



# MELITA



## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF VALLETTA

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Number 37

November 2023



*Aerial View of Valletta and the Three Cities*



### ***A Message from Chairman Graham***

A group of members, both from Malta and England, spent a very successful week in Malta in mid October. Some of the reports appear later in this newsletter. However, I would like to comment on a few of the things we achieved.

We met with several of our Maltese friends, including Joe Spiteri, who was Deputy Mayor in Valletta at the time of our original link, and whose inspiration contributed greatly to the coming about of our friendship. He and his wife, Rosette, had dinner with us on Thursday evening. Vincent Zammit, who has given us several interesting lectures and also guided the group last time we visited, spent Saturday morning with us when Paolo Ferrelli showed us round the Msida Bastion cemetery. Edward Said and Fernando Mifsud showed us the latest developments of the Villa Frere garden. Geoff Thomas pianist for Star of Strait Street, and his wife Julie, and Jamie, the Roadie for the show, joined us for dinner on Tuesday evening. And we watched Jasmine Farrugia, who played young Christina Ratcliffe, play Betty Rizzo in a performance of Grease in the Manoel Theatre on Sunday evening. Our committee member, David Vassallo, and his wife, Trish, were with us for much of the week.

One of our important achievements included talks with the two Cathedrals—St. John’s and St. Paul’s—on possible links with Chichester Cathedral, and we hope that this initiative will bear fruit. The senior clergy of all three are very enthusiastic, so we have hopes that this can come about.

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**Please note that our AGM will take place in the City Council Chamber on Thursday 7th December at 7pm, followed by David Vassallo speaking about Ben Jinks’s Diary.**

**Our Christmas Evening will take place at the Bishop’s Palace on Wednesday 13th December at 6.30pm, and Canon David Nason will tell us about the wonderful Tudor ceiling and show us round the Bishop’s Chapel. Your friends and relatives will also be welcome.**



# Friends of Valletta



## Christmas Get Together

*On Wednesday 13 December 6.30pm to 9.30pm*

*At the Bishop's Palace  
in the Sherborne Room*

*An evening of Music, Food and Friendship  
celebrating the Festive Season*

*Guest Speaker The Rev. David Nason  
Who will talk about the history of the Sherborne Room  
and the Bishop's Chapel  
ending with a short Organ Recital of Carols*

Enjoy a Light '**Supper in a Box**' and a glass (or two)  
of wine, beer or soft drinks

**Cost: Members £12. Guests £14**

Payment:

**BACS: Friends of Valletta sort code 60-03-08 A/C 81138695**

**Cheque:** payable to **Friends of Valletta** and post to  
Graham Pound, Crouchers, Birdham Rd, Apuldram, Chichester, PO20 7EQ

For catering numbers **RSVP by 6 December to [Josepound@gmail.com](mailto:Josepound@gmail.com)**

BRING A WARM COAT for the chapel as it's cold in there!  
Some Parking at the Palace - Disabled Access - Toilets

*Forthcoming Events*

# **Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 7th December**

**7pm**

**Council Chamber**

**Chichester**

**Followed by a talk by**

**David Vassallo**

**‘Ben Jinks’s Diary’**

**plus wine, nibbles and chat**

## ***A Successful Visit***

Although there were not many of us, we had a very successful visit to Valletta in mid October. It is hoped that this might be a precursor to a fuller visit next year. While there, we met up with several of our friends from Malta, as well as working on future events – and also enjoying ourselves!

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October – Jose and Graham Pound, Rachael Osborne and Anne Scicluna travelled to Malta – Jose and Graham stayed in the Domus Zammitello, and Rachael and Anne were in the Castille Hotel. Richard New had gone out there two days previously. He stayed in a B & B in Merchants Street. We met with David and Trish Vassallo, who were already in Malta.

Tuesday morning was spent looking round the newly opened Secret Garden at St. Catherine's Convent—recommended to us by Penny Jones, who had visited the previous week - which gave an insight into how girls of the past were disciplined and sent to the convent, and also how the convent worked. We saw their wash houses, their dormitories, their chapel and burial area, as well as the lovely small garden where they grew their vegetables. Both charming and interesting. Our evening meal had been booked for us by Richard, and took place on the Valletta Waterfront. Here we were joined by Geoff Thomas – pianist for Star of Strait Street, his wife, Julie, and Jamie Cini, their Roadie. A lovely evening.



On Wednesday we visited the Aviation Museum in Ta'Qali and watched a very good true wartime film, which we would like to somehow bring to Chichester – although at present there is only one copy. On to Mdina and a visit to the Roman Villa 'Domus Romani' and a ride on the Little Train round Mtarfa and the surrounding area. Our evening meal was eaten at Bacchus Restaurant in Mdina, and was excellent, both foodwise and placewise – thoroughly to be recommended.

