



MerHbA

Maltese Historical Association (Aust) Inc
(Għaqda Storika Maltija (Awstralija) Inkorporata)

MHA Newsletter No. 1/2016

www.mha.org.au

February 2016

Merħba! Welcome to all our members and friends to our first edition of the MHA Newsletter for 2016.

The committee has been hard at work preparing an exciting line-up of topics and speakers for this year. We will start off the year with a guest speaker, Professor Yosanne Vella from the University of Malta. She will speak about *Women in Malta in the Eighteenth Century*. How interesting it will be to gain a different perspective of life in the last and somewhat decadent century of the Knights' rule!

The MHA now has an active Facebook page. Robert Blythe has done a fantastic job setting up and maintaining it for us. Check it out here and "like" us:

<https://www.facebook.com/Maltese-Historical-Association-of-Australia-177744292578178/timeline>

Unfortunately, due to the exorbitant cost of printing and postage, the MHA committee has decided that Merħba will now have to go paperless. This may be for the better, as there are many internet links to information and videos, etc. in each issue. Members without internet access will still receive a notice of events.

If you are interested in researching a particular topic and would like to give a talk or write an article for the newsletter, my contact details are below.

Looking forward to seeing you on the sixteenth,
Charlie

Charles Gatt
(MHA Secretary)
Phone: 0425 708 830
secretary@mha.org.au



MHA February Event:

Women in Malta in the Eighteenth Century

by

Professor Yosanne Vella

As a girl, the lack of representation of Maltese women in history books dismayed Yosanne Vella. As an adult, and now a professor in Education, specialising in History pedagogy, at the University of Malta, Yosanne examined the Notary Archives in Valletta and other sources, researching the lives of women in Malta.

In this talk Professor Vella will focus on the role of women in Malta during the eighteenth century, when Malta was ruled by the Knights of St John.

WHEN: 7.30 pm Tuesday 16 February
WHERE: Maltese Community Centre
Royal Parade, Parkville,
Victoria
(Enter from Ievers St)

COMING EVENTS

- 11 February: *Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes*, 11am Ta'Pinu Shrine, Merrimu
- 16 February *MHA Lecture: Women in Malta in the 18th Century*: 7:30 pm Maltese Community Centre, Parkville
- 27 February: *Maltese Festival*: 10 am - 6 pm. Kernot Hall, Morwell
<http://www.mccv.org.au/event/inaugural-latrobe-valley-maltese-festival/>
- 20 March: *Passion Play*: 1:30 pm Ruffey Lake Park Doncaster
- 25 March: *Passion of Our Lord Good Friday Pageant*: 2:30 pm Ta'Pinu Shrine, Merrimu

MHA December Event

Our December event was a trivia night, held on 15 December. Despite the closeness to Christmas, enough people attended to form two tables. The spirit soon became more cooperative than competitive. Some of the questions were straightforward: others were so hard that even our experts were unsure!



*Racking our brains at the Trivia night
Photo: Lewis Zammit*

Questions were organised into topics: Early Malta, Punic-Roman times, Mediaeval Malta, The Knights of St John, Malta after the Knights, World War II, Malta Buses, Governors of Malta, General I and II, Riddles and Proverbs.

Examples of questions included:

- Q. By which writer, in which book and under which name is Gozo mentioned in ancient literature?
- A. Homer, Odyssey, Ogygia (The nymph Calypso lured Odysseus by her singing and kept him prisoner at Ogygia for seven years before Zeus commanded her to release him so he could return to his wife Penelope)
- Q. Who gave the name Ghawdex to Gozo?
- A. The Arabs. (The name Gozo comes from the Spanish via the Latin Gaudium, meaning joy or delight)
- Q. Legend has it that the Carthaginian General, Hannibal, was the son of a Maltese, who lived in Rabat at a place called Hal Barka. What was the name of Hannibal's father?
- A. Hamilcar Barca

Q. Where was the summer residence of the leading Maltese citizen, Publius, who welcomed St Paul and what is the name of the chapel built on that site?

A. Burmurrad (within the city of St Paul's Bay) and the chapel is San Pawl Milqi (Welcomed).

(The New Testament states that Publius converted to Christianity after St Paul healed his father from fever and dysentery. According to tradition, Publius became the first Bishop of Malta. He ruled the Maltese Church (the first Christian church in the West) for 31 years. In 90 AD, he was transferred to the See of Athens, where he was martyred in 125 AD. He was canonised in 1634 and his feast is celebrated on January 21).

