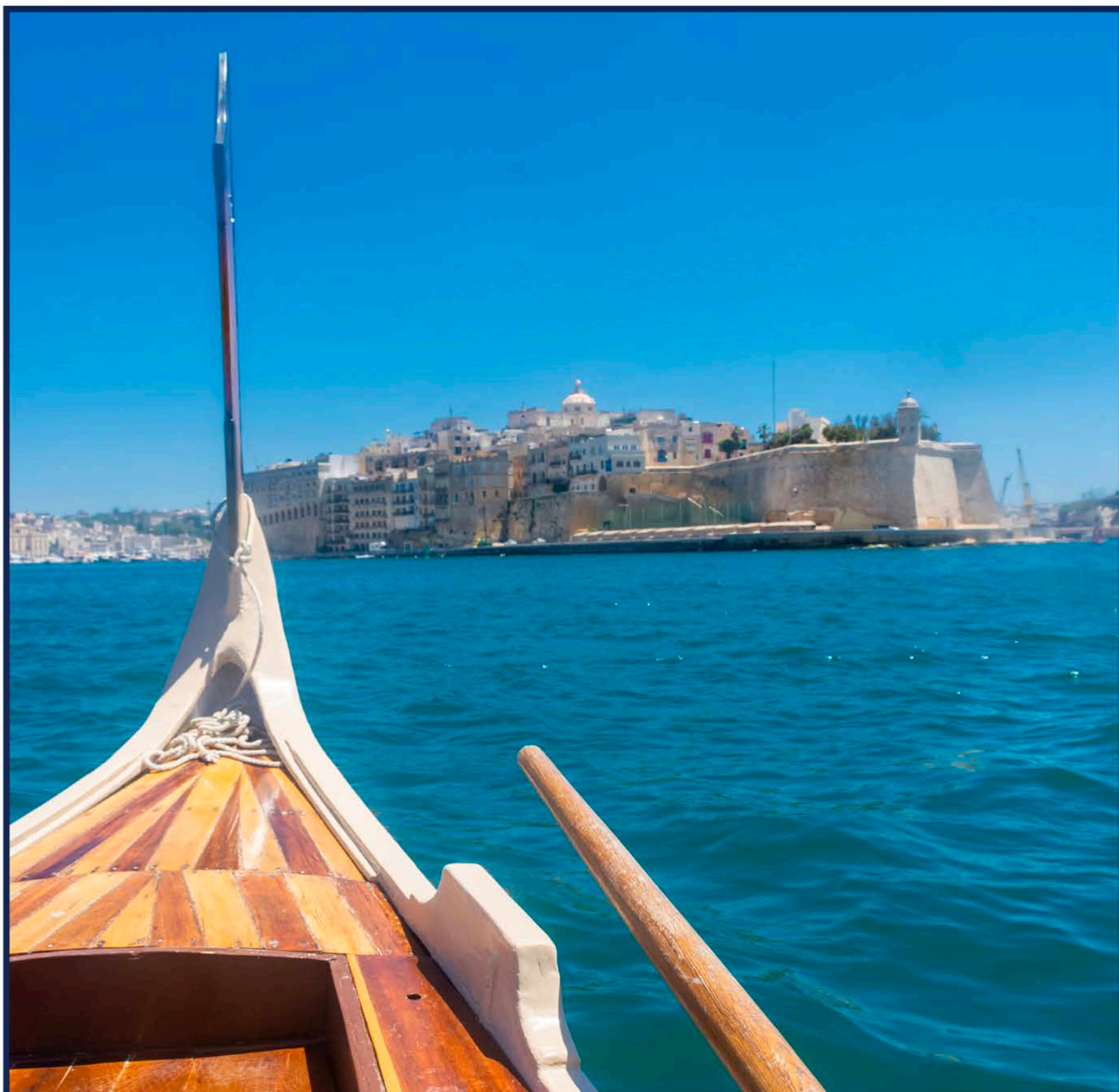


FUTOURISTIC

THE ITS JOURNAL ON HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM AND CULTURE

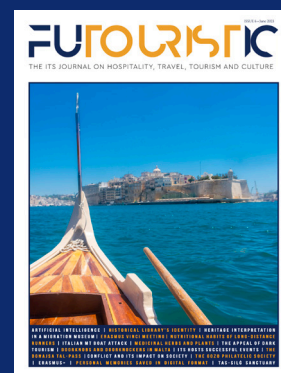


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE | HISTORICAL LIBRARY'S IDENTITY | HERITAGE INTERPRETATION
IN A MIGRATION MUSEUM | ERASMUS VINCI MEETING | NUTRITIONAL HABITS OF LONG-DISTANCE
RUNNERS | ITALIAN MT BOAT ATTACK | MEDICINAL HERBS AND PLANTS | THE APPEAL OF DARK
TOURISM | DOORKNOBS AND DOORKNOCKERS IN MALTA | ITS HOSTS SUCCESSFUL EVENTS | THE
DGHAJSA TAL-PASS | CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY | THE GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY
| ERASMUS+ | PERSONAL MEMORIES SAVED IN DIGITAL FORMAT | TAS-SILĠ SANCTUARY

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On the Cover
A traditional Maltese dghajsa tal-pass moving gracefully towards Senglea in the Grand Harbour.

(Credit: Shutterstock)



A message from the Editor-in-Chief

From the digitisation of libraries and personal memories, to door knobs, herbs, wartime Malta and AI

The world of tourism and hospitality has undergone significant transformations in the past few years, necessitating a rethink of how we educate and train the industry's workforce. As a forward-thinking journal, 'Futouristic' is committed to exploring the cutting-edge trends and innovations that will shape the sector for years to come. In this sixth issue, we focus on the rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on education, and the recent events organized by the Institute of Tourism Studies and their respective outcomes. The content here draws from the 'High Marks Symposium', the 'Open Doors' and the launch of the ITS Training School. These initiatives demonstrate the importance of forging strong links between academia and the industry, while addressing the changing needs of the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The High Marks Symposium, which was held on the 29th of March, aimed at celebrating the research work produced by ITS students as partial fulfilment of their qualifications. A number of research papers presented during this event are being published here to showcase the important topics which the students together with their research supervisors are addressing. These topics range from Heritage Interpretation to Tourist Guiding and Herbal Medicine in the 17th and 18th century Malta.

On the 24th of March 2023, the Institute of Tourism Studies held a successful outreach event titled 'Open Doors'. This occasion allowed the institute to showcase its educational programs and operations, giving the general public an opportunity to engage with faculty and trainers. Prospective

students were able to explore the myriad of courses available and the opportunities that the ITS can offer upon enrolment.

The 'Open Doors' event highlighted the institute's commitment to connect with the industry and understand its evolving demands. By engaging with the public and showcasing the educational pathways available, ITS has demonstrated its mission to create a competent and skilled workforce that can meet the needs of the tourism and hospitality sectors. This event marks a crucial step forward in bridging the gap between academia and the industry, ensuring that the next generation of professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in a rapidly evolving sector.

In an effort to further strengthen its ties with the industry, the Institute of Tourism Studies has recently launched the ITS Training School. This innovative training institution offers high-quality training programs and short courses for employees within the hospitality and tourism sectors, as well as the general public. By delivering hands-on, industry-driven, and innovative training, the ITS Training School addresses the skill needs and goals of the industry.

The Institute of Tourism Studies through the ITS Training School recognizes the importance of continuous learning and development for professionals in the tourism and hospitality sectors. By providing a platform for employees to enhance their skills and competencies, the ITS Training School ensures that the industry remains competitive and adaptable to the changing needs of consumers and the global market.

The Institute of Tourism Studies plays a vital role in shaping the future of the tourism and hospitality industry. By organizing events such as 'Open Doors' and launching initiatives like the ITS Training School, the institute demonstrates its commitment to addressing the industry's demands and equipping professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary for success.

As the tourism and hospitality sectors continue to evolve, it is essential that the link between ITS and the industry remains strong. By fostering a symbiotic relationship that encourages collaboration, innovation, and mutual growth, the Institute of Tourism Studies can continue to pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable, and prosperous future for the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The future of the industry relies on our ability to adapt, innovate, and embrace new approaches to education and training. Hence the article on AI, which reports on the launch of ChatGPT and the stir it is causing not just in education but in every sector of the digital economy and the digital society. By acknowledging and addressing the challenges we face, the Institute of Tourism Studies and the ITS Training School are poised to lead the way in shaping the future of tourism and hospitality education, ensuring that our industry remains a driving force for economic growth, employment, and global understanding.

Glen Farrugia

**Editor-in-Chief &
ITS Chief Operating Officer -
Academia**



The catacombs at the Wignacourt Museum, Rabat, Malta. Photo by Martin Bonnici, ITS alumnus, HND in Tourist Guiding.

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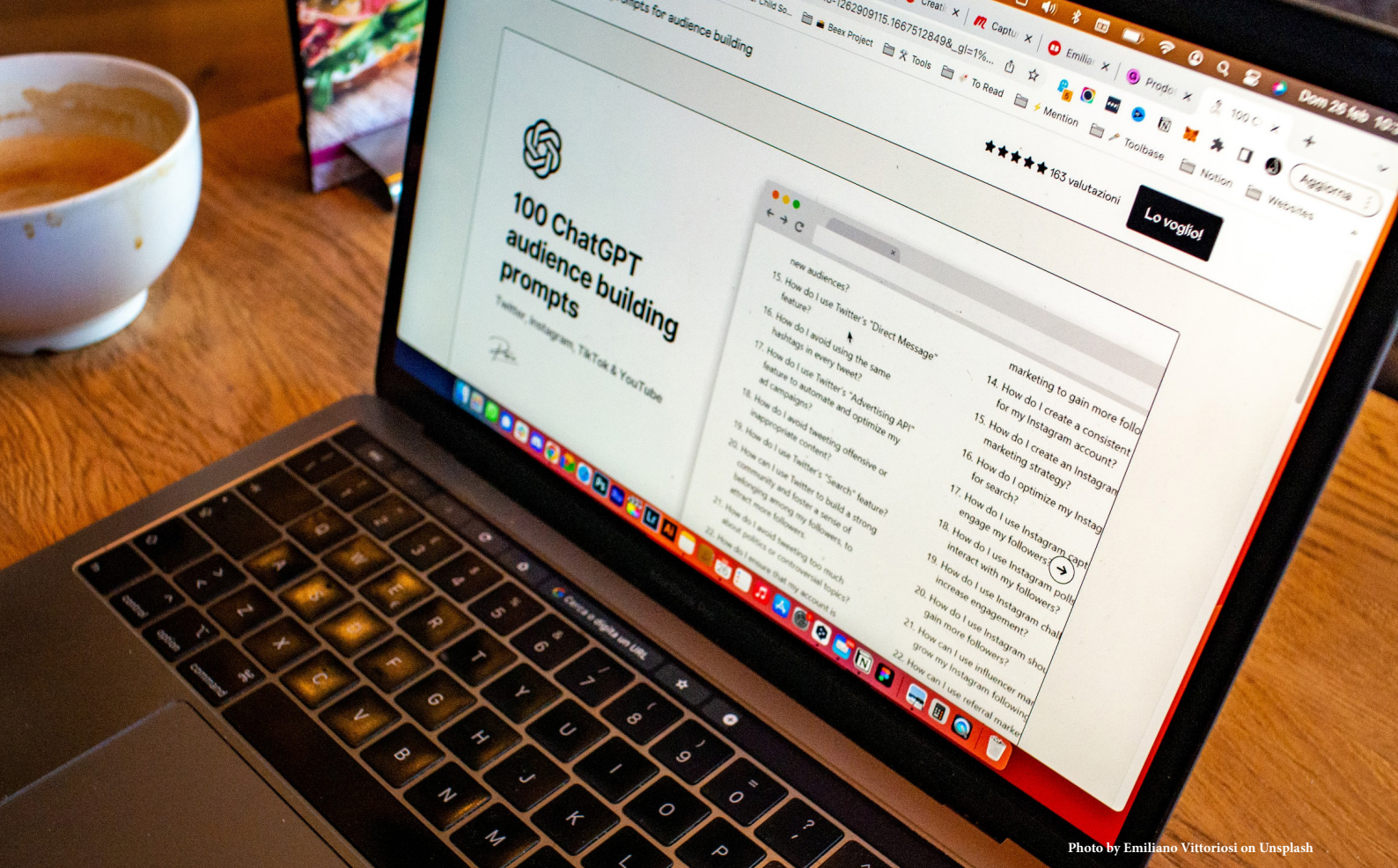


Photo by Emiliano Vittoriosi on Unsplash

Artificial Intelligence: the dawn of a new age in education?

BY MARTIN DEBATTISTA
SENIOR LECTURER AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF FUTOURISTIC

The public launch of ChatGPT by Open.ai in November 2022 has made artificial intelligence (AI) available to the public after decades of experimentation, steady development, and adoption by business behind the scenes. However, this was no ordinary new digital tool of which many are released every year. Its adoption has been the fastest ever recorded for any technology in history and both traditional media and social media have been discussing this ever since. Is this truly a turning point in our digital society? Should we resign ourselves to the job losses that are being forecast, or even start preparing for the doomsday scenario where AI challenges humanity

and takes over earth? *Futouristic* is mostly interested in the impact of AI on education and the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, and this article will try to bring sense to the discussion.

WHAT IS AI?

British mathematician Alan Turing, who broke the German military codes in World War II, is credited with being the first to propose a test, in 1950, to see whether artificial intelligence can exhibit the same characteristics of human intelligence and therefore become indistinguishable from it. The term 'artificial intelligence' was coined in 1956 during a summer workshop by John McCarthy at Dartmouth College, USA. Since then, there have been important

developments in the creation of artificial intelligence, with such milestones as the computer Deep Blue beating world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997 and the first self-driving cars in 2018. Then ChatGPT was made public in late 2022 and suddenly AI became a major topic of conversation and news production as millions began to test it out on their computers.

When ChatGPT was prompted (asked) "How do you compare your intelligence as ChatGPT to human intelligence?", it generated this reply: "while I can perform certain tasks and provide helpful insights and information, I am not a replacement for human intelligence, and I should be used in conjunction with human intelligence to

enhance and improve decision-making, problem-solving, and communication.”

AI IN EDUCATION

AI has been studied in academia for decades, as the history of AI development confirms. However, right until the turn of the century, the discussion and research were mainly in the domain of computer science and how it could be extended to other sphere of life, e.g., Aiken (2005) researched how AI models can be used as a teaching aid through a special text database. The trend continued with most academic papers on AI in education coming from computer science and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The areas of education where AI was being considered for application were a) profiling and prediction, b) assessment and evaluation, c) adaptive systems and personalisation, and d) intelligent tutoring systems (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Ouyang, F., Zheng, L. and Jiao, P., 2022).

In 2019 UNESCO launched a framework for action on the ethical issues raised by AI and similar innovations, such as discrimination and stereotyping, issue of gender inequality, but also the fight against disinformation, the right to privacy, the protection of personal data, and human and environmental rights. Then in April this year when ChatGPT started making headlines, UNESCO published new guidelines regarding the use of ChatGPT, recognising both the opportunities and the challenges for higher education. The organisation's emphasis is that “Used ethically and with due consideration of the need to build individual and institutional capacity, ChatGPT could support HEIs to provide students with a more personalized and relevant learning experience, make administrative processes more efficient, and advance research and community engagement” (UNESCO, 2023, p.13).

Malta took notice of these developments and the local discussion on the potential effects of AI on Maltese society, and on education in particular, were covered by several public discussions over the last few months. The report of a *Times of Malta* conference concluded that with “ChatGPT in schools: students must demonstrate skills not just reproduce facts” (Arena, 2023).

At the same time the anti-plagiarism checker Turnitin, adopted by the main Maltese higher education institutions including ITS, announced that it has implemented an AI checker. The announcement was made by the CEO Chris Caren in a blog post (Caren, 2023).

This was met by both hope and scepticism by academia (Knox, 2023), as the first experience of the implementation of this feature was giving false positives to lecturers when assessing not only their students but also classic texts such as the American Constitution (Fowler, 2023). This is, so far, is the experience at ITS and around the world. For this reason, the Academic Research and Publications Board (ARPB) at ITS is still investigating the performance of the AI detector by Turnitin before updating its policies and regulations accordingly.

ITS academics have been experimenting and studying the AI tools made available at an astonishing rate. These tools include not only ChatGPT but also other generative AI tools like Dall-E (also by Open.AI), Midjourney and Stable Diffusion. The assessment is quite mixed, as the images of General Napoleon Bonaparte having a drink in Malta generated by Stable Diffusion show. However, the AI-generated image of the artist Adolf Hitler who, contrary to what really happened, had been accepted by the Academic of Fine Arts in Vienna and matured into a painter rather than a divisive political leader that sparked the Second World War, shows potential for alternative or counterfactual history exploration.

Academics, students, and non-academics must surely learn new skills to utilise this technology, first on the list being so-called ‘prompt engineering’, i.e., asking the right questions in the right format to be understood by the AI.

CHATGPT SAYS ...

It would be interesting to see what this AI model has to say about AI in education. To the prompt to list the pros and cons of AI in higher education, ChatGPT responded that pros include efficiency and productivity enhancement, personalisation and adaptive learning, accessibility, and inclusivity in the form of support for remote learning, and

AI-powered tools such as chatbot, virtual assistance and automated grading. In terms of potential dangers, ChatGPT admitted there are ethical concerns about AI bias and discrimination if not designed and used appropriately, loss of jobs, dependency and over-reliance, bias in algorithmic decisions, lack of transparency and accountability.

