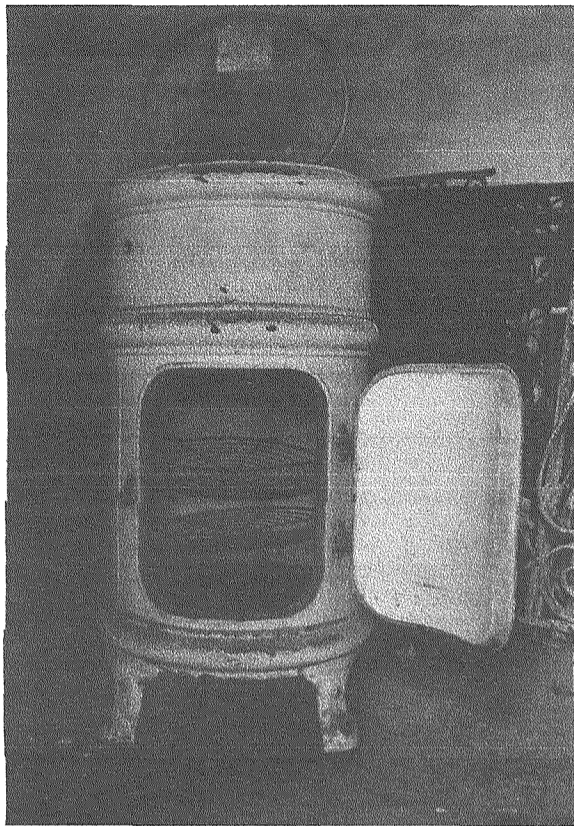


## NATIONAL



Photographers were allowed inside the Queen's former home in Guardamangia ahead of the restoration of the Grade 2 listed building. PHOTOS: JONATHAN BORG

# Restoration to start on €5m home of the Queen

Monarchy to be invited to send representative for reopening

Restoration work is to begin on Villa Guardamangia, the only place outside the UK that Queen Elizabeth II called home, after it was bought by the Maltese government for €5 million.

The purchase price for the villa was disclosed for the first time as videographers and photographers were allowed inside ahead of the restoration of the Grade 2 listed building by Heritage Malta.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip lived in the villa between 1949 and 1951. Villa Guardamangia, which has fallen into disrepair over the years, was put up for sale last year for €6.5 million. Parliament was informed that the state had bought the villa in October of 2019.

Yesterday, National Heritage Minister José Herrera said the transfer of the villa to the state cost €5 million.

The minister was asked by Times of Malta whether the government had been in touch with Buckingham Palace about the purchase of the villa and whether Queen Elizabeth was being invited to visit her former home.



Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip at Villa Guardamangia. PHOTO: FRANK ATTARD

"Yes, the royal family were involved throughout the discussions and yes it would be a pleasure to have a representative of the monarchy over, once the restoration works are finalised," Herrera said.

"At the moment we are focusing on the restoration works and any possibilities will be discussed through diplomatic channels," he said.

## VILLA GUARDAMANGIA

Numbered 49 on Guardamangia Hill, the villa is scheduled as a Grade 2 monument.

Measuring 1,560sqm, it is the only building outside of the United Kingdom that the British monarch has ever called home.

It was built in 1900 by Sir Augusto Bartolo and was bought by Joseph Schembri, who leased it to the Queen's cousin and Prince Philip's uncle, Lord Louis Mountbatten. He then made the property available to the royal couple.

They lived there while Prince Philip was a naval officer stationed on the island and before Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1953.

The Queen's last visit to her former home was during her 1992 State visit.

She has twice been presented with paintings of her former home, once in 2013 by former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Norman Hamilton and again in 2015 by then-president Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca.