On Thursday evening we were joined for our meal at Rampila, over the ditch by City Gate, by Joe and Rosette Spiteri, Joe being instrumental as Deputy Mayor of Valletta, with first setting up the official friendship. Graham offered him Honorary Life Membership of our association, which he was pleased to accept.



On Friday, while Richard went to see the Neolithic Temples, and Rachael and Jose did some shopping, Graham and Anne visited the cathedrals. Chichester's Bishop Martin had asked that we look into possible links between the cathedrals in our two cities, and we had promised to see what could be done.

We first visited St. Paul's Pro Cathedral, which was built by Queen Adelaide in 1844. David Wright, the new Chancellor, had only been in post a matter of



weeks, but he was delighted to look seriously into a link with Chichester Cathedral, and is especially keen on choirs and singing, as well as congregation. Following an hour or so with him, we went on up to St. John's Co Cathedral, which was built by the Knights of St. John just after the 1565 siege. There we met with Monsignor Paul Vella, who was similarly delighted at the suggestion of a link with Chichester – and asked that we have a photograph taken. On learning that we had received a talk from Marius Zerafa on Caravaggio, he very much

wants to see a copy of the talk, so hopefully it will be on our website soon.

On Saturday morning Richard left for England.

On Saturday we met with Vincent Zammit and went to the Msida Bastion Garden, where Paolo Ferrelli gave us a most interesting tour of the cemetery there. In the afternoon we had arranged a visit to the Villa Frere Garden to see how things had progressed since our last visit. In fact, progress has been fantastic!

The garden is beautifully planted, and a real pleasure to visit and walk round. The volunteers have also now uncovered two buildings which they are renovating to bring back into use. The Villa Frere itself has been taken over by the Maltese government, and hopefully will soon be getting back to what it should look like – although at present it is in a very poor state.



On Sunday morning Jose, Rachael and Graham went to the service in St. Paul's, while Anne was treated to lunch by some of her friends. In the afternoon we all went to the Manoel Theatre, where Jasmine Farrugia, who had appeared in Star of Strait Street in Chichester, was playing Betty Rizzo in Grease, and had managed to get us a box in the theatre.



Monday morning saw us returning to Chichester.

## **Architect Richard England**—article adapted from various copies of The Times of Malta



Photograph

Johan Pihlemark



Architect Richard England

After living in Malta for six months, Patrick van Schaik felt he had seen all there was to see. It was then, on his daily commute from his Birkirkara home, that the Dutch national noticed something beautiful: the façade of Mater Dei Hospital.

Van Schaik soon became obsessed with other modernist buildings, mostly from the 1960s and 1970s, and one architect elicited an “emotional response” – Richard England. Van Schaik made it a mission to visit and photograph every building designed by the Maltese architect. The Qawra parish church, La Vallette resort and Millennium Chapel are among the buildings designed by England.

“Richard England is one of the great architects of the world but people in Malta don’t seem to realise it,” said Van Schaik. “Many of my positive experiences in Malta are related to my crazy quest to visit every Richard England building” .

England said : Maltese architecture has a very strong and distinctive character. Its uniqueness is exemplified in such structures as the Parliament building in Valletta by Renzo Piano, which looks nothing like any of his projects elsewhere. That only speaks highly of an architect of such renown as Renzo. His work is all about looking carefully at the history of a place and its cultural background, and understanding the materials. The sole building material we have on the island is stone. We don’t have wood here. What Renzo did with his building is he turned Malta limestone, which is called *Globogerina*, into an intricate lace. You see, cities change. You can’t petrify a city. The challenge is how to envision a meaningful continuity between what is valuable historically and what will be aspiring in the future.

I remember Ponti telling me, “Religious architecture is not a question of architecture but one of spirituality.” In my career, I have designed 25 sacred buildings. The main challenge, of course, is to enhance the spirit and enlighten the soul. This is a good place to bring in the words of Tennessee Williams: “I don’t want reality, I want magic.” That’s what architecture can do. They produced an architecture that related to the earth, sky, and their own wisdom. Jorge Luis Borges said, “My business is to weave dreams.” That’s exactly what I want to achieve as an architect. Whether I succeed is another matter.



*Committee members in Mдина*

*Waiting for the women to come out of the shop*

**Committee Members**

**President**

**The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Chichester  
Councillor Craig Gershater**

- Chairman**            **Graham Pound**
- Vice Chairman**   **Anne Scicluna**
- Hon. Secretary**   **Vacancy**
- Hon. Treasurer**   **Adrian Cook**
- Membership Sec.** **David Ross**
- Committee**        **Jenny Bewes**
- Brenda Gay**
- Cherry Hughes**
- David Moore**
- Richard New**
- David Vassallo**

**Melita Editor**        **Anne Scicluna**

*Renzo Piano's Parliament building*







