. She says that since community numbers are small, roles are currently doubling up. Today, upstairs, and downstairs roles are shared. The only outside help they get is for cleaning windows. Everything else is done inhouse. Currently, she is the resident nurse and describes the job as being very hard.

146. Significant space - The choir

147. Favourite space – Her favourite personal space is the upper choir. She says that since there are no novices, this space is very quiet and ideal to read and pray.

148. Graffiti - She recalls some graffiti on the walls, mainly galleys and dates.

149. Rules and constitutions – Their original rules had been abolished as they no longer applied. They however still retained its essence, and their prayers are devoted to keep the faith of the Maltese strong.

150. Photography – She recalls an album of old photographs with photos of the community dressed in the old habit and wearing hats whilst staying on the roof. They no longer wear hats.

151. Works of art in the monastery – She said that there are a lot of works of art spread throughout especially in the entrance loggia. Paintings hang everywhere. The sacristies too are full of paintings. There is a room in the monastery that is full of church furnishings used to dress the church during special occasions.

152. Parlour – Although residing within the monastery for only 30 years, she still remembers family visits as being conducted once a month. The date allocation has been retained but if a family member cannot attend that day, other visits are arranged. The visits are kept short. They also offer spiritual counselling. She does not remember the two grilles but has heard the other nuns mention them.

153. Dormitory and cells – She said that her room does not face the sea and is somewhat cut off. In it she keeps a wardrobe, kneeler and a bed. When asked if some rooms were superior to others, she described the rooms in the Pinto wing as being bigger with a separate room attached. These are no longer used, and she agrees that they were probably used to highlight rank. Today all rooms are the same. She mentions the dormitory for the novices which was in the novitiate and other rooms in the upper loggia in a part of the monastery

referred to as the *junjorat*. She says that these rooms are massive, and she always wondered why they are so big.

154. Refectory – The old refectory has a pulpit. The new refectory has windows overlooking the sea.

4.2 Diary Entries [D155 - 157]

4.2.1 Introductory unscheduled meeting – Monday 18th October 2021 at 9:00am

155. This visit was intended as a familiarization visit and to see the level of acceptance at this stage. The door to the *Parlatorio* was closed and I rang a hall porter that had a video camera attached. I wasn't asked my name and entered. The Parlour was empty. It was large and very well-maintained. The four communication windows were covered in Perspex. They also had the ubiquitous metal grille. The viewer was reminded that this was a monastery of the Knights from the sculptural motifs around the communication windows. Soon after entering a nun approached the window and asked whether I wanted to speak to someone in particular. She left and another nun met with me and tended to my request. She was very pleasant and willing to talk although giving the impression that she was rather busy. I asked whether a mask was needed and she informed me that all the grill windows had Perspex. I introduced myself and informed her that I would like access to the monastery and also permission to conduct interviews with members of the community. She informed me that at the time the monastery was in disarray because there is a lot of dust and debris due to the passing of new electricity (removal of WWII piping) and stripping the stone from paint. I let her converse freely with me and she happily said that the youngest nun is 31 years old, that there are 2 sisters from the same family and that she has been there for over 43 years entering at the age of 18. She mentioned the works taking place in the monastery once again. She informed me that permission to enter the monastery would be granted on condition that I inform the archbishop about my intentions.

I asked her for the upcoming program for the celebration of the feast of St Ursula on 22nd October. She informed me that the feast will not be celebrated because the church is in disarray. They are currently using the church to unload all the stone debris from within the

monastery as the door to the church is the most comfortable for this sort of thing. Works happening on the inside are financed by the monastery.

I asked her about the number of empty cells in the monastery to which she replied that they no longer call them cells. They are rooms. The area of the bedrooms is called dormitories. She said that unused rooms are used for storage.

I re-mentioned the possibility of interviewing her and she asked whether this would entail one sitting. I said that the intention is to have one sitting with a variety of nuns to understand different perspectives. She didn't object and reminded me that I would need to discuss this request with the archbishop. After receiving confirmation from the Curia the interviews could be planned accordingly.

4.2.2 Semi-structured Interview – Wednesday 10th November 2021 at 4:30am

156. Before conducting the interview, I was welcomed in the monastery very cheerfully by two nuns and asked to sit in the area which they called 'the loggia'. I was introduced to a gilder - an elderly gentleman who was referred to as the teacher. He was helping them re-gild the frame of a very large painting that hangs on the staircase of the monastery. The frame looked 17th century with an acanthus leaf motif all round and crowned by a fine carving of a cherub's head. The head was flanked by what seemed to be flaming finials. Three young nuns were busy gilding and chatting away. I was offered refreshments whilst working on the interview. They gave me fresh lemonade. In the meantime, a nun answered the doorbell and used the bell in the loggia to call a member of the community. The bell was very loud. Loud enough for us to stop momentarily from our interview.

4.2.3 Semi-structured Interview – Friday 19th November 2021 at 10:00am

157. This interview was held in the parlour. Conducting the interview here gave me the opportunity to observe what went on in the parlour which was a very busy area. The gatekeeper or *gradiera* as they called her wasn't keeping up with the number of visits. I noticed that a man was delivering medicinals and was also sent on various errands. In fact, he came and went a number of times. All the things he bought were passed to the nuns from the wheel. Workmen also arrived, needing access to the church, a nurse arrived and was given access within the monastery and two people needed some time to chat with the Prioress in

the parlour. The bell calling nuns and signaling arrivals was functioning accordingly. I was offered coffee. This was Maltese cooked coffee with cloves.

4.3 On-site visit to the Monastery accompanied by a member of the community – 3rd December at 9:00 am

158. The visit at St Ursula started in the **parlour [IM105 – IM108]**. The person I encountered in the past delivering medicines and other supplies was putting something through the wheel when I arrived. The gatekeeper saw me and called the nun who eventually welcomed me in. Although warned that the place is in disarray because of workmen, the place looked very tidy.

159. I was welcomed with the usual enthusiasm and we proceeded immediately to our visit. The place smelt of cooked coffee and clover. We entered from the parlour door [IM108] that led straight into the **loggia [IM109]**, an area that is bright, welcoming and full of important works of art such as the reliquary of the *Flagellation of Christ* by Alessandro Algardi which was the subject of several academic articles. One immediately gets a sense of the overwhelming heritage associated with this religious order. This area had a number of chest of drawers which recalled the conversations had with many nuns about the dowries and the need to bring a chest of drawers with them when joining. This was not always the case but happened often in the past. The first place we visited was the balcony to get a **view of the enclosed garden from above [IM110]**. This was a vantage point. The garden was full of citrus trees and a banana tree which the nun was particularly fond of.

160. I caught a glimpse of a corridor [IM111] but we bypassed it and proceeded down a flight of stairs [IM112]. We met a young nun busily walking down the stairs before us. Since I was visiting after nine in the morning, this was the time when the community would be at work fulfilling their office. The Prioress told me that the first areas we would be seeing were the **kitchens**. I immediately noticed that these areas were very well maintained and they even had atmospheric lighting installed. The first thing one notices is the **vastness of space dedicated to the preparation of food**. The first hall which she referred to as *is-sala is-sewda* [IM114] didn't have any particular function but was used to display old utensils and terracotta ware [IM115]. I noticed that displaying old utensils and things no longer in use was important for the present Prioress who is responsible for the high level of organisation and the dynamic

maintenance of the premises. The nun informed me that the prioress found the alcoves full of stuff and that she wanted to organise everything and leave a legacy by taking care of the past. She even started taking photos of the nuns at work to keep memories. We moved onto **is-sala tal-forn [IM116]** where biscuits (*qagħaq*) were being made. The room had display cabinets [IM117] with old utensils used in the preparation of food. She showed me the copper vats used in the making of lemon balm syrup which was a medicinal (melissa) [IM119]. The rooms felt authentic with old utensils still being used for the preparation of the patron's biscuits and modern and antique utensils surviving side by side. Modern ovens replaced the older ones, but all was done tastefully. A nun was busy at work weighing flour [IM116].

The next two rooms were the **sala tal-ħelu [IM120]** and the **sala tal-pianu [IM122]**. She said that this room was used for piano practice because it was the furthest away and whoever is practicing would not disturb. They also played ping-pong here, a favourite sport of the Prioress.

161. The **laundry room [IM123]** came next. This was referred to as the *gibjun* because it contained a large well. The room smelt of laundry soap and washing machines were switched on and functioning.

162. We proceeded through the courtyard to another area. This time we visited the **main kitchen** and **dispensa [IM125]**. Both rooms were identical in size. They were being used at the time by nuns busily preparing. They had wonderfully vaulted ceilings and catering equipment. Everything was clean and orderly. The **refectory [IM126]** was situated next to these two rooms. On entering the refectory, a nun greeted me and opened the cane curtains for more light. Originally, the refectory was the monastery's old kitchen. The ceiling still had evidence of soot from the fires and the recess for the cooking fireplace still existed [IM127]. Once again, the room had display items in several alcoves. There was a collection of silver cutlery [IM129], part of the nuns' dowry, pestle and mortars [IM128], large terracotta containers and a collection of keys [IM131].