Q. During its time as a Roman province, Malta was at first part of the united Roman Empire. What year did the transition from Western to Eastern or Byzantine Empire take place?

A. 494 AD

Q. In 1397, Martin I of Aragon reincorporated Malta as part of Sicily and officially recognised the Maltese Commune (established by the Swabian Emperor Frederick in 1230). By what other name was the Commune then known?

A. Università. (Martin I also praised the loyalty of the Maltese and decreed that Malta would never in the future be granted as a fief to private lords.

Q. Name the 3 leaders of the besieging Turkish forces during the Great Siege in 1565.

A. Mustafa Pasha, Piyale Pasha, and Dragut (Turgut Reis).

Q. Which is the only Auberge built by Girolomo Cassar that is still standing in its original form?

A. Aragon.

Q. The total number of air raids over Malta between 1940 and 1944 was?

A. 3340!

We had a lot of fun debating the questions and learned many interesting facts and events relating to Maltese history along the way. We finished the evening with some Maltese riddles (Haġa Moħġaġa). Many thanks to Joseph Borg for providing us with such interesting and entertaining material. Afterwards we were able to choose from a number of books that the MHA had spare, the rest being donated to the MCCV Library.

MHA February Event: *Women in Malta in the Eighteenth Century* by **Professor Yosanne Vella**

About the author:



Yosanne Vella is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Her academic area of specialisation is history pedagogy, and she teaches history teacher trainees in B.Ed, P.G.C.E. and Masters courses. She was the vice chair of the Education and Culture Committee of NGOs in the Council of Europe till 2014, and is presently an active member and an ambassador of Euroclio (the European History Educators' network).

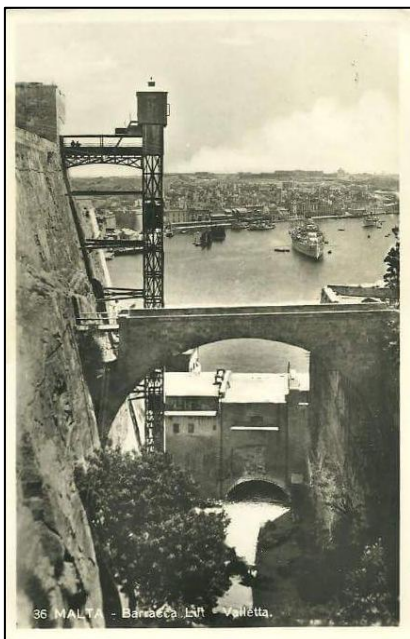
She is the Vice president of Malta's History Teachers' Association and the Vice president of Malta's Historical Society. She has published various history teaching as well as history papers, pedagogy books, teaching resources and textbooks. She has presented several history teaching papers at various international conferences and she is presently on a research Sabbatical in Melbourne.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/profile/yosannevella>

Short Abstract:

My love affair with Women's History is now over twenty years old. Since a pupil in school in the 1970s I was always very suspicious and more than a little uncomfortable at the total lack of representation of my sex in history books. Apparently I belonged to a group of people who did not seem to participate at all in the past. Since then I have been in search of women in history and this talk is a brief overview of some of my publications on the lives of women in 18th century Malta.

Malta in the 18th century was still ruled by the Knights of St. John and naturally women formed part of that society. The introduction of this talk will describe the island in general at this time and then it will focus on the Maltese women who formed part of Malta's society. The author mostly searched the Notary archives in Valletta to try and find what women were doing at this time. The talk will focus amongst other things on the work women did, women as troublemakers and women as victims of crime; and finally on whether there was any education available for women at this time.



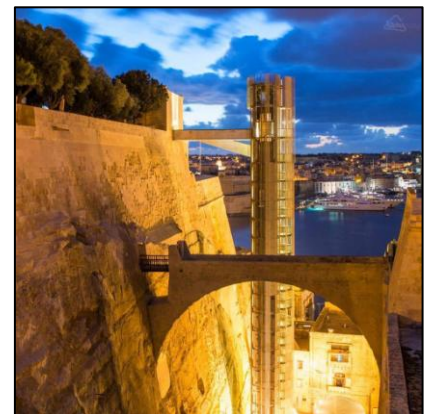
The old lift *Postcard*

THE BARRAKKA LIFT, THEN AND NOW

The original lift was built in 1905 for £5,000 by Macartney, McElroy & Co. Ltd., an engineering company that had previously laid down tramlines linking the Three Cities, Rabat and Valletta. The lift's two cabins each carried 12 passengers on a shorter and quicker route between Lascaris Wharf (Old Customs House) and the Upper Barrakka Gardens. The lift was shut down in 1973 and dismantled in 1983.