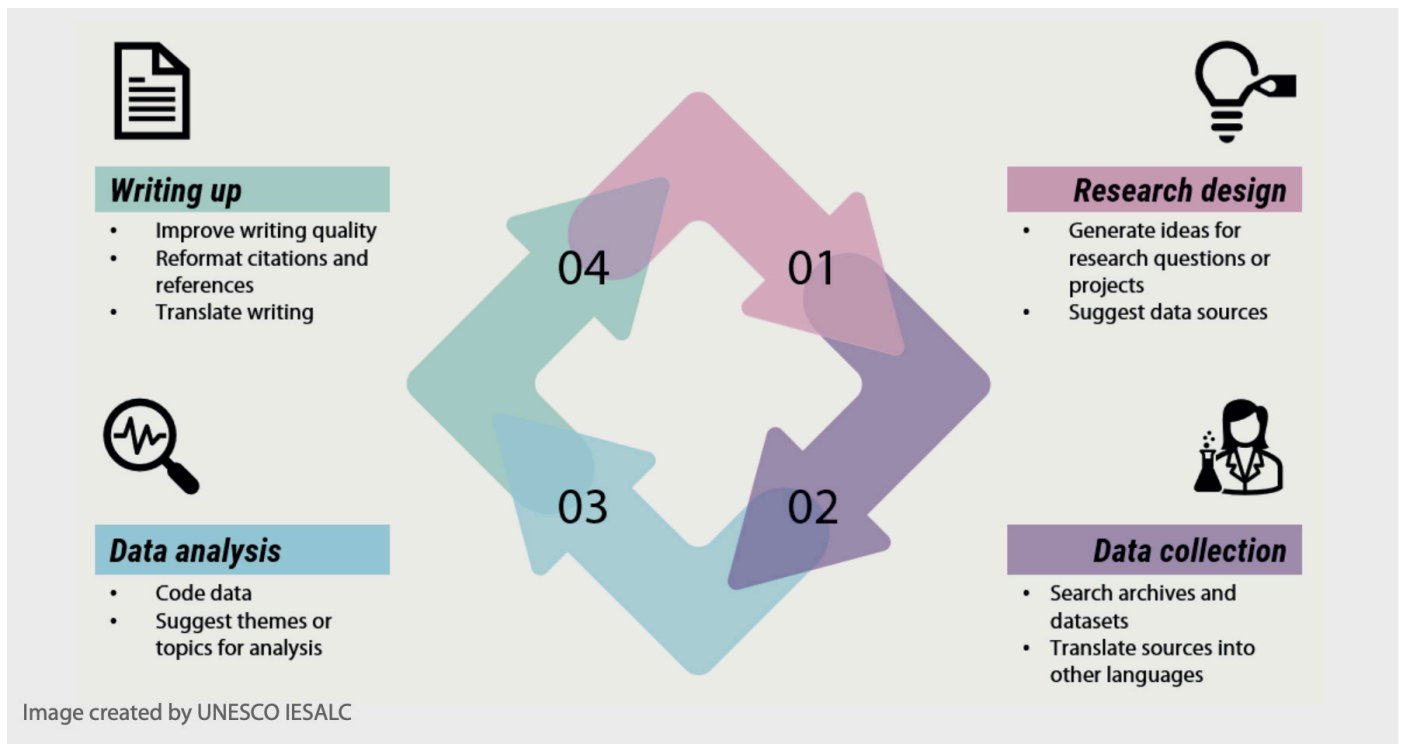
CHATGPT HAS THIS ADVICE:

“For students: be aware of the limitations and potential biases of AI tools, actively participate in the learning process, and seek help and feedback from human instructors. For faculty: use AI as a complement to, not a substitute for, human instruction, choose AI tools that align with pedagogical goals, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of AI implementation. Best practices for AI implementation in higher education: provide guidelines for the responsible use of AI in higher education, such as ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting



**ITS academics
have been
experimenting
and studying the
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astonishing rate**





Possible use of ChatGPT in the research process (UNESCO)

diversity and inclusivity, and addressing privacy and security concerns”.

AI IN TOURISM

The travel, tourism and hospitality industries are expected to be one of the major adopters of AI, but this has been developing for some years now, before ChatGPT came to the fore. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is promoting AI as an accelerator for post-pandemic recovery and to promote sustainability through digital innovation (UNWTO, 2020).

A paper by Noy and Zhang from MIT (USA) discovered that “generative AI technologies will—and have already begun—to noticeably impact workers ... ChatGPT increases job satisfaction and self-efficacy and heightens both concern and excitement about automation technologies” (2023, pp1-12)).

The implementation of AI in these industries cannot be discussed in a few paragraphs and merit deeper analysis, which *Futuristic* will provide in the coming issues.

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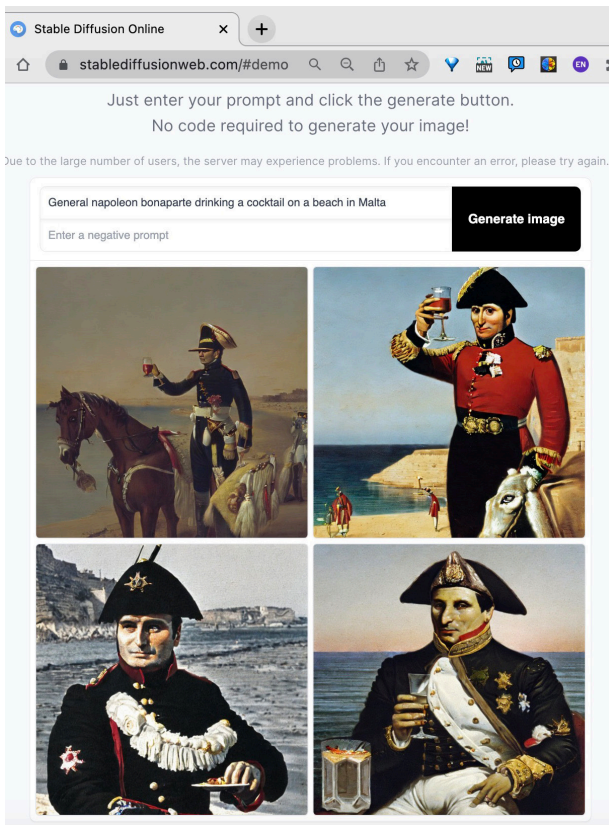
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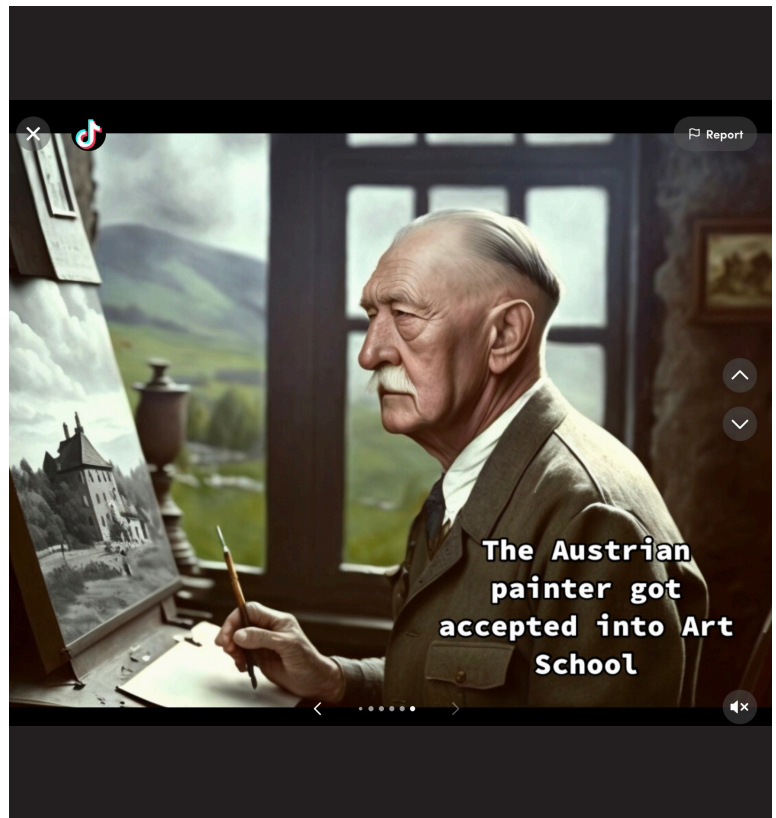
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How Stable Diffusion AI responded to the prompt to image General Napoleon Bonaparte having a drink on a beach in Malta



How AI imagines Adolf Hitler as a painter in old age if he has been accepted at the arts academy in his youth.

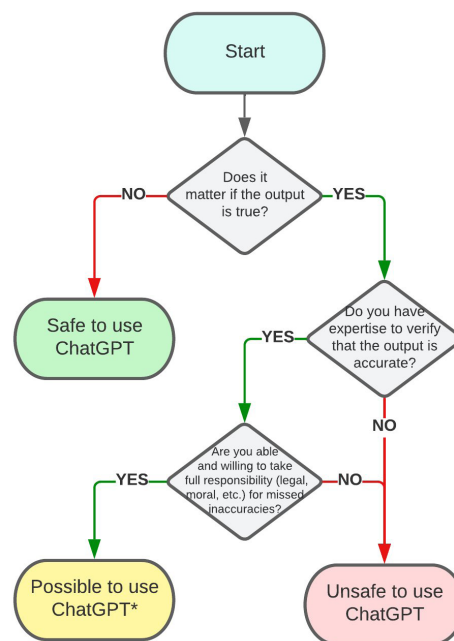
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Is it safe to use ChatGPT for your task?

Aleksandr Tiulkanov | January 19, 2023



* but be sure to verify each output word and sentence for accuracy and common sense





Developing a Historical Library's Identity through Heritage Interpretations

BY CHRISTOPHER CILIA
MASTER OF ARTS IN HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

National libraries serve locals and visitors from all around the world. These organisations are solely responsible for preserving and safeguarding national book treasures and unpublished documents and manuscripts. Heritage interpretation's primary function is to assist tourists in developing a sense of place and identity. Cultural heritage interpretation refers to the strategies used to increase visitor understanding and perception of cultural assets through development, management, and, sometimes, planning.

The primary purpose of this research is to provide a study on how the National Library of Malta can function as a cultural centre that safeguards the identity of all that makes us who we are.

The Knights of Malta constructed this awe-inspiring architectural structure to keep the Order's records secure and easily accessible. The edifice was completed in 1798, and the island is now home to some of the world's

most important collections. These works date from the 14th century until the 19th century. This antique library is exceptional and one-of-a-kind because certain manuscripts from the 12th century are much older. The National Library can serve as a heritage destination and, if promoted appropriately, can be matched with other locations such as temples and museums. In addition, the National Library of Malta possesses some of the most valuable items in the country. The 'Dedicate of Donation' by Charles V, 'Saint Anthony the Abbot of Life,' and 'Nostradamus - the 1566 Prophecy,' all in good condition, are regarded as national treasures due to their rarity.

METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly qualitative but employed a mixed approach. Two semi-structured questionnaires were disseminated to obtain a more focused picture: one for Malta's tourist guides and one for Malta Libraries' management, who are also professional librarians, allowing for a more in-depth examination of the data.

The comparisons assessed where the National Library of Malta stands and what tourist guides expect against what is done as expressed by library professionals. A comprehensive picture of what must be done to restore this prominent historical library to its former splendour is also discussed.

Two recruitment letters were sent to the library professionals and a representative selection of tourist guides via their official email addresses.

Since the number of tourist guides operating on the Islands is large, a representation of gender and range was needed, and it was decided that **ten persons** varying from 20 to 60 years would be a respectable sample. These parameters were established to understand how tourist guides view their role in aiding the National Library in promoting our literacy culture.

The other recruitment letter was addressed to the Malta Libraries Chief Executive Officer



and other key personnel from the National Library management team. All **four persons** contributed to the open-ended questions, and both population samples made a 100 % response rate.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

TOURIST GUIDES

While tourist guides may have had an inherent prejudice against the subject, this bias was mitigated by interrogating them as a secondary source of information regarding the tourists' sentiments towards the subject rather than their beliefs.

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

Given that the Malta Libraries' respondents are top management staff, a favourable trend towards supporting the National Library's capacity to participate in cultural tourism is emerging at the highest management level. It is well established that no such initiative can be conducted adequately without the management's agreement.

Unanimously, both parties highlighted that the National Library's mission's critical aspect should be attracting locals because many people assume that, as locals, we do not value our rich legacy and what our forebears sacrificed to maintain their identity and beliefs. Indeed, officials seek to benefit economically from tourism but fail to recognise the immediate benefits it may bring to other industries. Numerous

individuals and volunteers attempt to curb the destruction of vernacular buildings and protect village cores. Unfortunately, many people do not appreciate the architectural heritage. Therefore, raising awareness about such issues becomes difficult due to a lack of awareness and appreciation, contributing to the demise of what makes us Maltese as we are stripped of our identity. There is a noticeable lack of awareness and understanding of our immense archival treasures, whether it is civil, religious, or private groups keeping them. However, these archives help shape our understanding of past events, tales, and histories, and as such, must be better understood, cherished, and made more readily available to a broader audience.

Tourist guides were also asked whether they would be interested in training to become specialised guides at the National Library, highlighting varied cultural interpretations and representations. They unanimously agreed that it was an excellent notion and that such initiatives have been long overdue. With the impending adoption of new regulations governing tourist guides, further avenues for guides to market their services will become available. Library tours would indeed interest guides who value and are drawn to documentary legacy, and another niche tourism market may be developed for a specific audience seeking additional information. As a result, the guides will

learn about the historical treasures and the proper way to handle and discuss them, both in terms of documented evidence and the historical journey the location has had in becoming a historical library.

The role of the local population can be critical in adapting cultural routes to the requirements of creating a unique tourist product that carries the atmosphere of authentic national culture on the ground, the memory stored in libraries, and the revival of intangible heritage values. Strategies and development plans should involve libraries in interpreting and appealing to demonstrations of activities promoting cultural values' identity. In this way, conditions will be created for the popularisation of libraries, the development of a specific type of activity related to the engagement of employees to present the library to tourists, the formation of new jobs, and the creation of an appealing year-round calendar of cultural tourism, as well as the resolution of today's problem with the offering of attractions of dubious artistic value.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates how Malta's size is an advantage. If a collective synergy exists, a state-of-the-art historical library could represent the Maltese community's diversity. The ordinary people, the artists, and the historical tourists who want to

immerse themselves in a revamped library while ensuring that all the roots that made it iconic are still in place and ready to keep writing history; and storing it accordingly. Regarding the contribution and function of history, historical architecture is regarded as a repository of monumental heritage and an essential criterion for preserving architectural heritage. Consequently, transforming the philosophical concept of cultural heritage into contemporary architecture preserves its originality by applying historical precedent.

It is important to emphasise that library directors support the opportunity for these cultural institutions to participate in cultural tourism and that they are willing to collaborate with the tourism industry and all stakeholders to create the conditions necessary for the training of competent officials to reorganise the library's activities so that they are accessible to tourists with cognitive and cultural needs.

Locally, one can lobby for the National Library to construct another open location to display specialised topics throughout the year and engage the community within the institution. The message must emanate from a well-defined plan with constructive objectives.

A national hub can be used as a step in the direction of programmes, films, and documentaries on Maltese heritage, and thus, the National Library can serve as a heritage destination and, if promoted appropriately, can be matched with other locations such as temples and museums.

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A national hub can be used as a step in the direction of programmes, films, and documentaries on Maltese heritage



Photo by Krzysztof Hepner on Unsplash

Heritage interpretation in a migration museum in Malta and its role in a changing society

BY ANNA AZZOPARDI
MASTER OF ARTS IN HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

Maltese cultural heritage has been shaped by all settlers, colonizers, migrants and refugees who have been moving to and from Malta over the millennia. Emigration from Malta started in the 19th century and reached its peak post-war when over 30 per cent of the population had emigrated to distant countries to seek better futures (Jones, 1973; King, 1979; Azzopardi, 2012). On the other hand, whilst the Malta Census of Population and Housing of 2011 had shown that the percentage of foreigners living in Malta had reached 4.9 per cent, statistics from the preliminary report of the recent census held in 2021 confirm that within a span of ten years, this percentage had risen drastically to 22.24. This means that presently, out of a total population of 519,562 persons, 115,449 are non-Maltese (Vella, 2022).

During this study, the author carried out extensive research about the role that museums should play in educating a dynamic society about cultural diversity through the interpretation of heritage (ICOM, 1972; 1984; 2019), (ICOMOS, 2008; 2014), (UNESCO, 2005). Fleming, (2003) and Marstine, (2011) argue that museums contribute to the well-being of society and should make a difference in people's lives. According to Sorensen and Carman, (2009) and Falk (2016), the education of society about heritage should centre more on people than on things, museums can influence people's lives and the factor that motivates individuals to visit museums is related to their identity needs and interests. Various scholars refer to several European museums which are striving to connect their society's perception of its history to the contemporary movement of people

(Whitehead et al, 2015). However, other scholars admit that with the multicultural societies and challenges that migration creates, it is taking too long for European museums to adopt the subject of migration (Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione, 2013). In the local scenario, scholars refer to the significant role that museums in Malta can play in educating society about multiculturalism (Mayo, Pace and Zammit, 2008).

Through this study, the author explored how heritage interpretation in a migration museum in Malta can be used to educate society about the different identities on this island. Using an inductive approach, the researcher analysed the following research questions:

1. Can heritage interpretation in a migration museum in Malta contribute to educating society about how migration has been shaping the identity and the culture of the Maltese people?
2. Which interpretative techniques in a migration museum in Malta would be the most effective to assist society in understanding multiculturalism and in building relations between the host community and the migrants?

With a view to investigate the social role that European migration museums play through the interpretation of heritage (Museums and Migration, 2022), ten semi-structured interviews were carried out with museum officials of four museums in Italy, Slovenia and Malta. Case studies about each museum were subsequently formulated.

ITALY - GALATA MARITIME MUSEUM

This case study exposed the role that the Galata Maritime Museum plays in raising awareness about cultural diversity and migration, particularly about the creation of empathy between the host community and migrants. Throughout the interviews with three officials of this museum, emphasis was constantly made on outreach to society, and on the museum's efforts to educate society about the diverse cultures in Italy and about the contemporary social changes connected to migration.

SLOVENIA - SLOVENIAN ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM

During the interviews with three officials of this museum, the importance of educating society about migration was stressed throughout. This case study clearly reflects the emphasis being made by the museum to educate and reach out to all classes of society, mainly through participatory activities and narrative. Being an ethnographic museum, these officials stress on the importance of the interpretation of intangible cultural heritage such as crafts, languages, costumes, music and culinary activities to build bridges with migrants.

MALTA - MALTA MIGRATION MUSEUM

Through the semi-structured interviews with three of this museum's officials, some key points were brought to light. Although Malta already had a migration museum which was officially launched in 2011 (Times of Malta, 2011), this was never fully functional as a museum. The Migrants Commission, which is responsible for this museum, is presently fully occupied in assisting migrants and has no time on its hands to run a museum. It also does not have any financial and human resources available, as well as no expertise, to establish and run a new museum. However, the present officials are very eager to have a new museum and are also very willing to promote participatory activities. Another point which emerged was that although the Migrants Commission expects that a new migration museum would remain under its jurisdiction, it is willing to collaborate with other entities about the subject of migration.

MALTA - MALTA MARITIME MUSEUM

With the above findings in mind as well as the fact that several worldwide migration museums are integrated within maritime museums, the researcher felt the need to interview a high official who is engaged with Heritage Malta to discuss the present situation of the Malta Maritime Museum and discuss this issue in more detail. This official made it clear that museums in Malta are already facing many challenges and that it is not recommended to introduce more museums on such a small island. The researcher was made aware that the Malta Maritime Museum had never been in contact or collaborated with the Malta Migration Museum. However, in connection to the subject of migration, the Malta Maritime Museum is presently working with the National Archives of Malta for the future inclusion of collective memory connected to migration in the timeline of the museum. Since the researcher carried out the practicum at the Malta National Archives, substantial information had been gathered about the crucial work being carried out by The Malta National Archives on the oral, sound, and visual archive project Mem[o]rja, which aims in preserving the collective

the present officials are very eager to have a new museum and are also very willing to promote participatory activities.

memory of the people of Malta. Scholars refer to the importance of digitizing archival records connected to migration to make them accessible to all and create outreach for social inclusion (Arthur et al, 2018), (Marselis, 2011).

Following the argument raised by the official at the Malta Maritime Museum that a strategy for a new migration museum would need between 10 to 25 years for its implementation, the researcher believes that this period would generate enough opportunities to raise awareness about the need of a migration museum within Malta's contemporary society. Apart from the fact that a physical museum would not immediately be needed, introducing the idea of a future migration museum can provoke and inspire people about this theme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With this rationale in mind, the researcher tried to explore a vision for the future of this concept. The fact that both the Malta Maritime Museum and the Malta Migration Museum have never been in contact with each other does not relate to a possible plan of merging the two entities with each other. On the other hand, both curators expressed their willingness to collaborate, whilst both museums possess expertise in the field of migration, one from the historical side and one from the field of contemporary social issues. Subsequently, it was concluded that the ideal way forward for a migration museum in Malta would be to merge the expertise of both these entities in a joint collaborative project to draft a strategic plan for a future migration museum.