163. We proceeded into the **old refectory [IM133]** with its impressive stone elevated pulpit, period floors and original wall-mounted stalls. Today, this room is used for important functions. She said that it was first used as a reception hall for the visit of President George Abela and his wife. This room was chosen for this purpose as it can be accessed from a separate entrance on the perimeter with no need of passing through the monastery and disrupting enclosure. The refectory led to the enclosed garden area once again. Here ropes to

a bell were seen [IM134]. These are seen throughout the monastery and different bells are used for different reasons.

164. The **enclosed garden** was very well maintained and had period features such as a water stone basin [IM135] and overhanging balconies with bulky stone corbels [IM113]. I saw a nun wheeling items across the enclosed garden, busily attending to her work. The nun proudly discussed the growing of bananas [IM136] which they happily eat at the monastery.

165. Whilst walking through the loggia we saw another nun in a **garden room preparing vegetables for tomorrows soups** [IM137].

166. We also passed several **storage rooms** [IM138 – 140] which were impressively neat and well kept. In one room, pots originally used for boiling clothes on the stove in the past were stored. These pots were used before washing machines were installed. Once again old and new utensils co-existed side by side.

167. We visited the **crypt** [IM142] which she described as a very holy place since it contained the remains of the past communities. She related the story of the nun buried in a zinc coffin which would take twenty years to disintegrate. On the elevated burial chambers were placed the names of the nuns recently buried.

168. From here we climbed a flight of cement stairs situated at the corner of the enclosed garden. We proceeded indoors through a passageway that contained a showcase with the collection of figurines of the Infant Jesus. Some figurines were antique and very precious whilst others were used to decorate areas during Christmas or for taking around in processions around the monastery and kept in the nuns' rooms. From here we visited the **choir** [IM144 - 145]. She explained that the choir stalls were changed as the original ones had suffered severe infestation. The area was full of important works of art, including two wooden polychromized statues and the altar painting attributed to Mattia Preti which she confided was the favourite devotional image of the Archbishop. We stopped to look at the **communion windows** that today are no longer used since mass is attended in the church.

169. Exiting the Choir, we used the staircase to proceed to the first floor and visit the main **dormitory area** that is currently being refurbished [IM146]. On the way up, I noticed two cannon balls resting in an alcove which the nun said was evidence of past attacks. The corridor was well lit with ample natural lighting flooding the area through skylights situated at intervals along the entire length of the corridor. She said that the skylights were old and not part of the

modern intervention. The rooms in the dormitory were in disarray but I was given the opportunity to see the **windows [IM147]** mentioned during the semi-structured interviews. They were large and had spectacular views on the Grand Harbour.

170. At this point the visit did start getting confusing especially because of the alteration works happening on common areas that were used to link space. We proceeded to the **novitiate [IM148]** which was clearly marked with an old sign. The way this area was hived off the rest of the floor clearly showed the element of separation between dormitories typical of monastic architecture. We did not walk through the novitiate since it was currently being used as their temporary dormitory. We also entered the area referred to as the *gunjorat* [IM149] which unfortunately wasn't visited due to the state of works taking place at the time.

171. We moved back downstairs and proceeded towards the **Pinto wing**. This was an area embellished during the magistracy of Grand Master Pinto. There was activity in this area. The first room we encountered was the **infirmary**. I decided not to take a photo of this room as an elderly nun was quietly sitting at her desk. We sped passed the monastery **library [IM150]** with its modern shelving, the **doctors' quarters [IM152]**, the **computer room [IM153]**, and the **archives [IM154]** where digital scanning of the archival documents was currently in progress. On the way we also met a nun who was preparing a *ganutell* bouquet [IM151] that was going to be donated to a church in Rabat. I was also shown a typical room (cell) [IM155] that was currently being used. This is the typical antique bed with curtains still in use by the nuns today. She explained that in the past most dormitories were open without walls and changing would happen behind the drawn curtains of their beds.

172. Exiting this wing we retraced our steps to the loggia at the entrance and before proceeding further she showed me the Prioress' **office** that had modern utilitarian office furniture which the Prioress said was much needed. Crossing the loggia, we stopped to discuss the collection of **antique chests of drawers [IM156 – 158]** that lined this area and proceeded to the sacristy.

173. The **sacristy [IM160 – 161]** was full of references to this order's link with the Knights of St John who were their biggest patrons. Portraits of Grand Masters and wooden polychromized coats of arms were seen throughout. The sacristy **rota [IM159]** was also noted.

174. The **church [IM162]** was unadorned and bare. All extra furnishings were stored away since the area was currently not in use due to Covid restrictions. She proudly showed me the

skull of the Blessed Gerrard [IM166], their most precious relic and the two different **upper choirs** [IM163-165] used in the past for listening to mass. She also pointed out two different confessional areas. One area dated to pre -SVC and still contained the only example of metal grilles and iron sheeting [IM170]. The other area was the post SVC confessional [IM169], that was less restrictive. This was placed in an area that also contained the ropes used to ring the bells in the belfry [IM168]. These are currently not in use since the church is closed.

4.4 Images [IM105 – IM170]



Outer parlour (detail)



Entrance stairs to the outer parlour and monastery door (right)



Grilled communication window



Monastery entrance



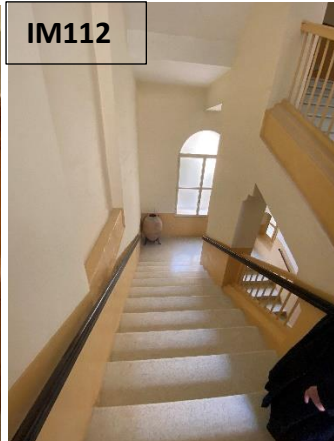
Entrance loggia



Enclosed garden seen from entrance loggia



Entrance level corridor



Stairs to kitchen area downstairs



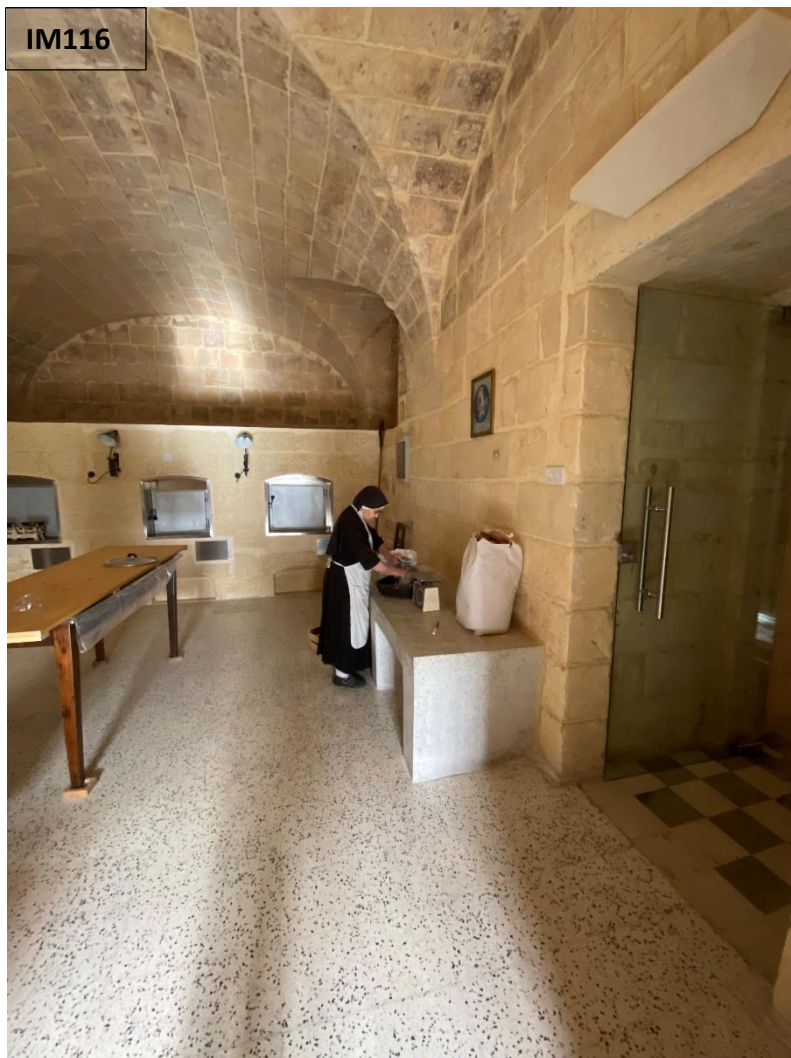
Enclosed garden (side view)