Work on the new lift started in 2011 and it was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr Lawrence Gonzi, on 15 December 2012. The €2.5 million project was mostly funded by the EU. The 58m high lift operates between 7am and 10 pm daily, carrying up to 800 people per hour, in its two passenger cabins with a capacity of 21 passengers each. It completes the journey in 23 seconds, to the Upper

Barrakka Gardens, with breathless views of Grand Harbour along the way, all for €1. Connection to the three Cities is via a new ferry service, which began operating in December 2012. Ferry users are entitled to free same-day use of the lift.



The new lift
Photo: William Farrugia

The 1429 Siege of Malta – Vassallo History



The first recorded siege of Mdina took place in 1429 and it can be considered as greater than the Great Siege of 1565. At that time, North Africa had been taken over by the Sunni Muslims called Hafsiidi who wanted to re-occupy Sicily. Malta, being in the middle, was attacked first.

In 1429 a determined attempt was made by an army of 18,000 Moors from Tunisia under Kaid Ridavan to capture the Maltese Islands with the intention of using them as an advance post for further conquests. The Maltese population then numbered between 16,000 to 18,000 with only some 4,000 men under arms. Malta had no foreign soldiers to help defend it but Mdina was well-prepared for such a siege. The invaders were beaten back but not before they captured over 3,000 of the inhabitants as prisoners.

The Maltese Islands were freed from feudalism in 1426. It is said, when you are in peace, prepare for war. Besides the King's Army in Malta and Gozo, there were 300 soldiers (territorials) called Tad-Dejma.

This Maltese regiment was compulsory for all those who reached the age of 16. Training used to be held on Sundays. The absentees were fined between a Karlin and 40. These soldiers were paid from the Università (local council) and from the abattoir.

In September 1429 the Army of the Saracins, about 18,000 men, arrived on Malta's shores from Tunis. These were under the command of Kaid Ridavan.

The Muslims first attacked Mdina fiercely for three consecutive days. Afterwards, they left Mdina, carrying with them what they could and destroying the rest. Many Maltese were killed; others taken in slavery.

There is a story that the invading troops placed bread at the entrance to the city to taunt the defenders that the invaders had bread while the Maltese did not. But during the night, the Maltese

crept out of the city and placed ġbejniet on top of the bread to show they had not just bread but also ġbejniet.

This siege is also renowned for the religious legends surrounding it.

It is said that on that occasion St Paul appeared on a white horse holding a dagger in his hand defending the Maltese. The Cathedral Chapter in 1682, as a remembrance of that event, commissioned a canvas to Mattia Preti representing St Paul on a white horse defending the Maltese. The painting still exists and it can be seen in the chapel of the Annunciation, facing the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament at Mdina Cathedral. Furthermore, Mgr Pietro Dusina in his Apostolic Visit ordered that St Paul be declared co-titular with Our Lady of the Assumption.



Maltese historians say that the siege of 1429 was worse than the Great Siege of 1565 because the Maltese were fighting alone without any help. On that event the Augustinians lost their monastery and church at Saqqajja in frontispitio Civitatis, very close to the city walls of Mdina, which was totally destroyed by the Arabs ab exercitu Barbarorum.

It is said that Kaid Ridavan stayed in that monastery.

Afterwards, the Augustinians took refuge at St Peter's Hospital (today St Benedict's Abbey) and later at the Visitation church, Via Lunga, in Mdina as well.

<https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/battles-sieges/>

Watch Towers of Malta and Gozo



Wignacourt tower: St Lucian's Marsaxlokk

Between 1610 and 1620, Grandmaster Wignacourt, at his own expense, built 6 large coastal towers, of which 4 survive. They can be found at St Paul's Bay, Marsaxlokk, Marsaskala and Comino.

The Tower of Santa Maria delle Grazie was built close to the present day town of Xgħajra, on or near the site of a medieval watch post. It was smaller than the others but the most heavily armed. The tower (or its ruins) was demolished by the British military in around 1888 to clear the line of fire of a new artillery battery, named Della Grazie Battery after the tower.