This study concluded that accessible, relevant, and provocative interpretation of cultural heritage created by migration can relate to the diverse communities living on the island of Malta. Participatory activities and narrative in a migration museum would assist in educating Malta's changing society about the diversity of cultures that exist on the island and would also stimulate the interests of the thousands of foreigners to expose their diverse cultures through their tangible and intangible heritage. Ultimately, investing in a migration museum to educate children and young persons about multiculturalism in Malta would prepare future generations to face the challenges created by migration and at the same time would add value to the tourism market by providing visitors with a bigger choice of attractions.

As a result of this research, this study brought to light the need of a future, fully-fledged and functional migration museum in Malta and discussed an interpretive strategy for its marketing and setting up (Kotler et al, 2008). Ultimately, the author recommends further studies and exploration about the interpretation of migration heritage as well as about the importance of the social role of museums in Malta.

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Erasmus Vinci Meeting in Talinn, Estonia Discusses Trainer's Guide

BY DAVID PACE
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS

On Friday, the 28th April 2023, a contingent from ITS Malta attended the third partner meeting of the Erasmus Vinci Project regarding Carbon Friendly Tourism in Talinn, Estonia.

Mr. David Pace, lead researcher, Ms. Sharon Farrugia and Mr. James Mula took part in the meeting which discussed the results of the first three phases of the project and the fourth phase which regards the publication of a Trainers' Guide e-Book that will provide guidance to Tourism VET Trainers & Mentors on how to plan, prepare for and deliver training to Tourism VET learners and Tourism stakeholders, on how to foster low carbon activities in the different tourism phases.

The guide will also provide a training path to those who want to become entrepreneurs in the low carbon tourism sector and allow VET trainers /tourism mentors to systematically prepare their training resources for sessions held with different types of VET learners/ tourism stakeholders and to cater for their different learning styles.

Although the publication of the Training Guide is an integral part of the project, it is also important as Low Carbon Tourism is a relatively new VET topic and thus VET trainers/tourism mentors need guidance on how to best transfer knowledge in the field. The EU Green Deal strategy must also be taken into consideration as it will increasingly impact the need for EU Member States to invest in low carbon tourism activities.

The Trainers' Guide will also address learner style issues, particularly those who are more receptive to visual or kinesthetic training approaches recommending to VET trainers/ mentors, the training modules/units and training styles to address the learning needs of different stakeholders involved in the main three phases of tourism travel, that is, planning, travelling and destination phases.

The Trainers' Guide is clearly intended for VET Trainers & Tourism Mentors who will be able to use the VINCI training material and resources in order to provide customised training to Tourism VET learners and/or entrepreneurs seeking to exploit LCT (Low Carbon Tourism) business opportunities.

The expected impact of Training Guide is that:

- Tourism VET trainers and mentors will have access to a concise yet professionally designed and prepared Trainers' Guide that will help them in their knowledge transfer activities,
- It will Guide Tourism VET trainers to deliver customised training paths/ sessions to VET learners /tourism stakeholders depending on their learning styles and Low Carbon learning needs,
- It will encourage VET trainers/ mentors to make use of the VINCI training resources; Thus, a range of Tourism VET learners will become more knowledgeable on Low Carbon Activities that can be followed in the main three travel tourism phases.

Hence in the long-term, European tourism sectors stakeholders in the partner countries will be able to foster low carbon tourism activities, thus directly contributing to goals set in the National Energy and Climate Plans and the EU Green Deal targets.

Website: <https://www.vinci.eumecb.com/>





The VINCI project partners in Talinn



The ITS representatives,
from left: James Mula, Sharon Farrugia,
David Pace.

Investigating the Nutritional Habits of Long-Distance Runners in the Maltese Environment



BY NATHALIE BELLIZZI
B.A. (HONS) IN CULINARY ARTS

This study provides an overview of the dietary habits of Maltese long-distance runners. What importance do athletes place on nutrition to achieve peak performance by understanding when and what to eat before, during, and after training?

The study also delves into the type of diet an athlete should consume and the ideal cooking methods of such diets. The primary research included mixed methods. The principal quantitative research instrument was a questionnaire handed to a target audience composed of long-distance runners, whilst the second research instrument was an in-depth interview, semi-structured questionnaire with long-distance athletes, coaches, and nutritionists. Following the research, outcomes, and conclusion, the author presented a set of recommendations from which athletes can derive optimal training and race results.

The author wanted to test whether Maltese runners follow a diet based on research recommendations from coaches or specialists.

The study also aimed to understand athletes' awareness of how nutrition affects their performance. It was assumed that runners who strongly understand nutrition and follow a healthy diet perform better and achieve superior outcomes.

The following are the primary research questions that were addressed in the study:

- What effect does nutrition have on an athlete's performance?
- What steps may be taken to help athletes improve their performance?
- Are athletes well-versed in the subject of nutrition?
- What is the level of culinary awareness of Athletes regarding the preparation of food to obtain the greatest nutritional value?

The author also addressed how food choices influence a long-distance runner's performance and how a well-calibrated diet can improve the Athlete's overall health and results. The study subdivided

the nutritional intake into macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats, and protein) and micronutrients (minerals and vitamins). The author also studied the timing of food, cooking methods, special diets, and a comparison between East African and Western marathon athletes. Information was obtained through journals, books, and social media.

The qualitative studies show that nutrition (not its own) is considered an essential aspect of improvement in athletic performance by Maltese coaches, nutritionists, and athletes. Consequently, the study results reveal that runners feel that appropriate nutrition is vital for performance.

The steps taken to help athletes improve their performance was another aspect of the research that was studied and concluded that the timing of food consumed before, during and after training is crucial. It is critical for the correct number of calories to be combined with a suitable balance of macro and micronutrients with enough fluids to prevent dehydration. Therefore,



Photo by Filip Mroz on Unsplash

finding the proper diet that suits an athlete's body is a priority. Unsurprisingly, athletes should avoid eating junk food, processed food, alcohol, and fatty, ready-made meals unless they are prepared specifically for the individual Athlete's diet. The study also showed that athletes should frequently prepare food at home with fresh ingredients and various coloured vegetables, grains, fish and meat.

15% of Maltese athletes utilise a nutritionist, while 85% design their own diet. Maltese runners would instead obtain information about the food that should be consumed from alternative sources. The internet and coaches are the most popular sources of information for such Maltese athletes.

The Athlete's culinary awareness about how to prepare food regarding cooking methods to obtain the most significant nutritional value revealed the top three that were roasting, boiling and steaming. Athletes appear to employ a healthy cooking method; although a study by Yong, Amin and Dongpo (2019) suggests that steaming and microwave cooking are best since they preserve nutrients, including water-soluble vitamins.

The preferred diet amongst Maltese athletes is the Mediterranean diet. According to the interviews, nutritionists promote the Mediterranean diet. Still, coaches and athletes are indifferent to a diet's specificity as long as it is healthy and high in carbohydrates.

The conclusion of the study revealed that while some Maltese long-distance runners give adequate attention to nutrition, others need further guidance on what foods are good for them before, during and after a race or training session. They also require additional knowledge regarding which proper cooking methods and nutritional sources are best with the assistance of nutritionists or coaches qualified in nutrition. The author believes that every athlete should follow a personalised diet because no athlete's body is the same. Differences can be due to age, gender, culture, genetics etc.

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Revisiting the Italian MT Boat attack on Malta's Grand Harbour on the 26th of July 1941

BY DONALD PACE
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

Much has been written about Malta's pivotal role in World War II and several significant events from that period are celebrated. The attack on Malta's Grand Harbour by Italian Naval Commandos on the 26th of July 1941, is a well-known but rarely commemorated event and its 80th anniversary in 2021 fell right into the Covid gap in local public activities. This is a pity as this event symbolizes both the skill and courage of the Maltese gunners as well as the effectiveness of the Grand Harbour defenses against the only attack ever attempted from the sea during this conflict.

One of the objectives of this essay is to address this gap and create a better awareness of what occurred just outside Malta's Grand Harbour on the 26th of July 1941. The evidence of the attack, dubbed *Operazione Malta 2* by the Italian attack fleet named the *Decima Flotilla MAS*, is ever present in the remnants of the 1919 bridge across the Grand Harbour's breakwater. In 2012 a new bridge, vaguely reminiscent of the original was installed over the gap, however, the central column of the original structure remains visible as a poignant testimony to the event.

Following the successful defense by the islands' military forces, details of the attack were the subject of several British Top-Secret military documents, many of which were only released for public viewing in 1972. Subsequently, researchers and historians have delved into these and other documents as well as biographies and publications to piece together an intricate

story of military strategy, defensive tactics and untold bravery and personal sacrifice by many of the protagonists, to place it firmly on the itinerary of visits to WWII sites in Malta.

This long essay sought to revisit the event and evaluate how the actions of the key participants contributed to the success of the defenders and the failure of the attack. The contribution of the well-planned defences, the role of the gunners, most of them Maltese, as well as the Italian attackers' strategy, were analysed. The sequence of events that led to the attack's failure was reviewed through a selection of publications and reports which narrated the story from both the perspective of the attackers and that of the defenders.

As a basis for the research, interviews were carried out with researchers and experts in the field. Site inspections of the main defences involved in the event were also carried out to understand the impact of the weaponry placed in strategic locations around the Grand Harbour as well as the complex system of observation and communication used to coordinate the defences.

As a result, several interesting facts and conclusions have been brought to light, giving the account a new perspective.

Based on these findings, a guided tour of the still-existing Grand Harbour defences has been designed. This tour offers participants a detailed account of what happened in different locations around the attacked areas from both the attackers' and defenders' perspectives.

THE TOUR

The route for this tour concentrates mainly on the areas of Grand harbour and Marsamxett where the activities related to the attack happened. Each stop provides a backdrop for a part of the story to immerse participants in the atmosphere of the attack and the perspective of the attackers and defenders.

1. The tour starts at the *Gun Post Bar*, near *Auberge de Baviere*, along the Valletta coastal road. This is the site of one of the Gun emplacements which protected the entrance to the submarine base in Marsamxett. Here the location of the WW2 submarine base within Marsamxett harbour serves as a backdrop to introduce the defences protecting the target areas as well as the positioning of the attackers on their final approach.
2. The tour then proceeds through the *Jews' Sally Port* to the shoreline below St Elmo, where the attack plan of the Italian flotilla is outlined with the defensive bastions and the sea-level perspective as a backdrop to the storyline.
3. The tour proceeds on foot along the foreshore leading towards the entrance to Grand Harbour and the damaged bridge. A description of the types of craft used accompanies this walk to the bridge in preparation for the account of the attack itself.
4. At the Bridge the plan of the Italian attacking force is explained. The story



The breakwater viaduct before the attack (left), with one span, collapsed immediately after the attack (right). Note the fallen girders of the outer span creating a further obstruction to the passage. The nets hanging from the girders are also still visible and reach the seabed. (Maj Tony Abela, *The Times of Malta*, 23rd July 2016).

of the disappearance of the 2 SLC Manned Torpedoes and the approach of the first two explosive boats is narrated in some detail. The positioning of the undetected attackers and their unexpected drift with the current will all be highlighted. The first explosion which set off the alarm and its effects on the bridge are highlighted supported by the visual of the damaged viaduct in the background.

5. The tour continues past the bridge and along the coast to the site of the Harbour boom defence mechanism inside Grand Harbour. Here an explanation of the protective barrier provided by this system is given using the excellent TVP of the site itself and the entry to the harbour.
6. From the boom defence site the tour proceeds along the coast and up the stairs leading to the *Sacra Infermeria*, the Mediterranean conference centre, and the entrance to Fort St Elmo. The tour enters the grounds of Fort St. Elmo and makes its

way to the main entrance of the fort and the parade ground.

From the parade ground at St Elmo the tour proceeds to the Harbour Fire Command positions at the highest point of the bastions.

Following the successful defense by the islands' military forces, details of the attack were the subject of several British Top-Secret military documents

At the St Elmo Harbour Fire Command Positions, a detailed explanation of the observation and communications setup installed here during WWII ensues.

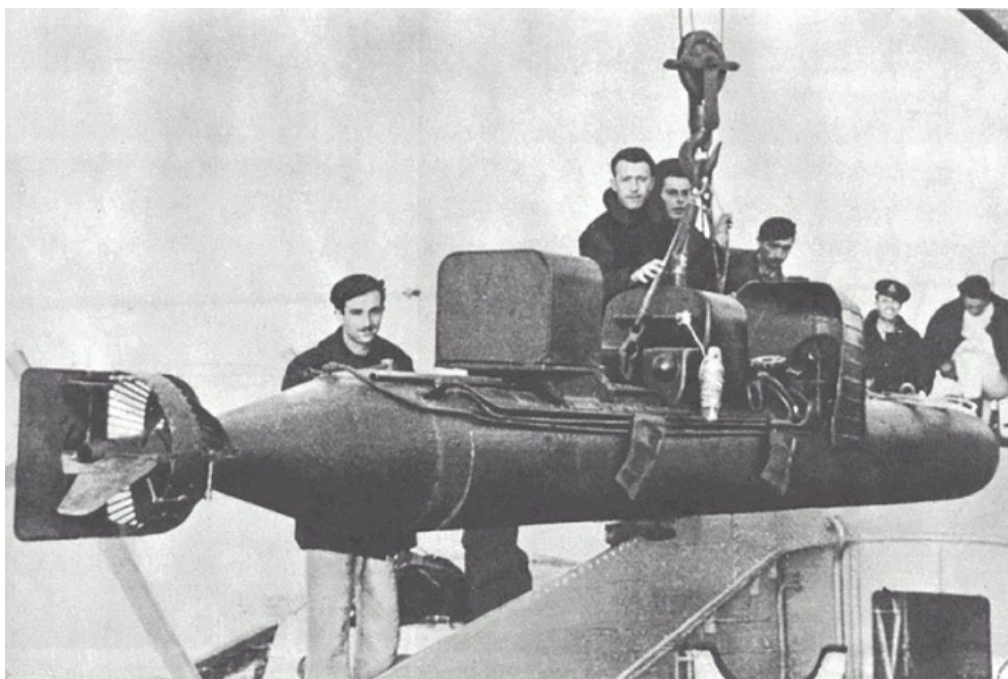
The positioning of the various personalities who participated in the defence on the 26th of July 1941 are identified and their respective roles outlined.

Major Ferro's position when accompanied by one of the survivors, Frassetto, is highlighted. A brief description of Italy's declaration of war in June 1940 and the 1st air attack on Malta is offered near the memorial to the victims of this first air raid. The Location of the 9, twin 6 pdr batteries of guns identified as Guns D to H in the story are also pointed out from this vantage point.

7. The tour then moves down to the gun positions on the perimeter road within the St Elmo complex.

This is the location of the twin 6-pounder gun emplacements D to H which formed the main defence against close-range seaborne attacks at the time.

These were the guns which defeated the attack, manned by their Maltese gunners, under the command of Major Ferro. The tour party is positioned at



The *maiale* (pig) midget submarine used by the Italians in the attack.

Abercrombie Bastion, the site of Gun positions E&F which is easily accessible and well-preserved.

The concrete twin gun emplacement and the Command Towers serve as a backdrop for a description of the actions of Lance Bombardier Bugeja on Gun E, Sgt. Barbara on Gun F and Sgt. Zammit on Gun G who together destroyed the majority of the enemy craft as they navigated their way towards Grand Harbour, right across the sights of these guns. The shot, taken at maximum range, from Gun 'F' by Sgt. Barbara is described and the repercussions of this shot on the Italian MTB, MAS 452, and the leadership of 10th Flotilla MAS crammed in the wheelhouse of the boat is highlighted.

Here, also the story of the downed Hurricane Pilot who boarded MAS 452 and discovered the gruesome spectacle left by this shot is narrated with its interesting conclusion on the retrieval of the pilot. A description of how the guns worked, where the ammunition was stored and where the soldiers spent the night at their posts between the 25th to 26th of July 1941 is also provided at this location.

8. The final stop of the tour will be inside the War Museum, where an MT Explosive Boat is on display.

Here the layout of these MT Explosive boats is explained and the position of the pilot ejector seat shown. This location also offers an excellent opportunity for a conclusion and question time.

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Medicinal Herbs and Plants of 17th and 18th Century Malta

BY FRANCESCA VINCENTI
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

The research for this long essay, aimed to identify herbal or plant medicinal formulas that were prepared and used in the Maltese islands during the 17th and 18th centuries and to identify which remedies may still be in use today. The research adopted a qualitative and a hagiographic bibliographic approach, while secondary data was retrieved from the archives of the Inquisition and the National Library of Malta. A bibliographic method for analysis was thus the main method employed and an emphasis was placed on the type of natural plants that were used during the period, which are still either being researched or administered today. The

data was supplemented by means of a semi-structured interview with a physician and the information gathered was used to determine whether enough material exists to support an alternative medicine tours or botanical tours, that would include historical landmarks. The results may also become useful for the setup of botanical gardens and future nature reserves, in line with the Regulations for the Protection of Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats instituted by the Environmental and Resources Authority. Additionally, the studies carried out for the purpose of this long essay, may provide interesting basic information and further investigation by historians, Pharmacologists or Botanists.

"The use of certain plants and herbs, has a long tradition in our islands, even to a limited extent up to as recently as the 1800's and very early 1900's"

Dr. Charles Boffa (2005)

Several medical documents and legal manuscripts dating back to the time of the Knights of St John were researched by renowned doctor and academic Dr Paul Cassar. These contained ingredients, lists and names of pharmacists and patients of the period (Cassar, 1991). Some of the manuscripts offered detailed information about the pharmacists who had filed a claim for payment for the services they rendered, against the estate of deceased

patients between 1713 and 1735. The names of herbs, plants and other *materia medica* that were commonly used in the era were mentioned in these documents. The list included oils, ointments, syrups, conserves and powders from white roses, fennel, senna, vinegar, sugar, anis, borage, verbena and other local plants. Another register dated 1766 to 1768, mentioned rhubarb (Roebarb), sweet almond (Amygd Dulcis) and radix china (Cassar, 1991). Radix, also referred to as china china, is an Asian herb used to strengthen the blood and promote circulation amongst other benefits (Wu and Hsieh, 2011. Page 32) and the plant was noted in the eighteenth-century manuscript entitled *Libro di Ricette Medicinale*, at the National Archives, in a recipe to treat 'Febbri Intermittenti' (MS. Libr. 251, Page 74). However, the source of this plant was not mentioned. It is not indigenous to the Mediterranean and enquiries made at the botanical garden of Argotti in Malta and at the Royal Botanical Garden of Madrid, yielded neither specimen or historical literature, nor any knowledge of its existence.

"Giardino di bellissimi segreti e ricette avuti da diversi signori soggetti bravi dove si contengono varie sorte di segreti, ricette medicinali et artificiali insegnati con l'occasione di camminare il mondo e praticar diversi virtuosi, parte di loro approvati da me Don Giuseppe Seychel"

*Libr. MS. 1173, Don Giuseppe Seychel.
Anno Domini 1776*

During the research carried out, a manuscript that may hold important historical, cultural, medicinal and ecological information was unearthed. The Manuscript, registered as Libr. MS 1173 is dated Anno Domini 1776. A detailed academic focus on this document is recommended, as it may hold valuable information on the flora of the Maltese Islands. The document does not seem to have been referenced by any of the scholars cited in this essay.