Downstairs large hall (*sala is-sewda*)



Terracotta pot collection and other utensils



Bakery (*sala tal-forn*)

IM117



Showcases in bakery

IM118

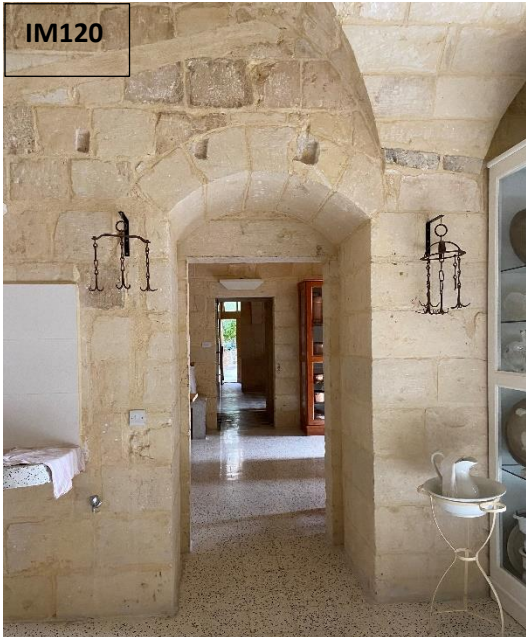


Preparation of *qagħaq* using old terracotta utensils

IM119



Lampiki seen above showcase, once used for making *melissa*



Old utensils displayed on walls



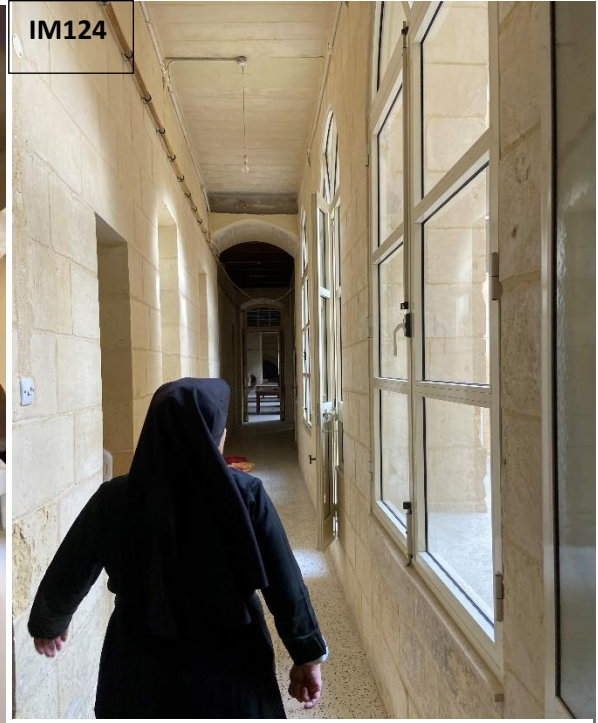
Weighing scales



Music room (sala tal-pjanu)



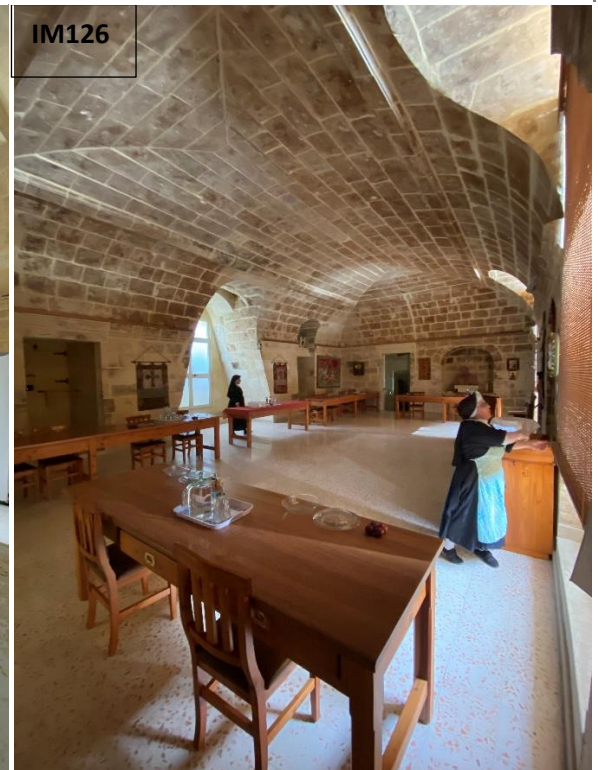
Laundry



Ground floor loggia



Kitchen store (*dispensa*)



Refectory (former kitchen)

IM127



Old chimney flue of former kitchen

IM128



Alcove with displayed mortars

IM129



Displayed antique dowry cutlery and large terracotta storage jars

IM131

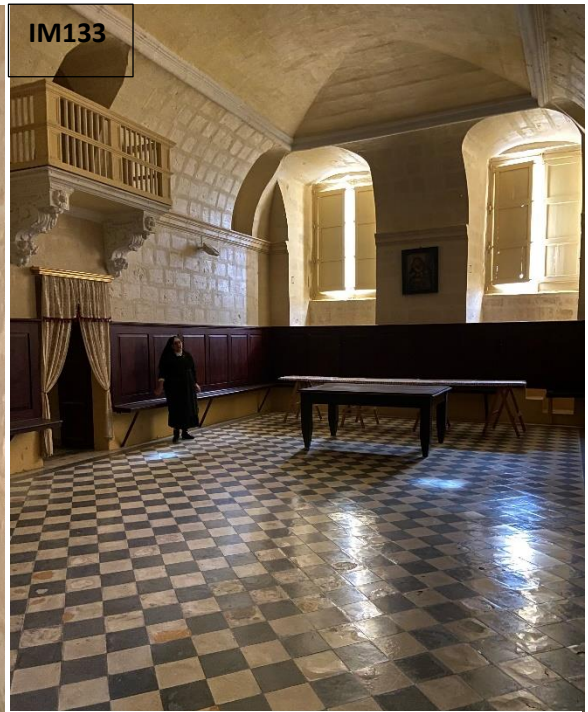


Old keys



IM132

Old refectory door



IM133

Former refectory with pulpit visible (left)



