

## **H** Fort St Angelo

The close relationship between Fort St Angelo and the maritime City of Senglea spans centuries. Although the Fort predates Civitas Invicta by at least 300 years, since the sixteenth century both locations have contributed part and parcel to Malta's resilience, especially during the period of the Order of St John. To begin with, Grand Master Claude de la Sengle, credited with the construction of the City of Senglea, held the position of Governor of Fort St Angelo in 1551 and was also the last Grand Master to be buried in St Anne's chapel's crypt following his demise in 1557. But perhaps, the correlation between Fort St Angelo and Senglea is best attested during the Great Siege and the immediate years preceding this event, as in 1546 an iron chain was placed in the sea between both sites to protect the entrance into Galleys' Creek. Immediately following the Ottomans' arrival to Malta in May 1565, a wooden pontoon was specifically built between Fort St Angelo and Senglea in order to transport necessary supplies for the ongoing gruesome battle. During the same beleaguerment, Fort St Angelo had saved the adjacent city from falling into the Ottomans' hands, when a timely intervention by the De Guiral's Battery on 15 July 1565, disrupted a major seaborne attack by ten enemy boats on Senglea, leading to the death of around 800 Janissaries.

Later on, in 1645, Fort St Angelo and Senglea shared the important function of sheltering the Order's galleys, with four moored within the Fort's moat and the other two below the *Giardino della Sirena* in Senglea. In 1758, 300 men, some from the Senglea Company, were enlisted to defend Fort St Angelo in case of an assault. Similarly in 1792, artillerymen from the Regiment of Senglea were also stationed within the fortress. Following the start of British control over the Maltese Islands, the relationship between both posts strengthened, particularly by the start of the twentieth century when Fort St Angelo passed under the responsibility of the Admiralty and was extensively used by the Royal Navy as the headquarters of the Mediterranean Fleet. During this time, thousands of sailors were ferried across to Senglea which was likewise booming with naval life. This activity was only brought to an end when the last British Forces left Malta on 31 March 1979.