The manuscript registered as *Libr. MS 251, Libro di Ricette Medicinali*, at the National Archives of Malta, offered detailed information regarding various botanical, mineral and other ingredients used for

pharmaceutical preparation. The manuscript was hand-written in old Italian, the lingua franca of the period. In the process of translating selected extracts, some valuable information emerged. This was further researched and cross referenced with medical and botanical information sources to ensure the accuracy of the information extracted. The remedies on the document were contributions credited to persons, such as *Dell' Medico Don Lorenzo Ther (?)*, *Com. Luc. Tomasi* and a certain *Bali. Cavaniglia*. Amongst the recipes, were 'Waters' using simple ingredients, to more complex preparations for the treatment of catarrh, Gout, dental problems, Calcium or Uric Acid stones, the Plague, Carbuncle boils and surprisingly even a solution to rid dogs of fleas and a remedy to avoid getting drunk at banquets.

"Per non imbriciarsi ne' conviti ancorche' si beva di molto di vari sorsi di vini, e si mangi molto"

Dal Com. Luc Tomasi, Lib 251. National Archives of Malta

Several local plants and extracts were listed in the manuscript which ranged from Spanish Broom, Calendula and Cynomorium to Olive Oil, Bitter Almonds, Cabbage and Cinnamon. Flavoured Coffees were also listed for use with persons during 'times of plague'.

"32. Profumo per le Café', e per Le Persone in tempo di Peste" - Lib.251, Ricetta 32. National Archives of Malta

"34. Eccelente preservative curati o della Peste" - Lib.251, Ricetta 32. National Archives of Malta

In recent times, phytochemistry studies of fourteen Maltese Medicinal plants were carried out by two departments of the University of Malta in 2015. The Institute of Earth Systems, *Division of Rural Sciences and Food Systems* and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, *Department of Pharmacy*, noted that the selected plants possessed healing properties. Some of these plants feature in the documents consulted for this essay, such as Squill, which was noted by the University of Malta to have the ability to

The concept of applying historical medical facts together with folklore, culture and tradition as derived from this study, could produce a unique itinerary for Tour Guides in the Maltese Islands.

produce a cardiogenic effect. Meanwhile, Borage and Squirting Cucumber offered anticancer qualities (Attard, 2001). The findings also resulted in the fact that Olive had immunomodulatory properties (Wisniewski et al, 2019, Page 117), while Marigold known as Calendula (Hiura et al, 2016, Page 149), as well as Aloe Vera and Erica (Villareal et al, 2013, Pages 236 – 243), all contained anti-inflammatory properties. Meanwhile, plants such as Poison Ivy, Sage and Basil, Fig, Caper and Sticky Fleabane were found to hold antimicrobial and antifungal properties, while Vervain had an antispasmodic effect. Waters made from Orange Flower, Chamomile and Blue Passionflower had a sedative effect

on the body, while studies revealed that *Micromeria* which hails from the mint family and known as the Maltese Savory was good for Kidney Stones (Attard et al, 2015. Page 5). Meanwhile, a manuscript translated by Reginald Vella Tomlin (1959, page 20), had an index of local medicinal flora. The town of Floriana was mentioned in the document as a site where one could find the *Albero Giuda* (the Judas Tree), which hails from the *Siliqua* family to which Carob trees belong.

The Serpillo (Wild thyme) was also listed as growing in Floriana. Other local Flora in the translated index included the Sarsapilla, Olive, Caper, Rocket, Juniper, Cypress and a variety of local flowers amongst others.

During the 1800's, the botanical garden of the Knights of St John was moved to Floriana by the British and the plants were initially divided between the Sarria Garden and the Maglio Garden. The entire collection was later relocated to Argotti Gardens (Times of Malta, 2015). Today a section of the garden is reserved for specific Departments of the University of Malta, such as the Department of Biology and the Institute of Earth Systems, where projects focus on the conservation of plants and research of bioactive extracts and ecology. None of the plants that originated from the Knights' botanical garden of Fort St Elmo survive today, however the herbarium and other areas host several plants of the Maltese Islands that would have been popular ingredients in the day.

Finally, the research undertaken for this essay, demonstrates that the concept of applying historical medical facts together with folklore, culture and tradition as derived from this study, could produce a unique itinerary for Tour Guides in the

Maltese Islands. An abundance of well documented information also exists, for entities to justify making an investment in the setup of more botanical gardens and to create national reserves and protected areas in Malta where rare, endemic and indigenous flora can be preserved for posterity and for future scientific research. Lastly, the studies carried out for the purpose of this long essay, may provide a useful basis for further investigation to be carried out by historians, or those focusing their studies on Pharmacy or Botany.

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The Appeal of Dark Tourism in Malta

BY MARIO CACCIOTTOLO
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

My research explores the appeal of dark tourism within the Maltese islands. It identifies reasons why tourists may want to visit 'dark' sites to hear stories relating to crime, sex, murder and tragedies. Also, the study defines local resources for dark history walks and identifies sites within the Maltese islands that can support dark tourism.

The study was conducted through qualitative research and the data was collected by examining books and journals. Further research was gathered through three interviews with people associated with various aspects of dark tourism in Malta.

One of the interviewees, Subject A, is a tourist guide who specialises in ghost walks. They describe these as popular social events and noted that people like to enter a building as part of their tour.

They also state how Malta has an advantage, due to how many historical events have occurred in such a small area, so the country's history is densely packed together. As a result, it is logistically easier to move tourists and clients between various dark history locations.

Subject A also suggests organising a conference on dark tourism locally, attended by scholars from abroad to discuss the subject and to include an analysis of local sites, such as the Inquisitor's Palace. This would also give a boost to Malta's dark tourism scene from an international perspective.

This echoes the interview testimony of Subject B, an academic with expertise in dark tourism both locally and abroad.

They say Malta is 'full' of dark tourism sites such as the ones found in Mdina, Valletta

and Birgu. They also suggest the creation of a nationally organised setup to help those who want to offer dark tourism experiences to market their offerings better, working within a holistic framework.

According to Subject B, there needs to be political will to develop Malta as a dark tourism location. By this, they mean policymaking by the relevant tourism authorities, who need to 'take dark tourism seriously and adopt a position on it'. This is necessary because fragmentation of this niche's offerings and letting individual guides or tour operators do their sporadic tours or events, 'will not work in the long run'.

This last point was also raised by Subject A, who says having a network of guides working together to promote this niche would result in a better, wider dark tourism experience around Malta. This collaboration, they say, would also help in providing different languages on dark tourism tours, instead of them only being conducted in English.

Both Subjects A and B mention how the marketing and promotion of dark tourism in Malta was vital if interest in this niche, particularly from tourists, was to be maintained and to see growth.

Subject B commented that ethical issues exist for every type of tourism but suggests caution is required with regard to dark tourism, because it involves the marketing of sacred places like cemeteries and churches, or religious events like Good Friday, as tourism destinations for people interested in dark tourism.

Subject B points out that dark tourism is already taboo to some, and the name itself is

understood by many people – erroneously – as something sinister, related to the occult. This means the way the itineraries are presented is crucial. Otherwise, local sensitivities, but also those of tourists, can be hurt.

Subject B also states it is essential to understand what can be presented during such a tour and what cannot be shown, whether taking photos of the sites is allowed, whether selfies are going to offend anyone, and other such considerations. Shall we let tourists take guided tours around Addolorata, the country's main cemetery which is still in use? Or shall we just allow visits to cemeteries that are no longer active, like the Msida Bastion Historic Garden? Is it acceptable to take tourists to churches



to see their death-related art? These are examples of the ethical issues one needs to keep in mind, according to Subject B.

The results of the study suggest there is ample opportunity for specific types of dark tourism tours around Malta of various kinds, and identify which would engage the most interest, and for which reasons.

Furthermore, the research also suggests there is ample opportunity to hold tours relating to the criminal and tragic history of individuals within the Maltese islands, which will serve not only to entertain the public but to further educate them on the crimes and misdemeanours from the past.

The research goes on to suggest there is a genuine need for a comprehensive dark tourism strategy in Malta, one which incorporates different elements of the niche and that can consistently plan and promote dark-themed events locally.

The research also supports the idea that having a dark tourism conference would attract attention to this niche in Malta, as

well as highlight local experiences. Bringing dark tourism expertise to the island - e.g. academics, tourist guides and museum managers from dark tourism attractions abroad - would assist the local industry in improving its skillsets and approaches to delivering a quality product in Malta.

Many people are unsure of exactly what dark tourism is and may well be unaware that Malta has sites catering for this niche, so anything bringing attention to it locally will benefit that part of Malta's tourism industry.

There is great untapped potential to market the darker elements of Maltese history, to commodify and market a larger number of more frequent dark tourism events across a range of urban locations and heritage sites, while maintaining ethical considerations regarding sensitive sites and topics of death and crime.

This study recommends a Malta Tourism Authority campaign to promote the dark tourism aspects of the Maltese islands. This would include sites, attractions and museums about the Great Siege, WWII,

ghost walks and crime tours, all in various locations such as Valletta and Birgu.

Also recommended is a sustained campaign by Heritage Malta for regular dark tourism events on its sites, in the vein of its Betta Caloiro event at the Inquisitor's Palace in Birgu, and its dark history tour of Fort St Angelo, both held in 2022.

There should also be a dark tourism conference in Malta, to allow scholars, tourist guides and location managers, both local and from abroad.

The conference should debate the ethics of the kinds of dark tourism, the best ways to market a dark tourism site, the different types of dark tourists, and the potential for crime, punishment and local legends to be presented for tourists, among other topics. Best practices in promoting and managing dark tourism events should also be on the agenda.

This research, therefore, concludes that there is significant potential for Malta to market itself as a dark tourism destination and cater for people interested in darker episodes of history.

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The Commonwealth War Graves Commission takes care of the Kalkara military cemetery. Photo by Continentaleurope on Wikimedia Commons.

A brief history of doorknobs and doorknockers in Malta

BY SANDRA FRIGGIERI
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

The purpose of my study was to research the subject of doorknobs and door knockers in Malta. They are part of our everyday art culture and have a story to tell, shedding more light on the residents, traditions, and history of these unique gems. Information on how doorknobs and door knockers originate and develop over time, what materials are used, whether made locally or imported and how these relate to the door and the portal is also included.

Data is gathered mainly by means of semi-structured interviews with two different artisans, a bronzesmith and a blacksmith, thus focusing on bronze and wrought iron, two materials that are still in use, using the traditional method. Moreover, the purpose of these interviews was mainly to understand the work involved in producing a door knocker in these materials. However, secondary interviews with other persons knowledgeable in this field were also carried out. This data was supplemented with research from books, academic journals, articles, and archives. For this research, illustrative material was also collected.

As a result, it was observed that the form-making and decorating of door knockers in bronze is still done the traditional way, using the Lost Wax Technique. This method was predominantly used in Italy in the 16th century. Bronze masters came from the schools of casters in Florence, Padua, with the largest workshop being in Venice. In addition to monuments, these masters created small bronze items, resulting in the

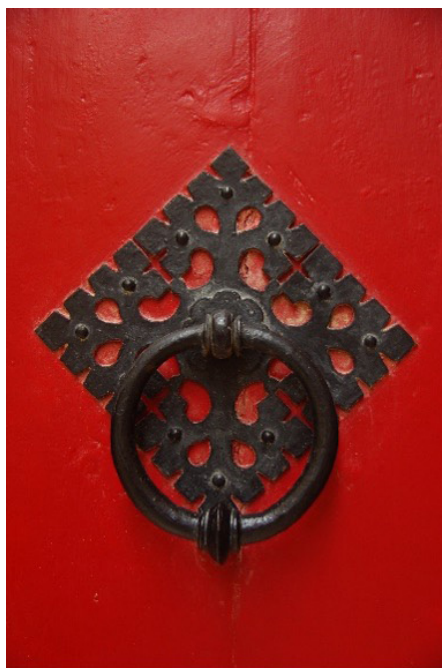


Figure 1 - Gothic style door knocker

production of knockers during this time which turned into an artistic industry.

There was also a connection between the form of the door knockers and the architectural style of door portals. In fact, in the Middle Ages, when gothic architecture flourished, hammered metal door knockers with tense lines and artistic forms were what fulfilled the requirements. With the introduction of malleable iron hammers, these gothic style door knockers became more geometrical with motifs borrowed from the local flora. (Fig. 1).

With wrought iron, metal is hammered using the same tools. The blacksmith mentioned how wrought iron door knockers have developed over time (Fig. 2). Besides

developing in their shape and texture, door knockers sometimes had a dual function. These were fitted with the lock of the door meaning that besides being used as a knocker, when turned it lifted a metal tongue in the lock, thus opening the door. This allowed anyone to enter the house, but he stated that at the time it was the tradition for people to leave their key in the door, so this was not an issue. The blacksmith explained what metal is used for wrought iron work, how door knockers relate to the door and the portal and if people are still interested in wrought iron work decorating their buildings. The blacksmith mentioned other accessories that went also with the door like the boot scraper which today is rarely used.

Door knockers are still produced in both materials to embellish different buildings. The bronzesmith recently produced a pair of door knockers for a boutique hotel in Valletta (Fig. 3). Moreover, different band clubs have ordered door knockers depicting their patron saint together with the town's or village's coat of arms. However, both artisans confirmed that door knockers need more thought and take longer to make. These must relate to the shape and thickness of the door panel. Apart from being detailed, they also need to be functional. Elaborate wrought iron door knockers are patiently sculpted with a chisel.

Malta's strategic position resulted in door knockers being influenced by various cultures. Different symbolism on door knockers have a significant meaning to their homeowners. Throughout history people



Fig 2 - The door handle developing into a door knocker.



Fig 3 - Door knocker on a boutique hotel in Valletta and on a band club



Fig 4 - Cattle horn and a grotesque face

have strived to protect themselves from evil, mishaps and bad luck. The most common form of superstition present in most cultures around the world is the 'evil eye'. Several symbols on door knockers like cattle horns, grotesque faces and shells are used to protect one's property from the evil eye (Fig. 4). Moreover, door knockers started to showcase information about its masters, their hobbies, job position, tastes, status or even the family coat of arms.

Lack of information, such as that related to their age and their manufacturers, and to whether these were produced locally or abroad could possibly be overcome in the future if artisans start applying their stamp on the finished product. Here the author managed to find a set of door knockers on a door pertaining to a band club with a stamp of the bronzesmith, thus determining the timeframe (Fig 5).

Today, a sustainable approach is being met with the buying of local recycled metal. In addition, contemporary designs are being introduced.

Both craftsmen emphasised that this could be a dying craft if nothing is done. Youngsters show an interest in these trades; however, today this is not a thriving business which can provide sufficient income to support today's lifestyle.

These works of art should be exhibited in Malta. Heirs or noble families may be grateful to donate them as collectables. Information panels showing how these evolved over time, the materials used, what they symbolise and the traditions attached to them would be quite interesting.

This subject can be studied further, more information can surely be retrieved from libraries, museums and archives abroad. Cultural Anthropology – the study of human culture – can be studied by analysing these artistic artefacts.

Moreover, a quantitative method of research of styles of doorknobs and door knockers could also be interesting.

Another approach is to conduct a tour to share this living culture with people by giving value to these cultural artefacts, thus linking the commentary of architecture and portals to these artistic works of art.

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Fig 5 - Bronzesmith stamp



Photo by Rico Van de Voorde on Unsplash

Institute of Tourism Studies Hosts Successful Events

ITS TRAINING SCHOOL LAUNCH

Last February, the Institute of Tourism Studies launched a key strategic business unit – The ITS Training School. The ITS Training School is committed to enhancing skills and help workers excel in the hospitality and tourism industry.

The Training School's comprehensive programmes are designed to upskill and reskill professionals and upgrade the quality-of-service provision.



ITS OPEN DOORS

This year ITS organised its first evening Open Doors event on Friday 24th March 2023. It was a very successful event and the institute would like to thank all those who attended. ITS looks forward to seeing all the attendees join ITS for their future studies next year.



HIGH MARKS SYMPOSIUM 2023

During the High Marks Symposium, students presented the research and findings for their long essays and dissertations as part of their studies last year. This event was organised in collaboration with the students who are currently following the Diploma in Events Management course, under the supervision of their lecturer, Mr Daniel Demicoli.



ITS GIN O'CLOCK

Our Diploma in Events Operations students and lecturers put together a fantastic evening, as part of their assignment, filled with delicious drinks, food, and awesome music. The atmosphere was simply electric!





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The Maltese dghajsa tal-pass in Vittoriosa is a popular tourist attraction and means of transport in the Grand Harbour (Photo by Mboesch on Wikimedia Commons).

Building The Dghajsa Tal-Pass in the Grand Harbour from early times to the present

BY MARIELLA SCHEMBRI
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

It is natural that as inhabitants of the small islands located between two large continental mainlands, natives on the Maltese islands were compelled to adapt to a life with a strong attachment to the beautiful Mediterranean Sea. Our ancestors developed a diverse variety of sea craft to address the many economic and social requirements that come from such geographical necessities. I focused on one of the more notable and prominent of these, the dghajsa tal-pass. This small and traditional mode of transportation has been an iconic symbol of the majestic Grand Harbour for generations. Despite

the availability of modern, luxurious and arguably more comfortable means to make way across the harbour today, none come close to the authentic experience achieved by sitting on a wooden bench of an open low boat provided by the traditional dghajsa.

My study aimed to describe the evolution of the dghajsa tal-pass throughout the ages, and its several uses. As these changed from time to time. Furthermore, I examined the close connection it has with the communities surrounding the Grand Harbour, particularly the Cottonera area.

The love for the craft and the 'dghajsa' is still shared by these communities today. This was noted from the interviews conducted. My groundwork was based on a review of literature, and qualitative research through a narrative approach, which involved various visits to workshops of boatbuilders, boat trips and visits to the Maritime Museum.

My analysis and fact-finding, research revealed the general scarcity of documented material about the dghajsa tal-pass and even less regarding boatbuilding artisanship, which in my



Credit: Mick Haupt on Unsplash.com



Unknown author - From the book, 'Life of Vice Admiral Sir George Tryon KCB' by Rear Admiral C. C. Penrose Fitzgerald published by William Blackwood and sons, Edinburgh and London, 1897. View of the Grand Harbour, Malta circa 1890.



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opinion should be recognised as a living heritage, and its survival should be protected, encouraged and supported to preserve the authenticity of the 'dgħajsa'.

My study is a very modest attempt to highlight how the dgħajsa tal-pass has a special place in the socio-cultural heritage of the communities in the Cottonera area, whilst also adding an element of charm and culture to the Grand Harbour. 'Dgħajsa tal-Pass' aided hundreds of people in making a living throughout the long and interesting history of the area and thousands if not millions more were able to marvel in the experience as a tourist or a commuter. Furthermore, it was made apparent to me that a simple boat, requires highly skilled artisanship to be built. 'Dghajsa tal-Pass' is still with us as a result of inherited skills coupled with experience and ability to adapt to specific needs.

It is my opinion that the local traditional boat building craftsmanship perfectly embodies the definition of what UNESCO defines as a living heritage. Whilst it was challenging to obtain much information on the history of the 'dgħajsa' and its craftsmanship, it is encouraging to see that the growth in the tourism industry has given a recent upward push in the number registered 'dgħajjes tal-pass' over the past few decades. Such positive increases in numbers surely warrant a holistic effort to support, save, and appreciate this unique and historic watercraft.