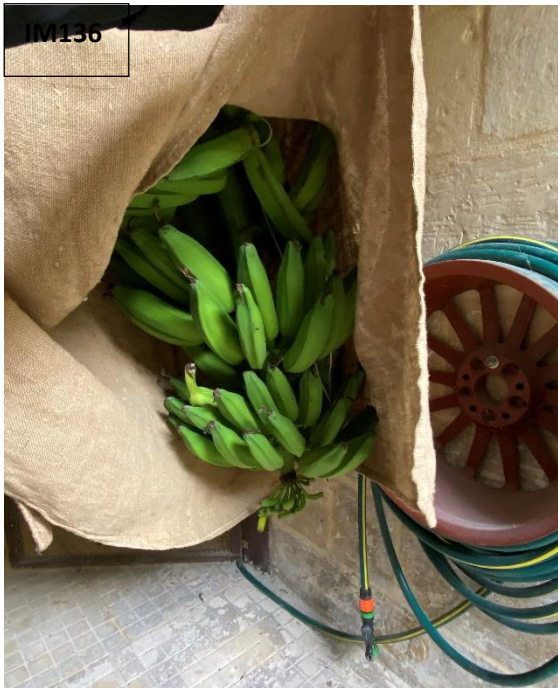
IM134

Ropes for calling community members from the ground floor level



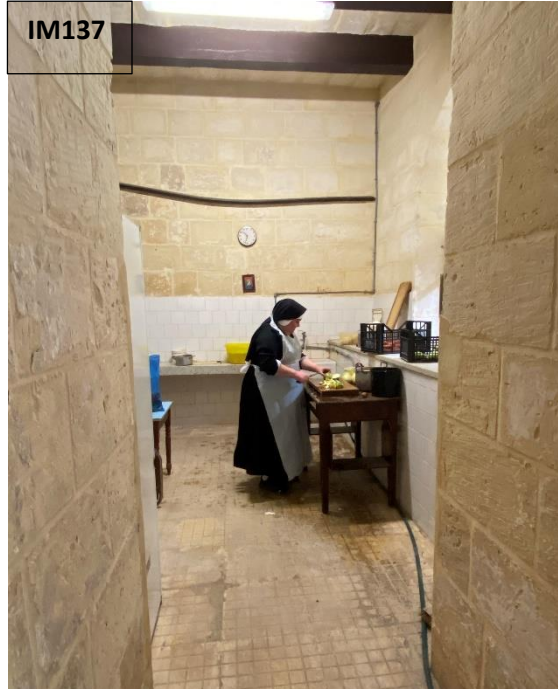
IM135

Stone basin



IM136

Monastery produce



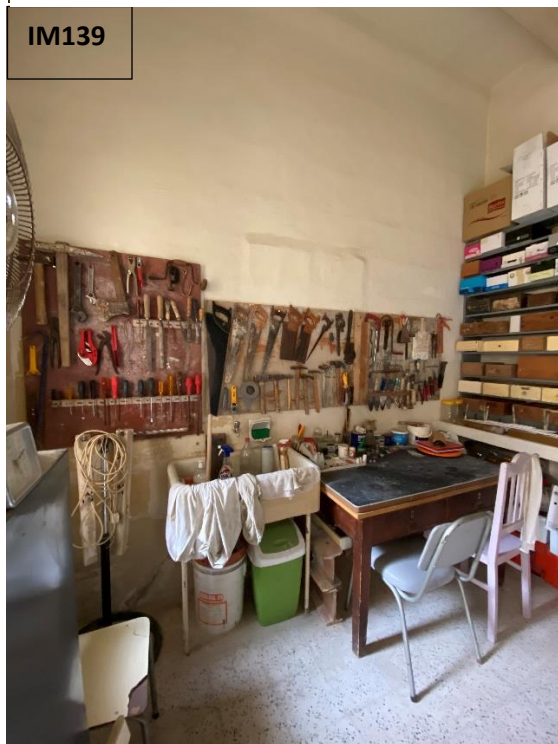
IM137

Preparation of ingredients



IM138

Storage of unused laundry boiling pots

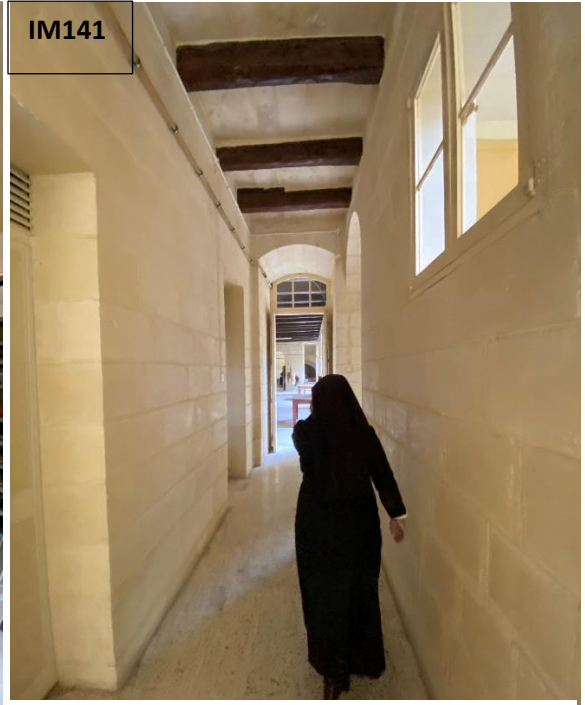


IM139

Tool shed



Tool shed



Downstairs corridor



Crypt



Community bell in corridor on first floor



IM144

Choir – Altar with flanking communion windows



IM145

New choir stalls

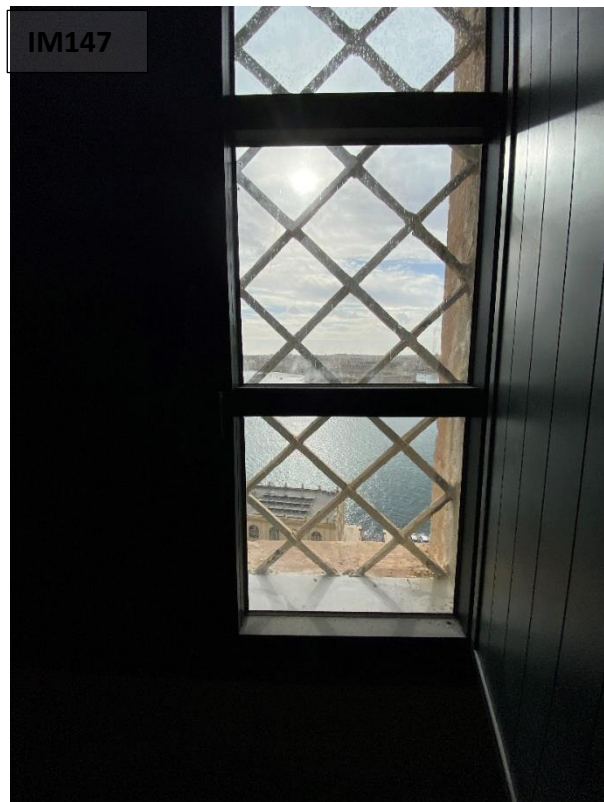


IM146

IM146

Aedicule with cannon balls on staircase

Upstairs dormitory



IM147

View from nun's private room

IM148



Novitiate



IM149

Upstairs hall (*gunjorat*)



IM150

Library

IM151



A nun showing the traditional *ganutell* bouquet she is working on



IM152

Doctor's room



IM153

Computer room



IM154

Archive

IM155



Private room

IM156



Flagellation of Christ by Alessandro Algardi on Chest of drawers

IM157



Chest of drawers

IM158



Chest of drawers

IM159



Sacristy rota

IM160



Outer sacristy

IM161



Outer sacristy



Church



Main Altar with flanking communion windows



Musician's balcony (below) and upper Choir

IM165



Lateral upper choir

IM166



Relic of Blessed Gerrard



Inner sacristy



Ropes to belfry



Post SVC confessional



Pre SVC confessional

Appendix 5

Research Data - St Scholastica's Monastery, Birgu

5.1 Extracts of Narratives from Semi-structured Interviews [N175 – 260]

5.1.1 Interview 1 - Dated 22nd November 2021 @ 4:00pm. Narratives 175-192.

175. Time spent in enclosure – Over 70 years living in the monastery. When she joined there were 29 nuns in the community. She is concerned that everything is finishing now.

176. Choir – She remembers the days when prayers in the Choir were recited in Latin. She also described the prayer schedules as being longer with evening prayers recited at 9:00.

177. Kitchens and food – When she joined, the ovens at the monastery were still wood-burning (*tal-ħatab*) metal stoves. She said that the quality of cooking and the taste was superior when meals were cooked in these ovens. She also discussed fasting that took place throughout Advent and Lent. During fasting, they did not eat meat, milk produce and eggs. Apart from fasting at Advent and Lent, fasting also took place on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday throughout the entire year.

When asked about traditional recipes she said that at their monastery they produced orange blossom water and carob syrup (*ġulepp*). The nuns renowned for these recipes passed away and their recipes with them.

178. Processions – They always enjoyed traditional processions. She referred to the ones that take place in other monasteries such as the Advent procession with the effigy of the Infant Jesus that is placed in turn in the nun's cells. This still takes place. She also referred to a particular tradition whereby on the eve of the feast of the Trinity and on the actual feast day (sometime in May or June) the nuns would walk up the steps of the dome to a place they referred to as '*Il-Madonna tal-Mellieha*'. Here they prayed to Our Lady and recited vespers. The idea behind visiting this remote space in the monastery formed part of a retreat that took place annually. This retreat was described as lasting ten days and ended in the form of a celebration (*xalata*) typical of Maltese festa celebrations.

179. Parlour - She remembers the overlapping double grilles which she describes as "*waħda kontra l-oħra*." She said that when looking through them one would see a deconstructed face, maybe catching a glimpse of an eye or a nose. Never the whole face. To be able to see a bit better, moving around or creating distance would help obtain a better view of the face. She mentioned the monthly visits with family members and also the days when phones weren't

permitted inside the monastery. Today things have changed. She also mentioned that they provide counselling here. Several attend the parlour for this reason.

180. Refectory – The refectory was refurbished about thirty years ago and all furnishings were changed. They still maintain silence during meals and the reader of the refectory still reads throughout the first course of their meals.

181. Wake up rituals – They are woken daily by bells, but in Holy Week the clapper is used. She describes this sound as a disturbing one.

182. Habit - Elements of their habit have changed. The opening of the veil for example was much smaller and made of stiff starched material. She said that as reference I should look at images of the Blessed Adeodata Pisani.

183. Paintings and works of art - When asked about paintings and works of art she said that a lot needs restoration. They do not have portraits of nuns or benefactors. She believes that a lot got stolen when the nuns left the premises during WWII. She also believes that their monastery is one of the largest.

184. Work - They still manage to fulfil all the chores between themselves.

185. Bells - She referred to the ropes used to ring the bells of the church. The ropes in the loggia are for the internal bell. These ring for communal prayers which she refers to as *uffizju, nona, sesta, għasar, kompieta*...They did not close the church during covid, however, the festivities for the feast of St Benedict when patrons are invited inside for refreshments haven't taken place recently. They still have a lot of generous Benefactors and funds are not lacking. Finances are taken care of by the Curia.