Different from the other towers, and probably financed by the Order, the Xgħajra Tower in Gozo was built in 1616 on a cliff overlooking Marsalforn Bay to the west, and Ramla Bay to the east, effectively guarding the northern approach to Gozo. It was clearly visible from the northern walls of the Cittadella, so it could communicate directly with the garrison there. In 1681, part of the cliff face collapsed and, in the 1693 Sicily earthquake, cracks on the cliff face extended to beneath the tower. It was still operational in 1715, but collapsed or was dismantled shortly afterwards. All that remains is a pile of rubble.



Vendôme: Tour-reduit, Marsaxlokk Source: Wikipedia

It was replaced by a *tour-reduit*, in the centre of the tal-Qortin plateau, in around 1720. Known as the Perellos Tower, the ruins were demolished by the British military in 1915. Only four *tour-reduits* were built, of which the sole survivor is the Vendôme tower of 1715, overlooking Marsaxlokk bay. Now used as the headquarters of Marsaxlokk F.C., the surrounding ditch and drawbridge no longer exist and the walls are in need of repair.

Grandmaster Lascaris built 7 watchtowers in 1637 and 1638, then, between 1647 and 1649, the large, bastioned, Saint Agatha's Tower, similar to Wignacourt's, all funded by the Università of Malta.



St. Agatha's Tower, Malta

Photo: Inkwina

Lascaris then built two towers in Xlendi and Dwejra, in 1650 and 1652 respectively, paid for by the Università of Gozo.

His successor, De Redin, built 13 watchtowers between 1658 and 1659, of which 9 survive. Another, built in Gozo after his death, is also referred to as a De Redin tower, as are some of the Lascaris towers.



De Redin: Hamrija Tower, Qrendi Source: terrasubarctica

Federation of Australian Historical Societies

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e-BULLETIN No. 147 – 6 February 2016

Compiled by the FAHS' new Online Outreach
Officer, Dr Bernadette Flynn

- 1) Fire at Yarloop destroys Railway Workshops and Museum
- 2) Burke, Wills, King and Yandruwandha National Heritage Place on National Heritage List
- 3) New grants and activities at Circular Head Heritage Centre, Tasmania
- 4) Victoria's Maritime Heritage Conference - Bass Strait: The Western Approaches
- 5) History is Hot! – RAHS Evening Event
- 6) Conference: Stories of Stephens, Annerley
- 7) Grants now open up to \$5,000 – Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewals
- 8) Grants open shortly up to \$15,000 – Community Heritage Grant



Address: Shop 10,
204 Warrandyte Road,
Ringwood North Vic 3134
Phone: (03) 9876 7688
Fax: (03) 9011 9698
email: claudia@thetravelhaven.com.au
ABN: 83156081015
Lic. No. TA-0033041
The Travel Haven Pty. Ltd.

Claudia Zammit
Manager

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Interesting Links:

Thanks to Mario Bonnici for forwarding this article from Malta Times: Many Corsairs made a living by plundering foreign ships under the guise of a Christian war against the Muslims. *In the Name of the Prince*, written by museum curator Liam Gauci after 10 years of research and illustrated by Daniel Cilia, is being published this February. It details the lives of the Maltese corsairs between 1760 and 1798. Read on!

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/201602/02/local/a-history-of-plundering-on-high-seas.600981>

Stories My Parents Told Me: Tales of Growing Up in Wartime Malta by Rupert C. Grech

http://www.amazon.com/Rupert-C.-Grech/e/B00ESEC18I/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1
<http://storiesmyparentstoldme.com/books-i-have-written/>

Ancient and Modern Malta by Louis de Boisgelin

While checking some references, I came across this treasure, a book written by a Knight of St John, and published in 1805. De Boisgelin lists an impressive list of references, some of which may no longer exist. Comprising 416 pages, it would be wonderful if someone could read it and write a review. It is available free to download at:

https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=8Mp70Rf4c1wC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en_GB&pg=GBS.PP11

Ta' Pinu Shrine:

January Newsletter:

<http://www.tapinu-australia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/newsletter32-final.pdf>

February Newsletter:

<http://www.tapinu-australia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/newsletter33-final.pdf>

BANK OF VALLETTA PLC

Australia Representative Office:

16 Watt Street Sunshine Vic 3020

Tel 9311 3222 Fax 9311 3216

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Pubic Transport 1856

Source: Maltese Old Photos