The 'dgħajsa' provides a more vibrant and personal experience to its users whilst promoting an important part of Maltese heritage, and I hope that my essay will be found useful by the tourist guide community, and other stakeholders such as Local Councils of the area, particularly those of the Cottonera region.

HND TG LONG ESSAY TOUR ITINERARY

Organised a 90-minute walking tour, starting from Kalkara Creek and ending at Dockyard Creek by the Freedom Monument. Walk includes some short ascents and descents, together with a few steps. This tour is not recommended for people with mobility problems. Comfortable walking shoes are highly recommended.

THE ROUTE:

2.1 Kalkara Creek – Location, introduction to the harbour area – 3 Cities and Valletta.

2.2 Walk to a Dghajsa tal-Pass beside Andrea Delceppo's Boatyard – how the Dghajsa tal pass originated and its purpose in the harbour

2.3 Andrea Delceppo Boatyard - Building of the Dghajsa – go through the full process of how a boat is constructed. Different techniques adopted, due to the purpose, that is whether to be utilised for tourists or regatta.

2.4 Walk to 'ropeman' Callus – rope maker visit and see how ropes are manufactured

2.5 Walk to Toqba – refer to Regatta race and how it is conducted

2.6 Go up from Toqba – introduce the Barklor

2.7 Oratory of St Joseph – outside talk about the fraternities.

2.8 Oratory of St Joseph – inside talk explaining the procession and vestments.

2.9 St Lawrence Church – side chapels altar dedicated St Catherine - connection rope makers made, St Catherine due to the wheel. Via Sacra – Fraternity Barklori used the side chapel to the right of the main entrance – today the altar has been replaced with St Lawrences statue.

Start concluding tour and move to the last stop

2.10 Barklori Landing Place by the Birgu Waterfront - Dghajsa tal Pass is part of Malta's Emblem;



Ronnie Gauci - My private collection
Senglea Regatta rowers celebrating their 19th victory in the September 2008 Regatta.

Bombed out Valletta on the 1st May 1942. Image credit: Imperial War Museum (non commercial licence).



Interpreting conflict and its impact on society: The experience of total war in Malta during the First and the Second World War

BY KEVIN CASSAR
MASTER OF ARTS IN HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

Carl von Clausewitz defined war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” (Howard and Paret, 1989, p.75). Writing about conflict and the way it has shaped society, Margaret MacMillan states that “war in its essence is organised violence” (New York Times, 2020).

In a local context, war is a distant memory tied to Malta’s colonial past. The Second World War, in which Malta played a primary role, is losing its immediacy. The few living persons who experienced those terrible events are the only a tenuous link that

remains to that war. Nevertheless, the memory of the war is still quite strong and has been sustained by the oral transmission of accounts from one generation to the next.

The Maltese have ambivalent views on war-related and military heritage as this is generally perceived to relate to the British presence in Malta. Some argue it is a reminder of Malta’s colonial past and “should not be promoted for educational and leisure purposes” (Magro Conti, 2009, p.123). Others look upon this type of heritage with nostalgia. They point to the

Second World War as the time when the British and the Maltese stood shoulder to shoulder in defence of Malta sharing danger, despair and joy (Cassar and Avellino, 2020, p.253).

This ambivalence also resides with the perceived nature of wartime heritage itself. When Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna restored and opened a Second World War concrete defence post to the public, the initiative was criticised because of its connotations of war and British colonialism (Magro Conti, 2009, p.125). The defence post was seen as ‘British’ and alien to the Maltese. On the

other hand, when some years later, the same organisation opened a Second World War public air-raid shelter, the initiative was received positively and prompted several Local Councils to clean and provide access to similar sites in their locality (Magro Conti, 2009, p.126). Unlike the defence post, the shelter is perceived as 'Maltese' heritage because it symbolises Maltese resilience under extreme duress.

The contested nature of Malta's British period and wartime heritage is exemplified by the ongoing debate regarding the George Cross featured on the Maltese national flag. Some see it as a mark of honour, others consider it "a vestige of colonial servitude" (Cassar and Avellino, 2020, p.251).

Malta has a long history of foreign occupation. The concept of 'fortress Malta' developed under the Order of St John (1530-1798). The British took formal possession of Malta in 1814. They held the island as a naval arsenal and a fortress. Although the Maltese generally benefitted from security and military spending at home, the maintenance of the fortress did not always match the people's needs and best interests. The politically-conscious classes felt cheated as generally, the Maltese had little say in running their affairs. The hundred years between 1814 and 1914 were a period of peace for the Maltese. Britain's wars were conducted in distant places, and Malta generally prospered whenever preparations for war were made. The Maltese probably assumed that the same would happen when the First World War broke out. It was another war being fought in a distant land. But, the nature of war had changed as the Maltese realised to their expense.

The Industrial Revolution spurred technological advances that changed the way wars were waged. Over the course of the nineteenth century, weapons became increasingly more destructive. The industrial wars (the two world wars) of the twentieth century assumed a totality that blurred the distinction between the military and the civilian realms. According to Roger Chickering, "civilians became no less vital than soldiers to sustaining the war effort,

and, consequently, they became no less vulnerable to military violence, be it in the form of strategic bombing from the air, starvation encouraged by naval blockade, or calculated genocide. These monster wars thus directly and comprehensively affect every man, woman, and child in the participating states" (Keene and Neiberg, 2010, p.12).

In the Maltese context, the effects of total war were clearly manifested during the Second World War. However, one could argue that even during the Great Siege of 1565 and the French Blockade of 1798-1800, the Maltese experienced some form of total war. In both instances, the Maltese people were caught up in prolonged acts of aggression conducted on their native land. Civilians, as much as the military setup consisting of foreign professional soldiers, mercenaries and local militia, were enmeshed in the fighting and in sustaining it. In the process they suffered deprivation, hunger, famine, disease, loss and death. According to Francisco Balbi di Correggio, who witnessed the Great Siege of 1565, the Christian side lost over 2,500 soldiers. In addition, "seven thousand Maltese men, women, girls and boys were also killed, as well as five hundred slaves belonging to the Order" (Bradford, 2005, p. 189). During the French Blockade, disease and malnutrition depleted the population of the Maltese islands by around twenty percent (Savona Ventura, 1998, p.60).

In this assignment I shall look into some aspects of the Maltese experience of total war during the two world wars. Malta relied heavily on imported food. The resupply of Malta proved problematic during both conflicts, and this had a negative impact on the quality of life of the Maltese. The interpretation of war within a museum environment will be discussed. Based on the historical narrative some suggestions for interpreting aspects of the impact of total war in a Maltese context will be provided.

WWI

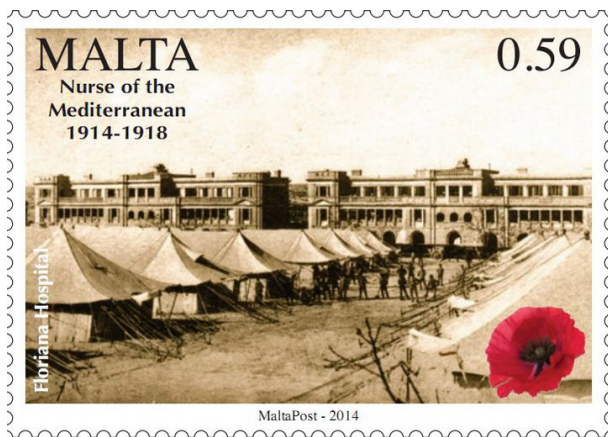
During the First World War, Malta was impacted by the fallout of conflict on land and, more profoundly, by submarine activity

The politically-conscious classes felt cheated as generally, the Maltese had little say in running their affairs. The hundred years between 1814 and 1914 were a period of peace for the Maltese.

in the Mediterranean. As a result of the latter, the Maltese got a foretaste of what they were to experience more forcefully during the Second World War.

Malta served the British war effort as a naval arsenal, a hospital base and convalescent camp, a seaplane base, and as a source of manpower (Schembri et al., 2017, p.70). The war created work and employment, and generally, the people thrived. However, as

the war progressed, many suffered due to inflation and the black market (Cassar, 2000, p.200).



A Maltese postage stamp issued in 2014 to commemorate Malta's role as the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' in World War I.

German and Austro-Hungarian submarines operating in the Mediterranean inflicted heavy losses to Allied shipping. Following Germany's resort to unrestricted submarine warfare, in 1917, ship losses and high insurance costs interrupted food imports to Malta and drove prices up.

Hardship was widespread, and many depended on charity to make ends meet. In the beginning of 1917, the Archbishop of Malta set up a bread fund that issued soup and bread tickets to the needy. Another relief fund aimed at helping distressed families was set up in the beginning of 1918 by Lady Methuen, the Governor's wife. Philanthropic organisations, like the Society of St Vincent de Paul, also stepped in to assist the needy. The *Malta Herald* of 20 February 1918 paints a picture of the work of this society and the level of economic hardship that was being experienced. It was reported that in 1917 the twelve branches of the society distributed £2,372 among the poor, reaching around 7,500 persons. More than 65,000 loaves of bread were distributed together with approximately 138,800 tickets of 2 pence each of the Archbishop's Bread Fund. In April 1918, the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe*, a mutual help society with around 1,400 members, voiced its concern about the rise in the price of all commodities, especially "the very high price of bread". It claimed that workers who earned an average of around 3 shillings (36 pence) a day could not afford to pay 7 pence for a loaf of bread. It stated that workers supporting large families were "compelled to starve".

The authorities acknowledged the problem. The Governor, Lord Methuen, admitted that the Maltese "were pinched for food, that the poor are suffering and that those on a low income (£100-150) cannot make ends meet" (*Malta Herald*, 16 April 1918, p.1). In January 1918, a Government Kitchen was opened at Cospicua and during its first weeks in operation served about 200 plates of soup a day at 2

pence each (*Malta Herald*, 21 January 1918, p.2). The Government also tried to impress upon the people to "use more vegetables and rice instead of bread" (*Malta Herald*, 19 April 1918 p.1-2).

Bread was an essential feature of the Maltese diet. In 1917 the authorities regulated the standard of flour used in bread manufacture. To try and curb abuse, it was ordered that no baker could keep any bran, milling offal or flour that did not conform to the set standard. By 1918 bread was "invariably black" and many complained it was giving them stomach pain (*Malta Herald*, 4 March 1918, p.2). Some areas like Cospicua experienced bread shortages, leading to rowdy behaviour and confusion. It was claimed that some shopkeepers were acting high-handedly and closing their shops before all the bread was sold "leaving their customers yelling and shouting for their legitimate share" (*Malta Herald*, 4 March 1918, p.1-2).

A Food and Commerce Control Office (FCCO) was set up to regulate food processing, sale, and distribution. To conserve the stock of wheat, the use of flour to manufacture confectionery items was restricted (*Malta Herald*, 19 June 1918, p.2). Restrictions were also made on the amount of sugar used in the manufacture of sweets (*Malta Herald*, 10 June 1918, p.2) and on the use of starch in confectioneries (*Malta Herald*, 11 July 1918, p.2). Retailers and hawkers were expected to exhibit a price list and prices were not to exceed the maximum set by Government. This was done to curb profiteering. Failure

to abide by the rules could land sellers in hot water. The authorities were quite heavy-handed with regards to offences involving potatoes. Bread became increasingly difficult to produce, and to afford, on account of the difficulties of importing wheat and its high price (*Malta Herald*, 8 March 1918, p.2). Potatoes were being seen as a potential substitute for bread.

Two sellers from Hamrun were separately fined £30 each for selling potatoes at a price higher than the Government maximum. Another person was given a £10 fine for holding a stock of potatoes exceeding the quantity required for his everyday use (*Malta Herald*, 27 April 1918, p.2).

At times, oligarchic arrangements were used to circumvent regulations. The price of kerosene, a fuel widely used by the Maltese for cooking, was regulated by the Government at 4¼ pence per measure. However, sellers in Sliema ganged up to fix the price to their advantage. They invariably informed customers that they could only sell half a measure for which they charged 2¼ pence. Through this expedient, they circumvented the official regulations, and customers ended up paying ¼ penny (a farthing) more per full measure (*Malta Herald*, 24 May 1918, p.2).

Shortages of other commodities were either the result of the war situation, or were artificially induced by hoarding. After the Armistice of 11 November 1918, many Maltese expected life to revert to what it had been before the war, but it did not. Persistent economic hardship and unemployment became two ingredients that fuelled the *Sette Giugno* riots of 1919 which ended in bloodshed.

In Malta, the First World War has generally been read as a colonial perspective which manifests itself in the myth of the "Nurse of the Mediterranean". Myth here refers to the constructed narrative, a simplified, dramatised story, which society elaborates over time to give meaning and make sense of war (Whitmarsh, 2001, p.6). In the National War Museum, in Valletta, the small space dedicated to the representation of the First World War perpetrates this myth. The attractively laid out display

comprises weapons, helmets, medals and other paraphernalia. There are also two Austrian guns, sent to Malta as war trophies. This presentation does not say anything about the war. The visitor is given no possibility to discover how the Maltese people experienced the war. The Maltese voice is drowned in favour of a sanitized display of objects. Although this period

WII

The bombings and hunger are two recurrent themes in Maltese memories of the Second World War. Mizzi (1975, p. 47) claims that hunger was worse than the bombings.

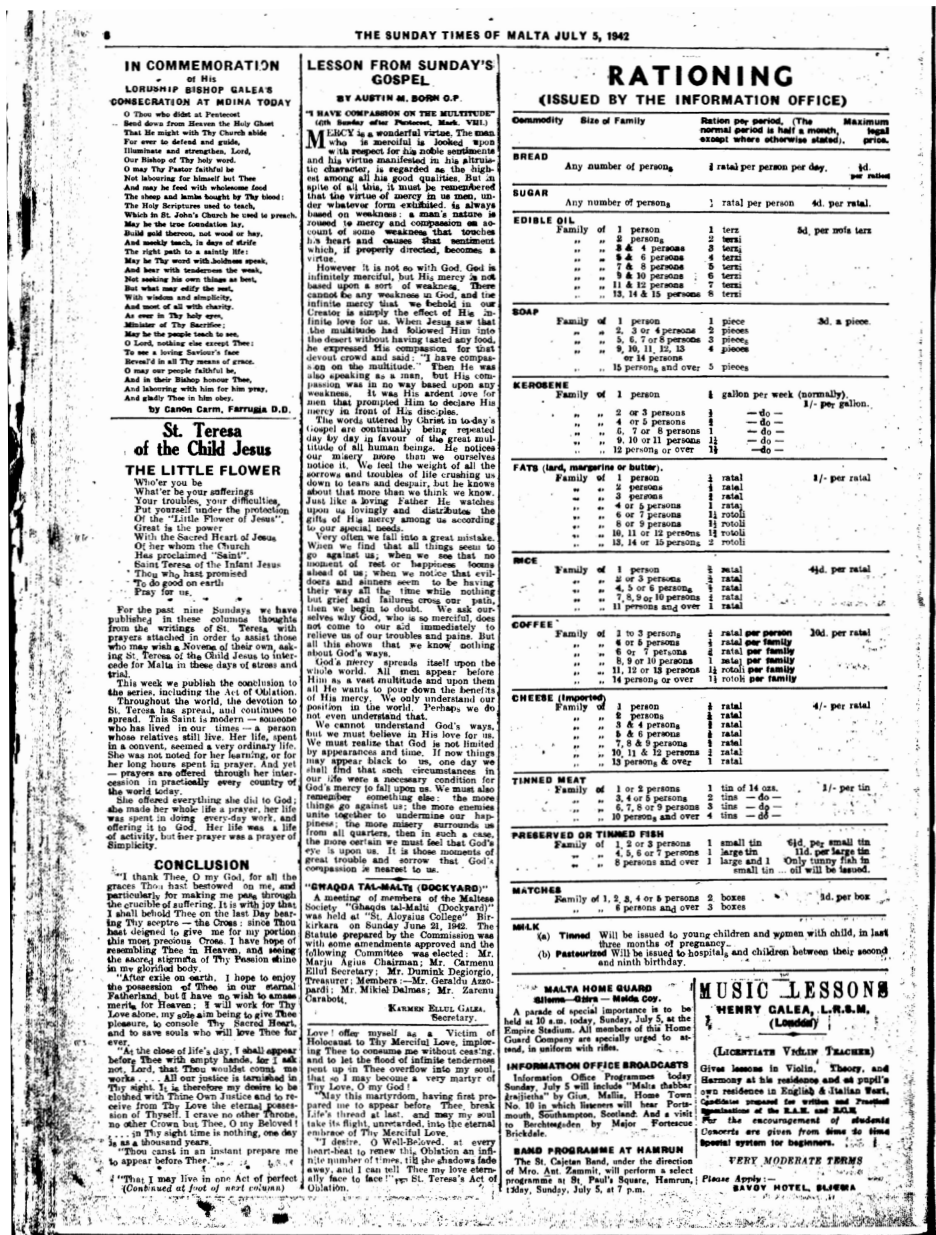
While shelters offered protection during air raids, there was no remedy for hunger when no food could be had. He states that people could not get used to the nagging

experienced by the Maltese during the First World War were grave enough to end in the bloody 'Sette Giugno' riots in 1919. During the Second World War the stakes were higher. Malta was effectively under siege, the aim of which was to subdue and starve the island into surrender.

Yoram Dinstein, quoted by Spak (2019), defines a siege as "encircling an enemy military concentration, a strategic fortress or any other location defended by the enemy, cutting it off from channels of support and supply". In addition to complete isolation, Dinstein says that "the essence of siege warfare lies in an attempt to capture the invested location through starvation". The primary aim of a siege is to bring an enemy army to surrender; the suffering inflicted on civilians in the process is generally seen as an inevitable occurrence (Szpak, 2019, p.6-7).

The Second World War broke out in 1939, but it was Italy's declaration of war against Britain and France on 10 June 1940 that brought the war forcefully to the Maltese. At the time, Malta had around 275,000 inhabitants, a fact viewed by the British as "the largest internal commitment a fortress has had to accept in history" (HMSO, 1943, p.39). It was well known that the island's resources were inadequate to support the inhabitants and the garrison for a prolonged period of time. As during the First World War, Malta's lifeline hinged on Britain's ability to keep the maritime sea lanes open. Despite this knowledge, the British failed to take adequate measures while there was a chance to do so. The Food Situation Report of 1942 scathingly remarks that:

Despite the vital strategic importance of the island, import policy was influenced in the early days of the war in particular by such considerations as saving foreign exchange instead of the primary need to accumulate stock of essential commodities ... as a long-term policy it would have been wise before the entry of Italy into the war to have built a system of rock shelters ... which could have been built to carry large supplies in the safest conditions. (Vella, 2016, p.32)



The face of total war: rationing in the summer of 1942, the worst period of World War II in Malta

needs to be studied further it is evident that the museum could explore other contexts, rather than just the colonial and the technical, to present a multi-perspective view of the war.

sense of hunger. The distress suffered by the Maltese as a result of war-induced food shortages is a salient feature of both global conflicts, albeit different in scale. The food shortages compounded by economic misery

People, possibly influenced by memories and knowledge of what had happened during the First World War, started hoarding food. Still, nobody anticipated the drastic interruption of provisions that Malta experienced during the war. When the first air attacks hit Malta on 11 June 1940, the island barely had supplies for three months (Vella, 2016, p.34).