186. Cell - She described their personal rooms as being large with three large beams. The room contains a bed, credenza, commode, two chairs, kneeler, and crucifix. A very large window with 8 glass panes overlooking the sea.

187. Novitiate - They were restoring the novitiate, but works have been stopped for the time being. She said that in the past the novitiate had a barrel vault but this was damaged during WWII and was now built in concrete. The refectory which lies beneath the novitiate still retains its original ceiling.

188. Crypt – They do not use the crypt anymore. She still remembers nuns being buried there. It contains 12 chambers for burial. She mentions the episode when private burials were prohibited from taking place forcing them to buy burial space within the public cemetery at the Addolorata which they use to the present day.

189. Archives – She thinks that certain things got stolen when the nuns left the premises during WWII.

190. Places no longer used – The infirmary is no longer used as is the Novitiate. She mentions the '*karçri*' or prison cell that was intended as a correctional area for unruly nuns. She never remembers it in use and in fact today they store vegetables in it.

191. Craft – They seem to have been renowned for their *fjuretti*, a form of artificial fabric flower arrangements used for church decoration. She clarifies that this is not *ganutell*. She also remembers nuns taking up commissions for producing lace and embroidery. These were done against payment. All this has stopped.

192. Church – They listen to mass in the choir. This is possible because they have installed monitors permitting them to view the priest. They have traditions whereby outside processions that pass in front of the Monastery stop in front of the church and the nuns can see the statues from the Upper Choir window. The feasts mentioned are those of St Lawrence, Corpus and St Domonic. So far, they have never managed to see the *Irxoxt* statue as it coincides with their resting time.

They advised me that they will not be conducting semi-structured interviews during Advent and that all the interviews will need to be conducted within the week.

5.1.2 Interview 2 – Dated 25th November 2021 @ 10:00. Narratives 193 – 217 @ 10:00

193. Time spent in enclosure – approximately 41 years

194. Community – There were twenty nuns when she joined and twenty remained the maximum number of community members during her time in the monastery.

195. Enclosure - She described the concept as having changed considerably. Family could only visit the parlour once a month and the parlour was kept closed on Sundays. Both these rules have changed. She remembers the door to the monastery closed on the outside with a padlock. She described seeing her sister's newborn baby through the grille as entry was strictly prohibited to all. Nowadays exceptions are made and family can enter. She also remembers newborn babies being passed through the *rota* (wheel) so that the nuns can lift them up on the inside. She says that after SVC things were relaxed, mainly for practical reasons. She says that all rules were kept but have been modified. Voting and obtaining medical care is today permitted. In the past, nuns would die without receiving medical care.

196. Rules and Constitutions – They follow the rule of St Benedict. She refers to their habit that is mentioned in the rule and she says that their formation is as follows:

- Postulant (1 year probation in secular dress)
- Novitiate (1 year dressed as a nun and joining the choir with a white veil)
- Simple profession for 3 years
- then solemn profession which are the permanent vows which lasts 5 years.

Silence is mentioned in the rule. Constitutions refer to leaving enclosure. It refers to seeing parents in case of serious illness.

197. Schedule – She described a typical day in their life. They are woken up with a bell at 4:30. A different bell rings at 5:00 calling them to common prayers in the choir. She refers to the bells as being different and their different sound is a means of alerting the community to the destination intended. The Madre of the community conducts. By 6:15 morning prayers are over and at 7:00 they are called to mass. The church bell rings at 6:45 alerting the outside congregation. At 7:45 they leave the chapel and go to work. She said that in the past her main duty was that of the community nurse. She had worked as a professional nurse before entering the monastery and was therefore entrusted with this office. She described how she had tended to a very sick nun for 6 years. At 11:00 they prepare for choir again. Rest is taken between 1:15 – 2:15 and at 2:45 meditation in the choir begins with prayers starting at 3 to 3:45. After work, they fit in 30 mins of spiritual reading. At 6:30 they proceed to the choir for vespers after which the bell calls them to the refectory for dinner. Compline is the last prayer which they used to say at 9:00pm but nowadays they say it at 7:00. This has been modified due to the elderly. The great silence (*grande silenzio*) starts at 9:30 and talking is only permitted in case of emergency. **She says that the younger nuns are now very busy and need to compensate for the elderly nuns of the community.** She remembers when converse nuns were responsible for chores. She said that the converse nuns did not pray the common acts with the choir nuns in the choir (*cappella*). They prayed separately and stayed in the upper choir (*sopra kor*). They had certain sets of prayers. In the past choir nuns were exempt from certain work.

198. Significant Spaces – She described the most significant spaces as the ones where the community meets - the choir, refectory, and the recreational hall.

199. Favourite space – She says that her favourite space is the belvedere on the roof. She refers to the *belvedere* as a proper structure that has three windows. She also describes the view from her room which includes the Grand Harbour, Valletta and Kalkara

200. Architectural details - She is not aware that any architectural plans exist. She mentions two very old rooms that date back to the early 16th century and formed part of the infirmary of the Knights of St John. The monastery converted these rooms into reception halls. Paintings and antique furniture embellish these spaces. She refers to a collection of antique chests of drawers that are placed in these rooms. At this point she mentions that when she joined, bringing a credenza, bed, 4 chairs and a commode formed part of their dowry.

201. Areas no longer used in the monastery – The two 16th century halls are no longer being used. Over the years, these halls had suffered severe structural damage. She mentions a particular episode when bombs were being used to blast debris in the Grand Harbour as part of a cleaning/ dredging program. This happened in the 70's or 80's. These bombs shook the foundations of the monastery.

She also said that a large dormitory area and the rooms in the novitiate are also not being used.

She thinks that the monastery was built in different stages and that today's refectory was the previous choir [?]. She refers to an organ balcony that is situated in the refectory [?]. She also mentions the rented warehouses situated underneath the monastery.

202. Parlour – She does not remember the double grilles in the parlour area. She confirms that the parlour contains access to the musician's balcony. Their use of the parlour remains traditional with items passed through the wheel and bells used to call nuns.

203. Cell – They still refer to their rooms as cells. Her room is spacious and contains her bed, sink, armoire in the wall with food stuffs, a credenza, commode, desk and two chairs. Her window overlooks the enclosed garden. In the past she also had a kneeler and cross.

204. Refectory – She describes it as a long room which must have been divided at some point. She mentions the pulpit that was accessible via a wooden ladder. Eating in the refectory takes place at lunch and dinner. Breakfast is consumed in their cell room. The reader of the refectory still reads during meal. Places are seated with the Madre having her own table at the head. The *Vikarja* sits next to her. The refectory has different tables, varying between seating for four, three and two. She remembers the refectory when it would have been half full. **Today use of the refectory is dwindling due to the sick and elderly.** They sit on benches not individual chairs and she believes the furniture to be modern.

205. Food - In the past, their menus varied according to the day of the week. On Monday's, the community would only consume *lattiċini* which are foods made with milk products and eggs. Meat was prohibited on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday whilst a full unrestricted menu could be consumed on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Fasting took place three times a week in Advent and on all days in Lent. During fasting periods no meat or milk produce is consumed. According to their tradition a very strict fast referred to as *ħobz u ilma* (bread and water) was held on the seven liturgical feasts of Our Lady. As the name implies only bread and water was consumed and eating took place on their knees. The term *ħobz u ilma* today refers to eating unfried food and no meat produce. Boiled foods such as vegetable soup, pasta with no sauce and any raw food is allowed. She described the refectory as a place of silence where only reading takes place. Reading stops when the second plate is served.

206. Kitchens – She described their kitchen as being large with large ovens and cookers. A special oven was bought for the making of the *biskuttini* (biscuits). The kitchen leads onto the pantry room (*dispensa*) which in turn leads to the refectory. The first monastery kitchen was situated in the basement. This space still exists replete with the old ovens still inserted in the walls. There are ramps still in place showing where food was wheelbarrowed up and down to the area. She did not remember this kitchen in use.

207. Enclosed garden – She said that this is not the only outdoor space. They have another yard with garden pots, situated on a lower level. The enclosed garden area was frequently used in summer. **She went on to describe in detail the conservation of water at this monastery. Their large central well (*ġiebjja*) is referred to as the site from where stone was extracted to build the church. Next to this well is what she refers to as '*ġibjetta*'. It is a smaller structure through which all the collected roof water passes. This overflows into the *ġiebjja* leaving any residues behind. The *ġibjetta* therefore serves the function of a filter. She said that once a year, a nun would enter into the *ġibjetta* and clean it from all the mud and scum collected from the rainwater. This process happens in July when the residue is extracted and used to fertilize the soil in the enclosed garden. The nun then washes the *ġibjetta* and prepares it to receive next seasons rainwater. She also mentions two other wells. A well-head can be found in the refectory and another in the pantry. The dirtiest well is that situated in the *kantina* (basement).**

208. Corridors – There are two corridors and these are situated in the dormitories. The passages downstairs are referred to as loggias and not corridors. The cells of the converse nuns were situated above the downstairs loggia. Their rooms were in a large hall that had

partitions. These partitions were removed and the room converted into a big hall. The corridors are a place of silence.

209. Processions – She mentions the procession of Santa Maria where the community recites the rosary whilst walking from one statue of Our Lady to the next one. This procession starts from the choir and moves around accordingly. They also hold the procession of the Infant Jesus during Advent. During this procession lots are drawn to keep the statue in their respective rooms. They sing carols along the way and move the statue daily from room to room.

210. Archives – She said that in the past, the archives have been consulted but now they are not permitting any research from taking place.

211. Chapter Hall – They do not have a chapter hall and the choir is used for any sort of elections.

212. Choir – Communal singing and prayer takes place in the choir. They also have a rehearsal room (*sala tal-kant*) where they practice singing. **This room is no longer in use because too many nuns are sick.** They installed monitors which permit them to see and hear the priest well. Thanks to this system, they chose to remain in the choir whilst mass is being said. She described the choir stalls as being original.

213. Liturgical feasts – Their biggest feast is the solemnity of St Benedict that takes place on the 11th July. During this feast, the Benefactors join the community for a small celebration.

214. Crafts– Crafts are described as no longer happening. She however remembers the older nuns referring to their *fjuretti* or lace making.

215. Crypt – She said that the crypt is no longer used for burial. Nowadays, they use the two tombs they bought at the Adolorata cemetery. The custom changed when the government prohibited private burials. Although this law was reversed, they chose to continue burying the community at the cemetery. In November, the younger nuns still go down to pray in the crypt and candles are lit on every memorial.

216. Church – When discussing use of the church, she described what happens when a nun joins the community as a novice. Mass takes place in the church, and the future nun dresses up in a bridal gown. After mass, the community exits the church and enters the parlour. The tradition dictates that the girl knocks on the monastery door and waits for the Mother Superior to open. On opening, the purpose of her visit is asked and she replies that her intention is to serve St Benedict. The Mother Superior refuses her entry and closes the door. This ritual is repeated three times and on the last turn the novice is accepted in, at which point

the door closes behind her. The second part of the function happens with the novice dressed in simple clothes whilst attending in the choir.

217. Bells – The church remained open during Covid so the church bells are still rung today, but the duration of ringing has been reduced due to complaints. On special feast days ringing generally starts from the night before at evening prayers. Then the next day, two nuns ring the bell to call the congregation to mass. Before, on the feast of St Benedict they used to ring the bell at 4:30am now it rings at 6:00 because of peoples' complaints.

5.1.3 Interview 3 - Dated 25th November 2021 @ 4:00. Narratives 218 – 236

218. Time spent in enclosure – She described living in the monastery for almost 60 years.

219. Community – There were 26 nuns when she joined and not too many joined after her. She remembers a gap of nine years before the next nun joined. She is very worried about the lack of vocations.

220. Changes from the past to today – She thinks that since she joined several aspects have changed. She was a flower-seller in Birgu and joined the community as a converse nun, the last remaining. Her role was that of doing chores and ensuring that the choir nuns (*koristi*) had all the time they needed to fulfil their praying schedule which she said was more important than chores. Her role changed weekly and she rotated between work around the monastic complex (*ġimgħa ta'barra*), and work in the kitchen (*kċina*). There were six converse nuns when she joined. Two of them were already very old and sick so all chores were divided between the four converse nuns. Part of their duties included waking up the nuns and cooking coffee first thing in the morning and at three. Coffee was cooked on the *kenur* (a cooking implement). She said it was a hard life but it was a life they loved. The converse nuns didn't pray in the choir area with the other nuns, one of the reasons being that they didn't receive an education in Latin which was the official language for prayer in the choir. The converse nuns prayed together in the upper choir (*sopra kor*). Their type of praying was nicknamed *ruzarju tal-kuruna* (rosary bead praying). After SVC, when Latin was eliminated as the language of choice and vernacular languages introduced, the converse nuns started attending choir and prayed with the rest of the community in Maltese. She said that at first, she felt reluctant to join thinking it was too big a responsibility.

221. Favourite space - The choir. She says that every chance she gets she goes to the choir to pray.

222. Crafts - She wasn't engaged in doing embroidery or lace making.

223. Parlour – She related that in the past, visiting family in the parlour only took place once a month. The door to the parlour on Sundays was kept closed. It was becoming impossible for everyone to be available on the same day. Now it is more practical. She remembers the double grilles of the communication window. These were removed in the 70s and 80s. She said that to pass sweets to her nephews or nieces a specific stick (*pala*) was used. She even remembers drawing a curtain before speaking in the parlour. She said that curtains are still being used on the communion windows in the choir.

224. Sacristan – She was very knowledgeable about bell ringing¹³ as she was often engaged as sacristan of the monastery which she still does till today. She says that the ringing of church bells has changed immensely. They used to play a *mota laudi* (a pre-determined bell peal) to mark the death of an infant. People from Birgu would come and announce this death on behalf of the mother and make a donation for them to ring the bells. The donation wasn't necessary, but they still made it. Ringing a peal and not a toll in these occasions was intended to distract the mother and alleviate her pain. She also remembers the ringing traditions related to St Anthony as patron saint of misplaced goods. If prayers to St Anthony were answered, the devotee would promise the saint that bells would be rung at the monastery for the duration of thirteen psalms which translates as fifteen minutes of bell ringing for the nuns. They rang bells (*ta' l-imwiet u tas-sawm*) on the last day of Carnival announcing the beginning of Lent. They also rang during various processions in Birgu and to announce the death of residents. On St Benedicts feast day, they rang the *Moti tal-festa* (very long ringing sessions) at noon, vespers and in the evening. When a nun passed away they played the '*transtu*' which is a two hour toll followed by the '*mewt ta Kristu*' a defined funerary toll. This sort of announcement could be heard all the way to Bormla.

225. Cells - The choir nuns had individual cells whilst the converse nuns slept in a dormitory divided by partitions. This dormitory no longer exists and has been converted into one big hall. Today she sleeps in a cell identical to the other nuns. She has a window overlooking the sea with the town of Kalkara in the distance.

¹³ I would like to thank Mr Kenneth Cauchi for explaining the basics of bell ringing to me.

226. Refectory – The converse nuns ate in the same refectory but were placed aside. She is still seated in the same place she sat in the past. She describes the refectory as being very large and a space where traditional silence is still maintained. She remembers the many times she cooked and even burned a couple of meals. She explains the different menus to me. On the Monday during Advent, they ate *latticini* (milk-based produce). Eggs were permitted but meat was forbidden. They also observed not eating meat on Wednesday, Friday and Saturdays. Fasting on a Friday in Lent was even more rigorous than Friday in Advent. Rigorous fasting was referred to as *ħobz u ilma* (bread and water). This tradition stopped taking place in the 80's. She started speaking about traditional recipes. They grew their own herbs and produced medicinals such as *melissa* (lemon balm). It was apparently used for indigestion. They also produced *ilma zahar* (orange blossom water). She recalls the deliveries of quantities of blossoms from bitter orange trees for them to produce this. They also made and still make *biskuttini* (biscuits). These are only made for their benefactors.

227. Kitchen – She always remembers cooking in the present kitchen. She is no longer on kitchen duties but she assists the cook with the preparing food like cleaning the fish, peeling the vegetables etc.

228. Unused rooms – She says that the novitiate hasn't been used for a long time.

229. Loggia – There are two large loggia's downstairs. The one that is visible on entering and another as one turns. This one is double in size and width and forms the passageway to the cells, refectory, choir etc. All the loggia areas overlook the courtyard. Above this wide loggia downstairs is the other loggia that originally was the dormitory of the converse nuns.

230. Corridors – She described the corridors as leading to the nuns' cells. There are ten cells downstairs and ten above. The corridors are devoid of furniture. The furniture is mainly situated in the loggias. She said that in the loggia areas there are several credenzas (*gredenzi*).

231. Roof – She said that the roof is mainly for hanging clothes or recreation in summer.

232. Enclosed garden – She remembers when a particular nun was responsible for the garden. Nowadays they use a gardener who does all the heavy work like tilling the soil, pruning and sweeping falling leaves. She says that the monastery has too many sick nuns to take care of the garden.

233. Upper Choir – This area is no longer used. She says that she would have really been the only one to use it but now the choir downstairs is her space with everybody else.

234. Processions – *Novena tal-bambin* – She described the way they draw lots and according to the sequence of numbers drawn they keep an effigy of baby Jesus in their room.