The Maltese were largely unprepared for war. Little had been done to provide the population with adequate protection during air raids, as revealed by the hastily improvised shelters located in disused underground tunnels and spaces initially built by the knights of St John (Vella, 1985, p.5). People realised that taking cover under a sturdy table or a staircase within their homes, as they had been told to do by the authorities, would not protect them from enemy bombs.

Following the first air raids, fear and panic gripped many people. The harbour areas, which were the worst hit, witnessed a mass exodus as people packed a few belongings and moved to safer areas. There were no concrete plans for evacuation. Some stayed with relatives, but many relied on the charitable disposition of strangers. Makeshift refugee centres were opened in village schools, church properties and other buildings. The Church opened community kitchens in a number of towns and villages to provide a basic cooked meal to refugees who lacked the means to cook food (Micallef, 1981, p.16). Subsequently, the Government, through the Communal Feeding Service, provided a similar service in those areas not served by Church kitchens (Micallef, 1981, p.17). When the intensity of the air attacks on Malta abated in August 1940, people started returning to their normal lives and the services of communal kitchens were no longer required.

The first of many convoys to Malta, Operation Hats, left Alexandria on 29 August 1940. Thanks to the arrival of convoys, Malta built up a seven-month supply reserve (Micallef, 1981, p.99). Despite the apparent difficulties and risks involved in carrying supplies to Malta, little was done on the island to conserve supplies. Hoarding was

widespread leading to food shortages and a rampant black market.

It was only when the attacks on Malta intensified, early in 1941, that the authorities adopted a ration system to ensure a more equitable distribution of supplies (Micallef, 1981, p.99). This came in the wake of the Illustrious Blitz during which the Three Cities sustain considerable damage. Around 200 houses were destroyed and 500 were damaged (HMSO, 1944, p.24). There was another exodus away from the Three Cities.

Rationing started on 7 April 1941. At first, only sugar, coffee, soap and matches were rationed. But, over time, the list increased. By the end of September 1941, the only unrationed items were bread, pasta, flour, cheese, chocolate, rice and tea, albeit most items were very scarce (Vella, 1985, p.39; Boffa, 1992, p.78). Rations were issued twice a month (Boffa, 1992, p.78). The collection of rations was characterised by long queues of people waiting to obtain their share. Disorderly behaviour was not unknown, and the police accompanied kerosene carts to control the crowds (Micallef, 1981, p.35)

Convoys reached Malta in May, July, and September 1941 and replenished food and war supplies. The German Luftwaffe left Sicily in June 1941, and the attacks on Malta mellowed. The authorities felt that “the supply situation during the summer was excellent” (HMSO, 1944, p.34). However, the supply situation in Malta was not as good as claimed. Large minelaying submarines operating from Alexandria were utilised to keep supplies trickling to Malta.

Flour was in short supply, but the authorities were unwilling to ration bread, fearing repercussions on Maltese morale. A bumper potato crop resulted in the adulteration of the bread mix with potato puree. Bakers had to add 30% potato puree to the bread dough. The production of this bread, which was dubbed wheatoatoes, was originally a voluntary undertaking, but in August 1941, it was made compulsory. The Maltese did not welcome the change in quality.

In December 1941, the Luftwaffe returned to Sicily, and the air attacks on Malta intensified dramatically. There was talk of

invasion, and this gained currency when the authorities distributed leaflets entitled ‘What to do in an Invasion’. Mizzi (1975, p.32) narrates how the terrifying prospect of finding German soldiers roaming through his village haunted him. Vella (1985) contends that the Maltese took the invasion scare in their stride, but that they were “more concerned with such realities as a meagre meal, the snatching of a few hours’ sleep, hitching a lift to work and avoiding the bombs” (Vella, 1985, p.56)

The communal kitchens were revived and rebranded as Victory Kitchens. Persons could voluntarily subscribe to the Victory Kitchens bartering half their ration for a cooked meal, or else paid 6 pence for a meat or vegetable stew or 3 pence for a vegetable soup. In January 1942, there were only 269 subscribers, but these increased to 7,000 by the end of June (Micallef, 1981, p.44).

The flour supply was a major concern. In December 1941, new regulations came into force whereby bakers and bread sellers were ordered to register their customers. Bakers were only issued with enough flour to cater for their registered clients (Buttigieg, 2021, p.6). Bread was reluctantly rationed on 5 May 1942. The daily bread ration was fixed at 300g daily, which was a third of what a Maltese adult normally consumed. To prolong the supply of wheat, bread was produced from a mixture of wheat, barley, and maize flour. The resultant bread was dark coloured, which many regarded as inferior quality. In July 1942, a new flour mix was approved to produce lighter coloured bread. (Buttigieg, 2021, p.8)

Mizzi argues that bread was the basis of the Maltese diet. Therefore, the shortage of bread was deeply felt and was the one thing that remained most impressed in Maltese memory. A reduction in bread would have been tolerable had there been something else to make up for it, but there was no other food to be had. Mizzi states that people went to great lengths to obtain bread in addition to their ration entitlement. He claims that people were prepared to pay 20 shillings and even a pound to obtain a loaf of bread worth four pence (Mizzi, 1975, p.48).

As had happened during the First World War, food scarcity bred profiteering. The average Maltese worker earned between three to five shillings a day, which was around half the average wage of a British worker (Buttigieg, 2021, p.6). On the black market, a 'rotolo' (800g) of flour sold for eight shillings. An egg fetched sixteen pence, four pence short of a shilling. By August 1942, consumers were paying eight shillings for a 'rotolo' of sugar when the official price was 4 pence, seven shillings for a 'rotolo' of lard instead of one shilling, and six shillings for a bottle of edible oil instead of 6 pence (Buttigieg, 2021, p.8).

In June 1942, the Food Control Enforcement Board was set up to deal with all black market offences. The Church condemned the black market, and mortal sin hung on the head of those unscrupulous individuals who grew rich out of the misery and needs of their brethren. Micallef (1981) argues that people with the means to do so were willing to pay extortionist prices as long as they acquired what they wanted. This attitude abetted profiteers and, in a way, handicapped the authorities' ability to combat this crime. On the other hand, Buttigieg (2021) suggests that the apparent lack of enforcement at the height of the siege was because the authorities closed an eye on black market activity. It was "*a "negotiated" arrangement where the authorities empowered their subjects to use any available resources undisclosed to the Government to stretch the meagre reserves available before surrendering to the enemy*". (Buttigieg, 2021, p.9)

In July 1942, a new Victory Kitchen scheme was launched to conserve food stocks and promote a better distribution; at the same time, it was also hoped to save paraffin. More than a hundred kitchens were opened, and to encourage subscribers, it was no longer required to give up part of one's ration (Micallef, 1981, p.172).

The food served by the Victory Kitchens was often unvaried and unpalatable and was a frequent source of complaint. Irrespective of whether the food was good or bad, Mizzi (1975, p.48) states that they gladly ate whatever was served. Nevertheless, there was an occasion, towards the end of August 1942, when in spite of the hunger, people refused to eat the portions of grey-green liver they were served. Although liver was a rare delicacy, nobody dared to eat the unappetising stuff. People were furious and turned riotous, pelting the Victory Kitchen staff with the green liver. A week after this incident, many people protested that the

In December 1941, new regulations came into force whereby bakers and bread sellers were ordered to register their customers.

'balbuljata' dish served to them, made with powdered eggs mixed with vegetables, was inedible and threw it away (Maltagc70 a, 2017).

The Victory Kitchens were unpopular, and many expressed dissatisfaction with the menu and the quality of the food, the cooking, the small portions, and favouritism. There were also allegations of theft of food with the complicity of staff. The people vented critique of the system through sarcasm reflected in the various 'Victory Kitchen' ditties poking fun at the staff and the miserable food they served. However, in the extreme conditions prevailing in

Malta, very few people could do without the Victory Kitchens. In October 1942, those drawing a meal from them amounted to 100,000, which rose to 175,536 in January 1943. Victory Kitchens served registered subscribers at midday or in the evening against payment of 6 pence a meal.

In popular Maltese memory, the 'Santa Marija' convoy (Operation Pedestal) of 15 August 1942 saved the Maltese from starvation and Malta from surrender. As Mizzi (1975, p.54) puts it, the convoy "saved them from death or the enemy". But, the supplies which reached Malta

at so much sacrifice and terrible loss of lives and ships postponed the 'target date', i.e. the date when Malta, having exhausted its food, ammunition and fuel, would be forced to surrender, from the first week of September to early December. Food remained scarce. Mizzi (1975, p.54) expresses the sense of wonder at seeing white bread again and not the dark brown stuff they had become accustomed to. It was, he said, a sure sign that God's grace had touched the Maltese islands.

Two British experts sent to Malta in June 1942, found that the daily food intake for a Maltese adult during the war amounted to about 1,100 to 1,500 calories. Today's

recommended intake for a male adult is 2,500 calories (NHS n.d.). Because of their more strenuous duties, servicemen got a slightly larger ration allotment than civilians (Buttigieg, 2021, p.14).

After the 'Santa Marija' convoy, the food situation remained a cause of concern. The Governor, Lord Gort, reported that "No signs of serious malnutrition have yet appeared, but prolonged continuance of present food shortage must have its effect both on health and morale" (Maltagc70 b, 2017).

The poor and inadequate diet contributed to an increased death rate among old and



weak persons. Infant mortality rate rose to 345 per 1,000. Savona Ventura (2009) suggests that the wartime food shortages had long term effects on the Maltese population and persons born during the war were likely to develop “metabolic disease” later in life (Savona Ventura, 2009, p.46).

Ray Roberts, a 20-year old serviceman sent to Malta on a temporary attachment with 69 Squadron RAF in October 1942, noted in his diary that “everyone is starving here” (Roberts, 2018). Servicemen too were hungry and starving, and on one occasion, Roberts bartered all his cigarettes for a loaf of bread. Roberts noted that keeping aircraft serviceable in the face of heavy enemy attacks was hard work, especially if it had to be performed on an empty stomach. He was sent back to Egypt on 31 December 1942. He was happy to leave and confided, “How these RAF lads here have stuck this for twelve months is beyond me. But when you look in their faces you can see that they are underfed and should all be sent home” (Roberts, 2018).

The food situation in Malta was only bettered with the arrival of convoys in November and December 1942. On 17 December 1942, the Government authorised a marginal increase in the food

ration. But, it was only towards the end of February 1943 that rations really improved. A ration system for essential foodstuffs was retained in Malta until the 1970s, albeit intended as a form of assistance for the population (Laws of Malta, n.d.).

INTERPRETATION OF WAR

War is a controversial subject, and even many years after its end, war may still arouse strong feelings. Representing war within a museum environment could be problematic because of what Gryse describes as “an unbridgeable gap between the real past and the reconstructed past” (Muchitsch, 2013, p.16).

It is easy to lose sight of the realities and unpleasantness of war and succumb to nostalgic and romanticised representations through neatly drawn and aesthetically pleasing displays of military hardware and uniforms. The focus of these traditional displays is purely object-based with little or no reference to human agency. Likewise, interpretation is limited to the purely technical. In the past, this type of representation was favoured because it steers away from controversy and inconvenient truths by using “the technical fascination of the objects to cloud visitors’ viewpoints” (Raths, 2014, p.85). Therefore,

the real reason for the manufacture of the objects, to cause harm, maim and kill, is lost; the suffering and misery caused is occluded. In such a scenario, the museum speaks about war but at the same time “keeping war completely out of the museum, not in spite of the objects shown, but actually because of them” (Muchitsch, 2013, p.15).

Focusing on technology is viewed as safe because it does not provoke moral debate (Whitmarsh 2001, p.5). This fits with what Jay Winter described as “an unstated rule of decorum” (Winter, 2014, p.26) in museum representations of war. The horrors of war are toned-down and censored to create sanitised war presentations, which diminished the possibility of giving offence and appearing too noxious.

Museum curators and interpreters must guard against over-simplification and trivialisation in representing war. They also have a “moral responsibility” to avoid glorification (Winter, 2014, p.34). Museums are not neutral, and war museums are no exception. (ICOM, 2019; Winter, 2014, p.26). Suay Aksoy observed that museums “are not separate from their social and historical context. And when it does seem like they are separate, that is not neutrality – that is choice” (ICOM, 2019). In a local context,



Photo by Museums Victoria on Unsplash

a war museum could choose not to speak about thorny subjects such as internment and deportation, the execution of Carmelo Borg Pisani, those who enriched themselves from the black economy to the detriment of those in need. In selecting themes, the artefacts to be displayed, the level of interpretation, and the stories to be told, a museum makes choices reflecting its bias or stance on specific issues.

It is probably an unwritten axiom that no museum can ever adequately describe war because the nature of the subject is too big and multi-faceted. Ultimately all museums “fail to represent ‘the war’...as it actually was”, because perspectives and memories are modified over time. (Winter, 2014 p.23). But, do museum visitors want to hear about war as it actually was? What happens if this does not match visitors’ expectations whose perceptions of war might be rooted in nostalgic and romanticised clichés and stereotypes. An example would be the local stereotype that Italian pilots were cowards who flew their machines at high altitudes to avoid anti-aircraft fire and threw their bombs at sea when the guns opened up. In interpreting war, a museum could privilege multi-vocal representations or “deepen lies and illusions about it” (Winter, 2014, p.37).

Objects are an asset for any museum. But, as already mentioned, they too could be problematic in representing war. The “technical aura” (Raths, 2014, p.86) of the objects should not dominate their presentation and interpretation in a way that detaches the object from its intended purpose (to kill, and cause harm). Objects like weapons, vehicles, and uniforms could be subject to fetishism derived from connotations of power, destructive capacity, technical excellence, and aesthetic features. One may also add contemporary propaganda and popular anecdotal information (Raths, 2014, p.89). Object fetishism and its associated connotations contribute to the formulation of “myths”, which could be an “obstacle in educating visitors” (Raths, 2014, p.93).

In real-life situations, it might not be feasible or desirable for museums to de-emphasise objects, which could be crowd-pullers. Raths remarks that, ironically, fetishism and myths could be exploited for museum marketing (Raths, 2014, p.93).

Museums could use and explore the “powerful emotional aura” (Whitmarsh, 2001, p.5) which war-related objects possess to provoke thought and reflection about war as a human tragedy. In such

a manner, museums would deconstruct myths by interpreting different contexts and offering visitors broader views and multiple perspectives.

David Uzzell criticised a “sterile and emotionally neutral” interpretative approach to war, which is a highly emotional subject (Uzzell, 1998, p.2). He coined the term “hot interpretation”, one that “appreciates the need for and injects an affective component into its subject matter” (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 1998, p.2), as against interpretation which is cold and impassive. He argues that museums should not shy away from provoking emotional responses when interpreting war. Interpretation, he argues, should be “interesting, engaging, enjoyable, informative and engaging. But now and again it has to be shocking, moving and provide a cathartic experience” (Uzzell, 1989, p.46).

The National War Museum has a vast collection of material on display representing the Second World War. It is easy for the visitor to be overwhelmed by the amount of objects and end up ‘learning’ nothing. Much of the display can be categorized as technical in nature and privileges an ‘official’ version of the war. Very little is done to give voice to the people and



A simple display showing gold trinkets or gold coins and a bag of flour and a few eggs could be the visual means for conveying the message that on the black market food was worth its weight in gold.



the way they experienced the war.

In April 1942, the Governor of Malta, Sir William Dobbie, informed London about the “grave” situation in Malta and that the island’s chances of survival, unless resupplied, were significantly reduced “because it is impossible to carry on without food and ammunition” (Lewellyn Jones, 2013, p.x). If there is a point where the official narrative of the war in Malta and the people’s narrative and experience intersect, that must be food. Therefore, interpreting food as theme within the museum means interpreting and representing an important aspect of Malta’s wartime struggle for survival.

Rations are an often mentioned feature of the Maltese wartime experience. Due to the

perishable nature of food it might not be possible to recreate a real ration for people to see in a permanent display. Nevertheless, an audio visual presentation could show what a ration consisted of and the quantities issued. A series of visual representations could present at a glance changes in the ration over different periods of time. There could also be a visual representation of soldiers’ rations to enable museum visitors to compare it with the civilian ration. Visual representations could be accompanied by objects that form part of the story such as ration books. Further layers of interpretation could be created through the use of newspaper cuttings, photos, and cartoons.

The museum space could be used to convey a feel of the long queues of people that were a characteristic of ration distribution. This could be graphically interpreted by a life-size diorama-like installation using a number of mannequins or cut-out forms of persons. Period photos of long queues could be used to fortify the message. A line-up of paraffin cans representing a queue together with a cut-out representation of a paraffin seller’s cart and a police uniform could form part of interpreting the need of fuel to cook food. Objects like paraffin-operated cooking stoves could be included as well as other improvised methods used to cook food when paraffin could not be had.

The black market was another feature of wartime life. This is not an easy theme to interpret in a graphical manner. A simple display showing gold trinkets or gold coins and a bag of flour and a few eggs could be the visual means for conveying the message that on the black market food was worth its weight in gold. In the display one could also include paper money to drive the point that those providing goods in an underhand manner refused paper money and asked for metallic currency or valuables. The black market could also be narrated through images of newspaper clippings. Audio clips with readings from wartime memoirs or oral interviews would provide real-life stories to the interpretation.

The Victory Kitchens are very closely knit to the narrative weave of the Maltese

wartime experience and the scarcity of food. In interpreting the work of the Victory Kitchens one could exhibit objects like Soyer Stoves and cooking implements. Period film clips could be used to give the ‘feel’ of the kitchens at work although one has to keep in mind that when such films were made these had a propagandistic purpose. Visual imagery and audio clips of readings from wartime memoirs could also be used. Video clips showing Victory Kitchen food being prepared, cooked and explained by a modern-day chef in the style of popular cooking programmes seen on TV could be an engaging form of interpretation for museum visitors. The Victory Kitchen could be a suitable platform for the museum to speak about female participation and the contribution of Maltese women to the war effort.

Hunger was one of the salient features of the Maltese wartime experience. In the interpretation of this theme the museum cannot limit itself to narrating the difficulties of resupplying Malta and the terrible cost at which this was done, or providing a litany of convoy operations and ship losses. That is an important part of the story, but it is equally important for the museum interpretation to give voice to the people who suffered as a result. It is really not possible for a museum to recreate hunger for visitors to experience. The theme could be interpreted through the use of narrative and oral sources. A museum could interpret hunger and lack of food by for example comparing in a visual manner a typical fast-food meal, which most people afford, and a six-pence Victory Kitchen meal.

Bread for the Maltese people was not simply a food item, it was the mainstay of their diet. The interpretation of bread could explore how the ingredients changed over time in an effort to stretch wheat supplies e.g. the addition of potato mash to the bread dough in 1941. Audio visual means could be utilised to show the traditional way of making bread before the war and how it was affected by wartime conditions. How the colour of bread changed and what were the people’s reactions. In April 1942, following the announcement of the award of the George Cross to Malta, graffiti appeared

with the phrase 'Hobz, mux George Cross' (bread not George Cross) (Todman, 2020, p.153). A life-size diorama reconstruction of a stone wall with the graffiti on it could be a very thought-provoking form of interpreting the centrality of bread for the Maltese and the prevalent food scarcity and hunger.