The figurine is carried in procession from the Choir to the nun's room. They sing carols and light candles. The scope of this tradition is to create an occasion for personal prayer.

235. Crypt – She remembers the crypt being used. Mass would be said, and the coffin is displayed in the church whilst the community sings from the choir. The undertakers were called to take her to the crypt. Today she says that burial happens at the Addolorata Cemetery.

236. Church – She says that the church is still open even during Covid. They no longer open the church for rosary at 4 as it requires too much work to disinfect the benches twice a day. They listen to mass in the choir. She remembers taking her vows in the choir and not in the church. She says that the ceremony to become a converse nun was very different from that of a choir nun. They did not wear the bride's dress. They had their own ritual which entailed wearing gold jewelry and removing it as a symbol of renunciation.

5.1.4 Interview 4 – Dated 26th November 2021 @ 4:00 Narratives 237 – 260

237. Time spent in enclosure – Approximately 35 years

238. Community – There were 19 nuns when she joined. Today only 10 live in the monastery. She said they are very worried about the lack of vocations. This concern is greater than their concerns for the monument, its architecture or works of art.

239. Choice of monastery – She chose to live at St Scholastica as a matter of vocation, not a choice of premises.

240. Photography – She recalls old photographs of the community in previous habits.

241. Ambient sounds heard from the outside – Ships entering the harbour and blowing their horns. She also hears voices of workmen in the streets.

242. Media – They use internet as a means of communication. Radio has also been introduced to listen to a religious local channel by the name of *Radju Maria*. They do own a television but this is never really used.

243. Changes regarding enclosure – She discussed the changes with me. She said that nowadays people can enter, before no one entered. She said that they can vote and she accompanies sick nuns to hospital. They follow the rules and constitutions of St Benedict and in the rules and regulations there are references to the parameters of enclosure, for example there is the rule that prohibits exiting to acquire foodstuff. This task is entrusted to third parties who provide for their needs.

Nowadays prospective candidates are given the opportunity to try living in enclosure before joining. They can come and spend a weekend at the monastery. When she joined she was already familiar with the architecture, community and environment before joining. She quickly got used to the concept of enclosure. After joining the monastery, she found exiting for various matters very difficult (*ħassejtni stamba...nieħu qata*).

244. Free time – She has little free time. When idle she tends to the correspondence they receive by e-mail. In the past, she would practice the guitar, recorder and also the piano. Unfortunately, there is no longer anytime for her to practice this.

245. Daily Schedule – She says that the bell rings to wake the nuns up at 4:30am. Some nuns wake up before to have time for spiritual reading. At 5:00 communal prayers start. At 6:15 they have free time until mass in the choir at 7:00. After mass, they resume prayers at 9:00 am. At 11:15 a bell rings and at 11:30 they gather for midday prayers and after prayers they proceed to the Refectory for lunch. Between 1:15 and 2:15 the nuns rest in their cells and silence is maintained. At 2:45 the bell rings once again to announce prayers and meditation at 3:00. Free time follows until 6:15, when the bell rings to gather at 6:30 for evening prayers. Supper is eaten after these prayers. In the past, after supper they would proceed to the choir for their final prayers. The schedule has been altered due to the elderly.

246. Significant space – She described the choir as the most significant space and she added that in the past the choir did not have a tabernacle for the blessed sacrament. This was introduced 40 years ago.

247. Favourite space – Her favourite space is the choir.

248. Work – In the past, work was on rotation every six months but nowadays they have assigned fixed tasks to the nuns who can provide the service. She refers to the task of answering the door, phone calls and mail, the gardener (nowadays helped by the handyman), kitchen staff, cleaners, and nurse. These are still fulfilled by the community.

She is very busy at the moment with various tasks one of which entails answering the door (*gradiera*). She refers to work as a form of prayer. The rules specify that work needs to be organised by the Abbess (*Badessa*) and everyone has to fulfil their duties. **Presently, only four members of the community fulfil the more physical jobs.**

249. Inventory of works of art – She believes that inventories of silverware exist. She specifies that everything is stored carefully, for example silver is stored in an armoire that is rarely opened. She is not sure whether an inventory of paintings and furnishings exists. When

asked about architectural drawings of the monastery, she says that actual ones do not exist and that a hand-drawn copy was once given to the Curia¹⁴.

250. Parlour – They have one parlour divided into an outside and inner parlour area. In the parlour there is access to the musician's balcony. She also recalls days when the nuns would use the musician's balcony and sing from there. They never used the upper choir for singing. This area was mainly used when adoration of the Holy Eucharist was taking place in the main church. Nowadays they have a monitor, so they do not leave the choir. The Abbess gives permission for anyone entering the monastery. She explained that the door to the parlour is open, so the procedure is entering into the outer parlour and ringing the bell inside. Regarding outsiders entering the monastery, she said that a handyman comes to the monastery every day from Monday to Friday.

251. Apart from the families' visits, members of the public often come to the parlour when private prayers are needed. She mentioned a variety of requests for prayer such as prayers needed for the sick, to fare well in important exams, the birth of children, familial concerns etc. They provide guidance even by phone. They receive several of these requests daily and they tend to them as a service to the community.

They still use the manual bell to call the nuns to the parlour area and they still use the *rota*. Everyone has their own ringing tone.

252. Cell – The rooms are all the same. She has a bed, kneeler and cross, bedside table, sink and an armoire in the wall, credenza, table and two chairs. Her window looks onto the harbour and she can see boats entering and exiting. Her room is the last of the complex and does not get much sun.

253. Refectory – She is not aware of any rituals or traditions from the past that no longer happen nowadays. The participant said that the refectory had just been refurbished when she joined. When she entered the monastery, the dado was maintained and new upholstered benches and tables installed. She remembers older furnishings in the refectory from the days spent at the monastery prior to entering.

254. Enclosed Garden – There is a nun who still takes care of the garden.

255. Archive and Library – The archive is downstairs and there are two libraries on the ground floor and second floor. She thinks that the books kept downstairs are older. When asked whether the archives were cared for, she does not think that these have been organized.

¹⁴ A request to see this hand-drawn map was made to Dr Evelyn Pullicino, Assistant Archivist at the *Arkivju Djocesana*. This sketch was not located.

Access to the archives is limited. When asked whether the monastery had an office, she said that there is no particular room dedicated to office work

256. Novitiate – This is situated above the refectory and the belvedere is above the novitiate. The belvedere nowadays is mainly used to hang the laundry. In the novitiate she remembers wooden plaques with latin inscriptions on them. She is not aware of their meaning.

257. Choir – They listen to mass in the choir. The furniture in the choir is old and she mentioned that the choir stalls are dated. They have three precious reliquaries in the choir. They still receive holy communion from the communion windows. She said that to access the church from the choir one must exit the choir, into the inner sacristy, and into the outer sacristy that has direct access to the Church.

258. Infirmary – This still exists but is no longer used.

259. Crafts – She does not remember any nuns specifically doing crafts but she heard the older nuns mention a particular altar frontal used during the feast of St Benedict that was embroidered by nuns residing at the monastery.

260. Crypt – She has never witnessed a burial in this area but she said that in the month of November, they still pray daily and light candles. Whereas before all the nuns used to attend to this, today only two nuns attend to this tradition. She says that access to the crypt is difficult and only the younger nuns descend to this area.

Appendix 6

Questionnaires and Forms

6.1 Semi- Structured Interview Sample

the walls, the church, the internal cloister, and a sequence of rooms and passages, formed the stage for the collective and individual routines (Evangelisti, 2007, p.47)

Qualifier

Monastery name:

Date and time of interview:

Introduction

How long have you been living in the monastery?

How many nuns were living in the monastery when you joined? How many nuns are there now?

Do you know the range of ages from youngest to oldest living in the community?

Do you remember a time when there were more nuns in the community than today? Do you recall the highest number?

Do diminishing vocations worry you?

Do you remember the time you decided to join the monastery?

Why did you choose this monastery and not another on the island? Did the choice have anything to do with the architecture and location of the building?

Have you exited the monastery recently? How have the rules regarding enclosure changed over the years?

What rule does your community follow? Do you consult it often?

Where do you spend your free time?

General Spatial Questions

Do you remember setting foot in the monastery for the first time? How did you experience the idea of space? Did enclosure worry you?

Can you describe a typical day in your life (daily tasks related to space and time)?

Which spaces are reserved for members of the public?

Which is the most significant space in the monastery? By significant I mean to cloistered life.

Which is your personal favourite space?

Are there any secret passages, or interesting features that only resident nuns would know about (graffiti, alcoves, viewpoints, shelters etc.)?

Would you be able to describe the exterior facades of the monastery or details about the surrounding streets?

Does the architectural layout reveal any information about the past/ present rank (novices, professed, superiors, converse nuns)?

Do you have a photographic collection with images from the past?