The National War Museum displays representing the two global conflicts conform to a traditional object-centred approach. Very little voice is given to the people's experience and the wars' impact on Maltese society. As a result, an essential dimension in conveying the meaning and wide-ranging effects of total war, is missing. Hence, the visitor is only given a sanitized and one-sided view. The intensity of the impact of the two world wars on Malta was significantly different in both cases. Nevertheless, a common trait emerges in that food supplies to Malta were, in varying degrees, interrupted, resulting in distress. Food shortage, hoarding, inflation and a rampant black market are recurrent themes in both conflicts. It is contended that from a Maltese perspective no interpretation of the two world wars would be 'complete' without exploring the centrality of bread. Examples have been given of how these themes could be interpreted within the context of Second World War. It is acknowledged that the First World War needs further research. Nevertheless, an interpretative approach that goes beyond object fetishism and offers multi-perspective views is called for.

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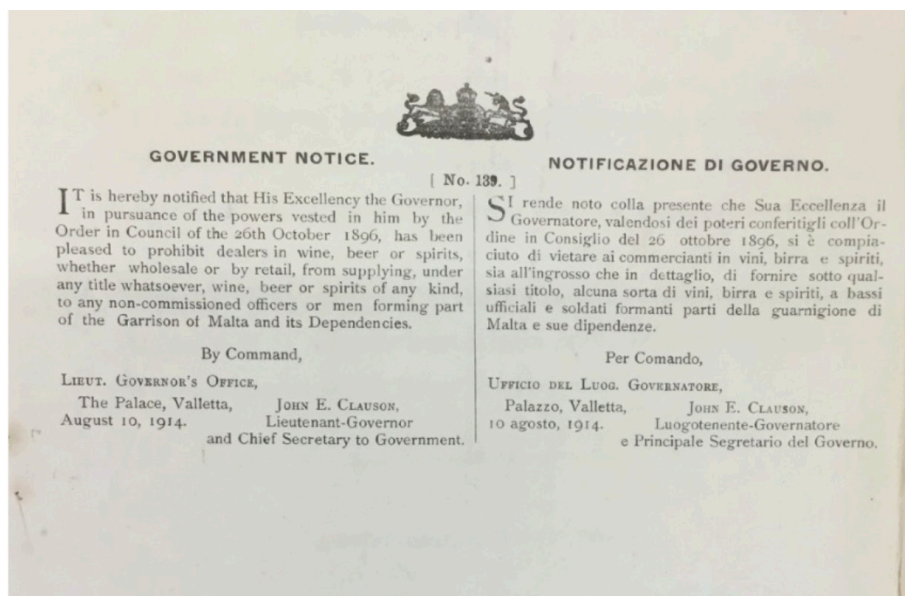
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The merchantman Port Chalmers, one of the survivors of Operation Pedestal, is cheered on entry in the Grand Harbour in August 1942.

The Gozo Philatelic Society

BY JESMOND BORG
ITS LECTURER

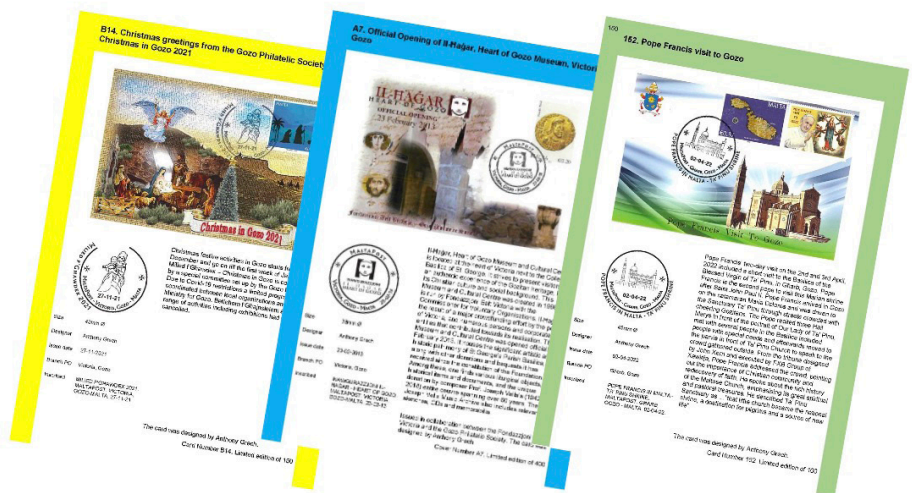
The Gozo Philatelic Society (GPS) was founded in 1999 by a group of avid local philatelists with the aim of promoting the hobby of stamp collecting, provide a point of reference for philatelists and co-ordinate philatelic events in Gozo.

The Gozo Philatelic Society issues commemorative cards whenever MaltaPost issues a Gozo related postage stamp and/or a special commemorative handstamp.

The GPS's first production goes back to the end of the Millennium, with a set of eight covers postmarked at the Post Offices in Gozo. These special cards designed by one of the founding members have helped members widen their philatelic interests and have given quite a positive identity to the Society especially with foreign philatelists. These commemorative cards have become a sought philatelic item, contributing greatly towards a healthy publicity to the island, and surely rank as the top achievement of the Society.

On the 12th February 2000 the Gozo Philatelic Society launched the first issue of the GPS Newsletter. The Newsletter developed in a quarterly full-colour publication, full of philatelic information and news. In 2016 the newsletter was awarded the Large Silver medal in its first international participation at the Canberra Stampshow. It is distributed to all its members and is also available full text on the University of Malta's Institutional Repository OAR@UM.

The annual Gozo Philatelic Society Exhibition has found itself on the Gozo activities



On the day of the book launch the Catalogue will be available for a minimum donation of

15€

calendar and is sought out by both Maltese and foreigners. In 2007, the Gozo Philatelic Society launched its website, www.stamps-gozo.org, which has recently been upgraded and updated.

The Gozo Philatelic Society today is more than a mere association of collectors; it can be considered as a valuable representative of society.

THE CATALOGUE

The primary aim of this publication was to create a comprehensive catalogue of the cards and covers to better equip philatelists with supporting technical details about the cards produced by the GPS featuring the stamps and handstamps issued related to

Gozo.

The cards and covers commemorate local events, history, art, culture, folklore and Gozo personalities, furthermore, special cards are issued for the annual GPS Exhibitions. Two notable series of cards produced along with personalized stamps feature Maltese Prime Ministers and Gozo Bishops. A further series of cards were produced in collaboration with local parishes and organisations to commemorate respective events and anniversaries.

The cards are issued in limited numbers and are very popular and sought out by collectors. In fact, we would not have been able to produce this catalogue without the



help of one of the founding members of the Society.

Furthermore, this publication is an excellent source of information about local heritage.

THE ARTIST

Anthony ("Toni") Grech was born in the Għajnsielem and has for many years been interested in art.

Way back in 1999, Anthony was one of the founding members of the Gozo Philatelic Society. His suggested design for the GPS logo was immediately chosen and still current in use. His artistic talents were immediately evident in all events, from the

first meetings and into the launch of the GPS Newsletter at the beginning of the year 2000.

As a very active committee member, he immediately began proposing ideas; and tangibly brought into realization the first "production"; a set of eight covers bearing the last postmarks of 1999 given by Gozo's eight postal offices. This success quite naturally inspired successors!

The committee unanimously decided to recommend issues to commemorate Gozo-connected developments; and to pick up these occasions to create covers, with Anthony as resident designer.

Way back in 1999, Anthony Grech was one of the founding members of the Gozo Philatelic Society. His suggested design for the GPS logo was immediately chosen and still current in use.



The shipwreck off the coast of Xlendi and the Gozo Citadel on stamps in 2022.

What's in it for us with Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe, it has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion for the period 2021-2027. Erasmus+ is managed by the European Commission (the EU's executive body), the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), National Agencies in Programme countries, and by National Offices in some Partner countries.

As a Programme, Erasmus+ is a powerful tool that is creating change across Europe and beyond. Indeed, Erasmus+ has opportunities for all, from students, staff, trainees, teachers to volunteers. The focus of Erasmus+ is to increase the quality of education and skills for the job market and to continue investing in non-formal learning by enabling young people to participate in exchanges and activities in an informal setting across the EU. This continues to show the stern belief from the EU that Erasmus+ is a success and that it can provide high quality, inclusive education, and training, as well as informal and non-formal learning. European citizens need to be better equipped with the knowledge, skills and competences needed in a dynamically changing society that is increasingly mobile, multicultural, and digital and this is what Erasmus+ aims to achieve.

Erasmus+ also presents opportunities for organisations that want to explore development and networking opportunities with universities, education and training

providers, research organisations, and private businesses that want to create transnational cooperation partnerships in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices. There is also the

“
Erasmus+ is a powerful tool that is creating change across Europe and beyond. Indeed, Erasmus+ has opportunities for all.”

opportunity for organisations to create projects supporting the overall EU policy agenda, the Education and Training 2020 cooperation framework, and the Youth Strategy.

For the period 2021-2027, Erasmus+ has four horizontal priorities and Erasmus+ projects and activities should connect with one or more of these priorities across all sectors.

- **Inclusion and diversity;** aiming to support people with fewer economic, social, and cultural opportunities.

- **Digital Transformation;** aiming to address digital transformation through the development of digital readiness, resilience, and capacity in the educational sector.

- **Environment and fight for climate change;** aiming to raise awareness about global warming and how to develop skills in sustainability-relevant sectors.

- **Participation in democratic participation;** aiming at promoting EU common values, civic engagement, and active citizenship.

Erasmus+ allows for individuals to participate in the programme through their organisations. Numerous projects are granted annually, and these projects fall under six sectors: School Education, Adult Education, Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training,

Youth and Sport. As of 2023, organisations active in the field of sport can also submit projects for mobility of sport staff which aims to support professional development of coaches and other sport staff.

Thousands of projects are taking place across the EU, supporting millions of individuals to participate in the programme. Several projects are selected annually both at National and European level as good practice projects and success stories, having Inspiration, and achieving remarkable results over the course of their project. Two such projects recognised as good practice



Malta is active in the Erasmus+ EU programme through the EUPA, the Maltese national agency.

projects in 2022 on a national level were 'NObesity' by Creative Youth and 'Active children, Technological Innovations, Varied Environments' by Gozo College Secondary School.

'NObesity', was a youth exchange that enabled 6 youths from Malta to participate in an Erasmus+ Project with 30 other youths from Portugal, Hungary, Turkey, Poland and Lithuania and it focused on developing youngsters' understanding of obesity, generate ideas to improve healthy lifestyle, raise awareness of how unhealthy lifestyle leads to psychological issues, and promote healthy dishes inspired from participating countries. The beneficiary institution was Creative Youth, a fast-growing youth group in Malta, which aims to prepare Maltese youth to succeed in the modern professional world and become socially active in volunteering initiatives. The project had a profound impact on participants,

helping them become more competent and open-minded. It also built the international experience and recognition profile of all parties involved and created stronger bonds with other members of the consortium.

Another successful project recognised as a good practice in 2022, was 'Active children, Technological Innovations, Varied Environments' by Gozo College Secondary School. The project was a collaboration between six schools from Denmark, Iceland, England, Finland, Turkey and Malta and it enabled 4 students and 2 teachers from Gozo College to participate in a mobility abroad amongst other activities. The objectives of this project were to encourage active learning, where pupils move both mind and body, and use ICT actively in their learning in collaboration with peers across borders. The project aimed to help pupils become active/passive learners, learn about growth mindset, and to help

them be resilient in terms of their goals. By participating in this project, students have gained the skills of active mind, active body, active learner with a focus on life-long learning.

Erasmus+ is indeed a powerful programme that has touched and changed many lives and it will continue to do so over the coming years. Millions of individuals, through their organisations, are experiencing mobilities abroad, further developing their skills, exploring new cultures, making new friends, and undergoing a life changing experience that will continue to empower them and support their growth. Explore what opportunities are out there for you and be part of the Erasmus+ world. For more information contact the European Union Programmes Agency on eupa@gov.mt or 25552326.



The KA229 project



The Nobesity Project



Personal memories saved in digital format

BY MARTIN DEBATTISTA
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS AND FUTOURISTIC EXECUTIVE EDITOR

As a movement dedicated towards saving Maltese analogue content, Magna Žmien was established in 2017 to address the need to digitise the memories of people who used home audiovisual media to document their ways of living in the 20th century. This initiative by a non-governmental organisation has taken root and Futouristic has spoken to Dr Andrew Pace, the head archivist, and Kris Polidano, communications coordinator and researcher at the Magna Žmien foundation.

WHAT INSPIRED THE START OF MAGNA ŽMIEN?

Magna Žmien set out to salvage Maltese memories that lay neglected and deteriorating on their original analogue carriers, freeing them from obsolete playback formats by converting them to digital files. We give individuals and communities access to previously lost images, sounds and narratives as these old formats degrade increasingly quickly. This content is shared on our platforms and

through our activities with artists, musicians, researchers and other creatives, preserving it for future generations, while being careful to credit and respect the wishes of the donor. We believe that all the material that we gather in our archive is part of our shared heritage, and that this heritage must be properly cared for.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE FROM THE PUBLIC SO FAR, BOTH FROM AN DONOR'S POINT OF VIEW WHO WANT TO HAVE THEIR MEMORIES DIGITATISED AND SHARED, AND THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PUBLIC?

The response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive. As the, let's say, "guardians", of a community's memories, we have the responsibility to ensure that the material that is digitised and deposited within the archive is treated with respect and with the same care that we would treat our own personal micro-archives. For this reason, people trust us to keep their memories to use with artists and researchers. The outward reception of the movement has been one filled with incredible enthusiasm. We have received feedback from people from all over the world about what we do, both from individuals expressing curiosity towards the content and even larger institutions.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN DIGITISING THE MEMORIES OF COMMON PEOPLE HELD IN OLDER AUDIO-VISUAL FORMATS?

On a physiological level, tape and film become brittle, sticky or mouldy as time passes, so we use high quality transfer equipment to avoid damage during digitisation. Equipment and replacement parts are also becoming increasingly expensive to source, meaning that it is becoming more expensive for the Foundation to maintain its goals. That said, fortunately, the majority of domestic formats are relatively affordable to obtain and maintain at the moment, unlike more professional formats that are very expensive (e.g. we can handle 8mm and various VHS formats, but not 16mm or Betamax). Right now, in 2022, Magna Zmien handles 20 different sound, image, and moving image formats.

AS AN NGO, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES IN WORKING IN MALTA'S HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION SECTOR?

HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS ANY ANALOGUE MATERIAL THAT SPARKED A 'WOW' OR 'A-HA!' MOMENT?

The benefits of working with Malta's heritage conservation and interpretation efforts allows us to engage with so many types of people in Malta and abroad ranging from the donors whose content becomes part of the archive, to artists and researchers who keep the content alive. Finding people who are willing to donate their material to the archive is far from difficult. On the contrary, we are inundated with people who are interested in passing on their memories. We also are very lucky to have people who voluntarily give their time to this movement without hesitation. That said, we do encounter challenges, as most NGOs do. In our case a rather significant challenge is finding methods to access and interpret



Part of the equipment used to convert from analogue to digital.

these collections as we reached over 100 collections with over 15,000 images which is a massive task for our small team.

"Wow" or "a-ha!" moments are rather frequent for us. We tend to find something special in most of the collections we get, but some highlights include the works of amateur filmmakers in the 1960s experimenting with equipment and emulating 1950s thrillers; immigrant messages from 1950s-80s, and underwater snorkelling in the 1950s, to name a few.

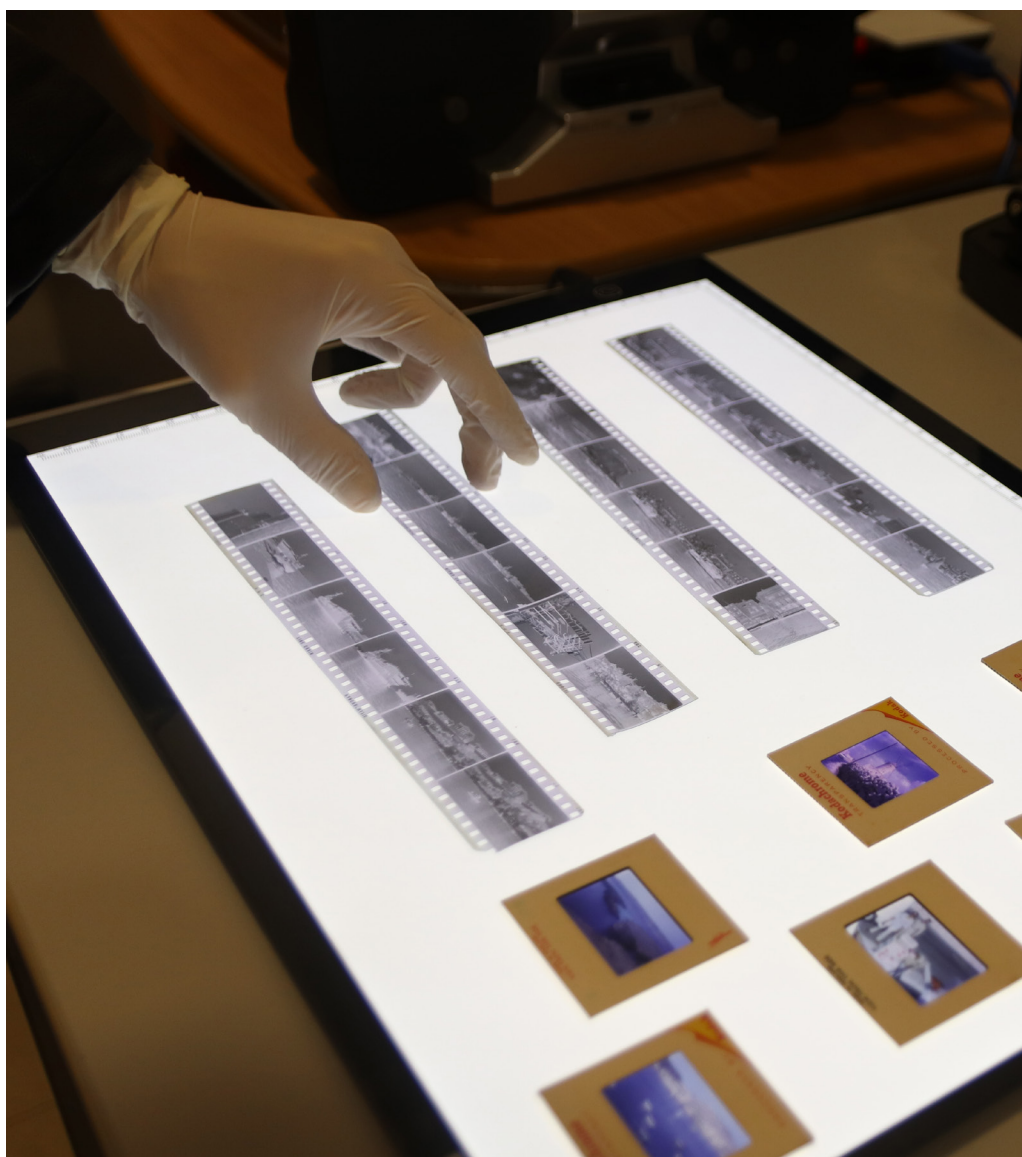
WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MEMORY INSTITUTIONS IN MALTA, ESPECIALLY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES WHO HAVE SIMILAR DIGITISATION INITIATIVES?