If you had to stop and think, what outside noises do you hear within the monastery walls?

What media do you use (radio, tv, internet)? Do you remember a time without media?

Which spaces are reserved for alone time and which are for community time?

Could you indicate which places are still used today and which are not?

What does work signify to the cloistered nun?

Parlour/ Entrance area

Can you describe the parlour to me?

Who can enter the monastery and from where does one access the interior?

Who enters on a daily basis?

Who is responsible for admitting members of the public within? What is the procedure or ritual?

Things have possibly changed since SVC. Do you remember the procedures for entering pre-SVC?

What is the difference now? If you are too young to remember, what have you heard from the other members of the community?

Are there any peep holes for checking outdoors without being seen?

Do you look forward to your time in the parlour?

Are visiting hours strictly observed?

How are the nuns called to attend if required in the parlour? Is this method similar to the method used for calling in the past?

Can all nuns frequent this space and are there time allocations?

Can things be passed from the outside in? How? Any other access?

Are there any furnishings (grilles, locks, heavy curtains, communication windows etc.) you can describe to me? Do you remember how things have changed over time? What do the older members say about this space?

Dormitories and Cells

On plans of monasteries, one can generally see more than one area reserved to dormitories. Can you explain why? Which are the areas still in use today?

Do you still refer to your room as cell?

Can you describe the space of your room to me?

How much time do you spend in your cell? Do you look forward to time alone?

What objects do you keep in your room?

Is this space intended for solitude or do you invite members of the community in?

What is the level of natural and artificial light within the room?

Are there better cells than yours? By better I mean, in size and positioning or are they all the same?

Have there been changes with regards to what is allowed as furnishings?

Have there been changes with regards to use (this must be asked based on personal knowledge or information passed down from the older members of the community)?

Refectory

Can you describe this space to me? What is it used for?

How often do you eat? Can you eat outside hours? Is eating only allowed in the refectory?

Do you have any rituals before, during and after eating? Can you describe them in sequence to me?

Has anything changed about this?

Does eating on a Monday differ from eating on a Sunday or feast days?

How does eating in Lent differ from a normal day?

Is this a quiet space? What does one expect to hear?

Can you remember (or have you heard) any traditions/ rituals tied to the use of the refectory that have changed over the years?

Have there been changes with regards to furnishings or distribution of furnishings? Why have furnishings been changed and where have they been placed?

Have there been changes with regards to use?

Kitchen

Can you explain the division of spaces in the kitchen area?

Can you describe this space to me? How is it used? (Ideally this is explained according to the schedule).

Nuns worldwide are famous for their recipes (sweets, preserves, medicinal recipes etc.). Have any recipes been passed down? Do old recipe books exist in the archives? Does the monastery have any specialties? Do you remember past activities that involved cooking?

Have there been changes regarding furnishings and layout? Why have things changed and have they been kept?

Have there been changes with regards to use?

Is eating outside hours permitted?

Loggia

What happens in the areas described as loggias? How are they used?

Is this a communal or solitary space, or both?

Have there been changes regarding their layout or use?

Enclosed Garden

Is this space used alone or in company?

What happens in this space? Is this a silent space?

What does it mean to you?

Do you use water from the wells? Are there any rituals past and present tied to the use of well water or this space in general?

Do you meditate in the garden?

Do you spend time just enjoying the fresh air, the sun or looking up at the sky?

Have there been changes regarding its use?

Corridor/ Staircases

Can you describe the corridors to me? Are there windows, furnishings or works of art in these spaces? Any in particular you enjoy looking at?

Are these quiet spaces or is talking allowed?

Does anything related to ritual (past and present) or tradition take place in these spaces?

To your knowledge, has their use changed over the years?

Library/ Archives

Who is responsible for maintaining the archives and library?

Who can consult the archives?

As far as you remember, has this always been the designated space for this?

Do you and the nuns come and research in the archives?

Where does one read in the monastery?

To your knowledge (past or present), do any members of the community keep journals?

Choir

Can you describe this space and what it is used for? How often?

How do you participate in the celebration of mass and other festivities?

What are the liturgical feasts celebrated by this monastery?

During the celebration of feasts, are there any rituals and celebrations that take place within the choir or monastery that do not involve the public? Can you think of rituals that no longer happen?

Are there important works of art in the monastic choir? What do these artefacts mean to you?

Have the furnishings/ elements changed within the choir? For what reason?

Recreational Room

What is this space used for? Has it always been used this way?

Do you enjoy your time in this room?

Are there any crafts that keep you occupied in this space? Is there specific manual work done against payment, like embroidery, *ganutell*, lace making? Do you remember any special crafts that happened more frequently in the past?

Are there any paintings or antique furnishings in this room that you are fond of?

Crypt

What happens when a member of the community dies? Can you explain this from the moment of sickness till internment here?

How often is this space visited?

What does this place mean to you?

Apart from burials, are there any rituals associated with this space?

Have there been changes regarding its use?

Church

Is the church used solely by the outside community? When do you share this space with them?

Do you use this space when the doors are closed to the public?

How has the use of this space changed since SVC?

How many liturgical feasts do you celebrate apart from the usual ones? Any traditions tied with this celebration that happen, or used to take place in the past?

Did you take your vows in this church? Can you run me through what happened from the time you leave home till when you enter?

What do you think about the works of art in your church? Are there any paintings or antiques in this church that you enjoy looking at more than others?

Other Features

Belvedere Is this space used at all? How is it used and by whom? Any fond memories of this space?

Windows Can you recall particular windows that are used more than others in the monastery? Please specify? How important is the possibility of looking out for you?

Bells Are bells still used to call nuns? Has anything replaced it?

What other bells are used on the premises? Can you describe the past and present use of these?

Are the church bells still used? Can you describe the past and present use of these?

Sacristy Rota Does this still retain its function?

Communion Windows Are these still used? Have any customs changed in relation to their use?

Refectory Pulpit Are they still used? If not, do you remember it in use?

Infirmary Is this space still in use? If not do you remember it in use? How was it used?

Doctor's Quarters Is this space still in use? If not do you remember it in use?

Other Are there any other rooms that have not been mentioned that would be interesting to this study?

6.2 Consent Form Sample

Participant's Consent Form

Female Cloistered Monasteries in Malta; Issues and Challenges in Safeguarding Living Religious Heritage

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by **Daniela Apap Bologna**. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be **stored anonymously**.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in **answering questions presented to me in the form of semi-structured interviews** in which the researcher will **ask the question and record my answer using a digital device in an attempt to valorise the living communities' ongoing contribution to the cultural significance of the architectural spaces we inhabit**. I am aware that the semi-structured interviews **might take 2 sessions of 40/60 minutes** approximately. I understand that the **semi-structured interviews** are to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation **does not entail any known or anticipated risks**.
5. I understand that **there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study**. I also understand that this research may benefit others by **contributing to the discourse of best practices in the management of living religious heritage by emphasizing the necessity of dialogue with the resident religious communities as core-custodians of this heritage**.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be **stored in an anonymised form and disposed of within 12 months of completion**.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.
9. I am aware that, if I give my consent, this **semi-structured interview** will be **audio recorded** and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).
10. I am aware that, if I give my consent, extracts from my interview may be reproduced in anonymous form.
11. I am aware that **the identity of the organization I represent** may be revealed in publications, reports or presentations arising from this research, and responses **I provide may be quoted indirectly**.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Daniela Apap Bologna

Dr Shirley Cefai

Senior Lecturer

Tel no: _____

6.3 Information Letter Sample

30th October 2021

Ref: Information Letter

Dear

My name is **Daniela Apap Bologna**, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a **Master's degree in Cultural Heritage Management**. I am presently conducting a research study for my **dissertation** titled ***Female Cloistered Monasteries in Malta; Issues and Challenges in Safeguarding Living Religious Heritage***; this is being supervised by **Dr Shirly Cefai**. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to **give value to your communities' on-going contribution to the cultural significance of the architectural spaces you inhabit**. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of **the characteristics and subtleties of living religious heritage**. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to **set an appointment at your convenience and answer set questions by making informal dialogue with me**. These questions will mainly relate to the use and access of space within the monastery walls. **For the purposes of brevity on-site, the conversation will be digitally recorded.**

Data collected will be **treated confidentially and can remain anonymous should you wish.**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be **stored anonymously.**

If you choose to participate, please note that **there are no direct benefits to you or your monastery**. Your participation **does not entail any known or anticipated risks**.

Please note that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be **transcribed, analysed and appended to the main text of the dissertation**. **Should you wish, all audio files can be destroyed 12 months after completion of this study**.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail on [REDACTED] or call me on [REDACTED] you can also contact my supervisor over the phone: [REDACTED] or via email: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Daniela Apap Bologna

Dr Shirley Cefai

Senior Lecturer

Tel no: [REDACTED]