Our focus is collecting personal memories that don't necessarily relate to national collecting priorities, thereby filling an important gap and not competing for material that is better stored by national institutions. We don't actively look for themes to collect, but rather take in what people offer us with the only condition being that it must be associated with Malta and its diaspora. We don't want to dictate subjects, but we do have a collecting policy. We also digitise formats that other institutions don't, so we also offer these services accordingly. In this way, rather than gatekeeping our services, material and knowledge, we collect. The more material we have, the more researchers and artists can share. For instance, we recommended that the Guido Stilon collection go to the National Archives. We don't keep any physical items, as we're not capable of storing non-digital material, and we also don't want to separate families from their own family history. For this reason, we recommend people to donate material to more suitable institutions if they wish to.

HOW CAN RESEARCHERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ACCESS THE DIGITISED MATERIAL? THE 'STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVE' ([HTTPS://WWW.MAGNAZMIEN.COM/STORIES/](https://www.magnazmien.com/stories/)) SEEMS RATHER LIMITED IN COMPARISON TO YOUR EFFORTS.

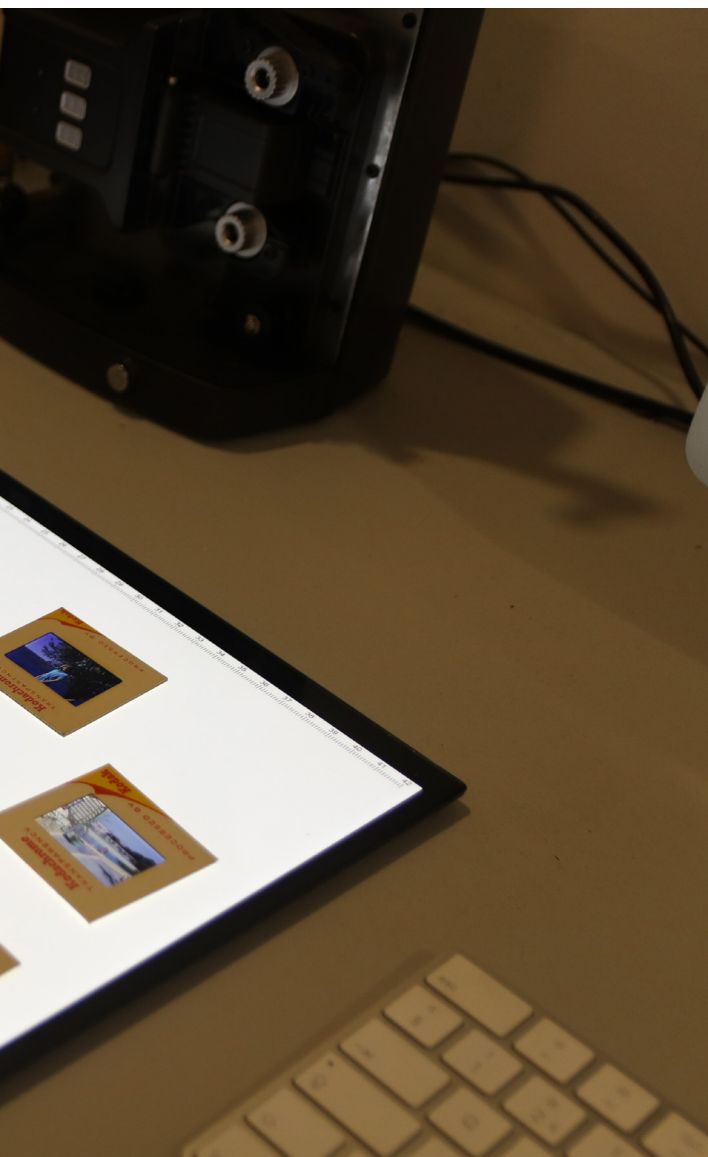
In 2023 we're starting to move to a new sharing platform. We're very grateful to be able to do this through the Investment in Cultural Organisations Fund which was awarded to us by Arts Council Malta in 2022. Initially we will migrate all our collections

to a platform that artists and researchers can access remotely, using much improved catalogue descriptions that <https://www.magnazmien.com/> will develop throughout 2023. Then, some of these collections will be made available publicly through the same platform. People with special knowledge will be invited to participate in volunteer description sessions to contribute to this over the next few years. These include people versed in subjects such as carnival, ecology, music and more. We want to



engage people directly with us and the archive, rather than share things more freely on social media platforms, employing more ethical ways of sharing that respect donors' rights and maintain the contexts of the images we have within the archive in particular. This is a community archive – the more you're willing to put material and time into it, the more you'll get out of it! Magna Żmien is moving toward being a platform, enabling artists and researchers to produce projects and work based on the content –

through them the content will be shared, contextualised and interpreted, allowing us more time to develop and enable these projects, rather than dedicate our own time to that. We rely heavily on volunteers, and producing exhibitions, for example, is very resource intensive, and that's why we're always looking for artists and researchers to engage with us so that the work we do can be shared.



Magna Żmien collects and digitises personal memories in analogue formats such as photo, photo negatives, glass negatives and slides.

“Wow” or “a-ha!” moments are rather frequent for us. We tend to find something special in most of the collections we get, but some highlights include the works of amateur filmmakers in the 1960s experimenting with equipment

”

Tas-Silġ sanctuary as a sacred place of worship

BY RAYMOND J. VASSALLO
VISITING LECTURER AT ITS

Humanity has always felt the need to resort to a higher power to attain or achieve his wishes and give thanks. From times unknown man has been known to 'look up' to a 'higher superior being' as a means of praying. The act of devotion and worship of a supreme being, created the need for a 'special space' outside of man's normal abode. These spaces were sanctified to provide not only a profound spiritual meaning but also personal empowerment to believers. Sacred spaces become sacred because people consider them different from ordinary spaces and serve the community by providing respite to the various users. Religious space is powerful as it focuses the attention of the believer on the divine and helps in the creation of relationships within the worshipping community.

Places of worship, churches or temples were, and still are, an edifice or location regarded as the base for religious activity or ritual. They underlie religious, social, and cultural mores.

Societies create their sacred spaces by embedding sacred meaning in those that were previously bereft. (Smith, 1987)

Power through worship may be divided into divine power, personal power, and social power. Divine power in a sacred space can refer to the presence or worship of a deity or higher power believed to have control over the physical and spiritual world. Primitive societies perceived it as present in natural forces, such as the cycles of the

moon or the fertility of the land and can be invoked through religious practices. In paleo-Christian cults, divine power was believed to be embodied in a single, all-powerful deity, often represented as a triune God.

Personal power can refer to an individual's own spiritual or emotional connection to a sacred space which provides empowerment through prayer, through confession and communion with the divine which could result in positive changes in one's own life.

Social power in a sacred space can refer to the influence and control exerted by religious or community leaders, giving guidance and interpreting religious doctrine to the congregation, such as a shaman in primitive societies, a priest in a Catholic church, an Imam in a mosque, or a Rabbi in a Jewish synagogue.

According to Mircea Eliade in his book *"The Sacred and the Profane"*, sacred space opens communication between heaven and earth. He further states that a temple is essentially a building designed to house a god and *"constitutes an opening in the upward direction and ensures communication with the world of the gods"*. (Eliade, 1987, p. 26)

In ancient times, temples were erected as a space specifically intended for this purpose and exclusively reserved for the veneration of gods as well as intercessions for social and personal gain. Worship was seen as a gateway to power, providing believers a different perspective on circumstances in their mortal lives.

From a local perspective, the Maltese temples:

"were the climax of the islands' prehistoric development. As well as honouring the local gods, they may have been deliberately elaborated to emphasize the islands' cultural independence".

(Trump, 2002)

One such place of worship is the temple of the Phoenician Ashtarte, which later changed its role to the temple of the Roman Juno, in Marsaxlokk. The famous sanctuary located on a hill known as Tas-Silġ (from the name of a small church dedicated to Our Lady of the Snows) is close to Marsaxlokk Harbour. The site overlay an even more archaic megalithic temple constructed sometime between 2,900 and 2,500 BC. The Phoenicians adapted this ancient edifice for their own needs to venerate their female goddess, Ashtarte, the divine protectress of mariners, hence the vicinity to the sea. Ashtarte was also venerated as a fertility goddess associated with love, sexuality, and motherhood.

Its vicinity to Marsaxlokk harbour, which must have been a busy port in those days, made Tas-Silġ sanctuary a recognized landmark for seamen to visit to give thanks to their gods for a safe return to dry land, or before embarking on a prospective journey at sea.

The movement of mariners carried with it artefacts from other countries which would

have changed hands in trade, such as the discovery of a small fragment of agate with an ancient writing recording the offering of a group of Babylonian men to one of their divinities. It was dated between 1330 and 1230 BC. (Cardona, 2022)

In his paper entitled *"Defining Phoenician Religious Space: Oumm el-'Amed Reconsidered"*, Dr Nicholas Vella mentions a report by two Frenchmen that 'Malta's megalithic monuments featured as renowned examples of Phoenician religious architecture'. He further cites Antonia Ciasca who carried out archaeological studies on the Phoenician settlements in Malta. Following years of research, Ciasca established that there are similarities between the sanctuary at Tas-Silġ and Oumm el-'Amed in the south of modern Lebanon, the most excavated archaeological site in the Phoenician territories.

The sanctuary at Tas-Silġ appears to have been occupied for millennia during various periods: as a megalithic temple during 3000-2500 BC; during the Bronze Age 2500-700 BC; converted by the Phoenicians in late 9th to 6th centuries BC; and during Punic times from the 4th to the 2nd century BC. During the Roman occupation from the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD the site became an international religious centre dedicated to the goddess Juno; and during the Byzantine era between the 5th and 6th centuries the temple was converted to a Christian basilica. This variety of dominators

would have definitely provided a melting pot of people with different traditions, cultures and religions. Being close to one of the main harbours active for many centuries, it became an important place where wayfarers and settlers left a significant heritage.

The inhabitants of Malta during the Temple period held a complex system of religious beliefs and practices. They believed that their ancestors were directly connected to

representation of their religious beliefs and practices.

It was only in the early 1900s that the site at Tas-Silġ was initially excavated and in 1934 Sir Temi Zammit commenced trenching works. Later, in 1963 an Italian Mission from the University of Rome, together with the University of Malta, was given permission to again carry out excavations between the late 1990s until 2012.

The remains at Tas-Silġ were identified as a neolithic temple originally dedicated to a fertility goddess which later became Ashtarte venerated by the Phoenicians. A D-shaped area made up of large stone blocks was discovered to be part of a four-apse temple which was part of a larger complex.

After the end of the Temple Period at around 2500 BC, during the Bronze Age, the use of the temple tended more towards domestic needs. Excavations recovered items relating to a seafaring culture, such as broken seashells, pieces of ceramic anchors and weights

which sailors might have carried with them to the temple, possibly as offerings to the deity.

Although some pottery finds from the Bronze Age colony were discovered, the sanctuary had not been in use and went into ruin until the Phoenicians revitalized the temple. On their settling in Malta, they chose Mdina as their main settlement, but for their spiritual needs they favoured the



Its vicinity to Marsaxlokk harbour, which must have been a busy port in those days, made Tas-Silġ sanctuary a recognized landmark for seamen to visit to give thanks to their gods for a safe return to dry land, or before embarking on a prospective journey at sea.

the divine which could provide protection and guidance to mortals. They built large temples to commemorate their ancestors and offered sacrifices to the gods, similar to the ones at Hagar Qim and Ras il-Wardija in Gozo, both also located on hilltops and close to the sea. They offered sacrifices of sheep, goats and other animals as a way to seek divine favour. They would have decorated their temples with carvings and paintings which would have served as a visual



The remains of fluted columns at tas-Silġ (Photo credit: Zugraga on Wikimedia Commons)

sanctuary at Tas Silġ which “started to emerge as an important extra-mural religious shrine with an international maritime vocation”. (Bonanno, 2005, p. 39)

The Phoenicians incorporated part of the prehistoric temple into the new temple of their goddess Ashtarte which could be seen as an attempt to connect their religion to the islanders’ prehistoric past. Before they settled in Malta, the Phoenicians were travelling traders from the Eastern Mediterranean and Bonanno states that it was only the sanctuary at Tas-Silġ that seemed to have been their established sacred space when they disembarked on the island.

The Phoenician conversion of the temple consisted of an extension to the outer wall and the enclosure of the original curved façade by two straight walls each ending with a square pillar to form a grand entrance where a large rectangular stone was placed to hold three vertical stone

features, probably representing three divinities. The forecourt could have been used for both religious and non-religious activities, such as processions, markets, public gatherings, etc.

The Italian Mission established that a relief of a corpulent androgynous deity, probably a fertility goddess, preserved from the waist downwards, was found in a Romano-Punic context and retained as the cult statue of the Romano-Punic fanum. The Phoenicians identified this prehistoric divinity with their own goddess Ashtarte also associated with nature and fertility. It is the second largest statue to be found on Malta. In another report by the Italian Mission, a *baetylus* (a precious, large round stone) was also found at Tas-Silġ, representing a male divinity which, together with the female goddess, symbolized the fertility cult. Through the coming of the Phoenicians, the male divinity at Tas-Silġ was given the name of Melqart, who symbolized the annual cycle of vegetation and who became venerated

in Phoenician and Punic cultures across the Mediterranean.

“Both the Phoenicians and the Romans respected this baetylus and left it in its original positionthey recognized in it the male divinity that essentially went together with the Great Goddess” (Vella, 1986)

The cults of Ashtarte and Tanit among the Phoenicians, and the cult of Juno among the Romans, had many similarities. The specifics of the rituals performed by the Phoenicians are not well-known and what we know is based on reconstructions from surviving artefacts and inscriptions. Some of the religious worship and ritual activity performed by the Phoenicians included offerings of food, drink as well as animal sacrifices, either as part of religious ceremonies or as a personal act of devotion. There were also public processions and festivals which might have taken place in and around the temple which was also a



The tas-Silg sanctuary (Photo credit: Zugraga on Wikimedia Commons)

centre for divination where oracles were used to communicate the will of the gods to the faithful. Phoenician people also made pilgrimages to the temple of Ashtarte and Tanit seeking blessings, guidance and protection from the goddesses.

Similar rituals were performed during the Roman period in honour of their goddess Juno, with offerings, public processions and festivals, as well as communal or individual pilgrimages which might have involved long distances to reach the temple. Marriage ceremonies could also have been performed since Juno was also associated with the sanctity of marriage and the protection of women.

The results of the excavations verified Cicero's account (in his prosecution speech against Caius Verres, governor of Sicily between 73-71 BC) of the holiness and wealth of the sanctuary. The main part of the temple was found to be horseshoe-shaped but very little was evident with regards to apses.

The findings also showed that:

"the Temple of Juno was indeed not only a venerable temple throughout the Phoenician, Punic, and Roman periods but also one of the sites with the longest use on these islands"

(Cardona, 2022)

Both cults were significant and socially and politically influential, shaping laws, customs and traditions. Also during Christian times, communities offered sacrifices and the sanctuary served as an occasion for the people to get together. Paleo-Christian worship involved prayer, sacraments and other religious ceremonies centered around the belief in only one God, while pagan communities were polytheistic.

Numerous votive cups and cooking pots which were unearthed had effigies of Ashtarte, indicating that household objects of personal use held an amount of spiritual power by the believers. The discovery of

burnt material, pots and litter found inside and from the altars indicated an abundance of offerings. Several ceramic containers found at the site were engraved with full dedications or ablutions, to a god. Many of these were devoted to Ashtarte, Tanit, and Hera, depending on the period to which they belonged. Other discoveries included Punic and Neo-Punic ritual inscriptions on bone, stone and baked clay which praise the goddess under her Phoenician and Punic names Astarte-Tanit. A statue of a standing *fat lady* was also found. This too was probably a representation of the venerated goddess Ashtarte/Juno.

Tas-Silg was unique as the only known *"example of a prehistoric structure on Malta that was used by the Phoenicians for their own religious needs."* (Cardona, 2022) It was also exceptional that a female idol was venerated from neolithic times to the Christian period.

The Phoenician conversion of the temple also included an extension to the outer



Tas-Silġ sanctuary, in particular, is a strong testimony of early Christianity in Malta. A large amount of Byzantine pottery and related material excavated at the site indicate that Christianity thrived on the island between the late fourth and the early ninth centuries.



wall and the enclosure of the original curved façade by two straight walls each ending with a square pillar to form a grand entrance where a large rectangular stone was placed to hold three vertical stone features, probably representing three divinities. The forecourt could have been used for both religious and non-religious activities, such as processions, markets, public gatherings, etc.

There is an unexplained gap in the history of Tas-Silġ after the first century AD during which evidence of building activity was present. This seemed to have resumed significantly in late Roman and early Christian times. Between the late 5th and early 6th centuries AD, the Christians radically converted the temple to suit their religious needs. A quadrangle court was created on one side of the prehistoric temple surrounded by a Doric colonnade with a double row of columns.

Tas-Silġ sanctuary, in particular, is a strong testimony of early Christianity in Malta. A large amount of Byzantine pottery and related material excavated at the site indicate that Christianity thrived on the island between the late fourth and the early ninth centuries. In his paper, *"The Early Christian Remains at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi, Malta – A Reconsideration of the Archaeological Evidence"*, Mario Buhagiar attempts to assess the Christian evidence on the island *"based on field surveys carried out in 1986 and on a careful analysis of the published material"* (Buhagiar, 1996)

An altar was erected which suggests that religious offerings or other sacrificial rituals were held as a means to thank the 'supernatural power'. For the Christian believers who came after, the altar would have symbolized the sacred place for offerings to God. A cross-shaped basin sunk in the ground in the middle of the temple was uncovered indicating the celebration of baptisms, presumably from the Byzantine period. The fact that a baptistery was used, shows that baptism was administered perhaps either to exorcise what was



Figure of Astarte/Isis found in Egypt
(Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

considered evil or to induct a new member within the faith. During the early Christian period, many of the people in Malta converted to Christianity as the religion spread throughout the Mediterranean region.

At the end of the Byzantine period, the central Mediterranean was regarded as a warzone and it is reasonable to assume that the people would have taken to the temple to pray fearing an attack by the infidels. Their fear was proved right when the sanctuary was destroyed by the Arabs since they probably would have considered it as an important focal point of resistance. The Muslim tradition of obliterating all effigies probably resulted in the destruction of any religious symbols present in the sanctuary. (N/A, 2022). It is said that marble and stone columns from a dismantled Christian place of worship were taken from Malta to Tunisia. (Dalli, 2006, p. 56)

The church seems to have still been active until the 8th or 9th centuries AD. Its religious

use came to an end during the Medieval period as it was abandoned and most of the stonework dismantled. What remained was turned into a farm and the whole area became agricultural land, at least until 1963 when excavations began.

The veneration of the sanctuary at Tas-Silġ by the inhabitants from Malta from neolithic times to the Byzantine period, is enough evidence that the temple was continuously recognized as a sacred place of worship, specifically of Ashtarte/Juno as the perennial deity at least until the coming of Christianity. The ruins of the original pre-historic temple remained the focal point of this place of worship, whether the “god was the ‘fat figure’, Ashtart, Tanit, or Hera, all of whom were worshipped here at one point or another”. (Cardona, 2022)

It is to be noted that thorough studies and findings on the site of Tas-Silġ were very important to discover more information on our Maltese past. They have greatly enriched the Maltese archaeological heritage particularly for the Phoenician-Punic and

Christian periods. All in all, Tas-Silġ is an important archaeological site that gives us valuable information about the religious practices and beliefs of the people who lived in Malta in ancient times and serves as a testament to our religious and cultural heritage. It continues to be a popular destination for those interested in the history and archaeology of our islands and which has since developed into a sanctuary of international fame.

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