



GWL

The word for Ghawdex in Punic inscription

Wirt Ghawdex NEWSLETTER No3/11



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I assume the office of President of this Society my first thought is to thank the outgoing President, Magistrate Paul Coppini, who throughout the thirty years of this Society which he co-founded, dedicated so much time and effort to enable it to prosper for the good of Gozo. Whilst addressing a vote of thanks to him we would like to inform him that his dedication and service will not be forgotten. In fact the Society will build on the solid foundations which he helped establish. His pioneering work will be a beacon for us all in the time to come.

I will endeavour to add value to the Society by consolidating all that has been achieved in the past thirty years. This can be further improved by seeking to coordinate with like minded institutions for the common good of Gozo. The main thrust will obviously be to proactively seek new ways to enhance and protect Gozo's unique heritage. In this regard I hope to encourage a greater diffusion of cultural activities in connection with Gozo's heritage by continuing the series of lectures which have always provided an important educational activity of the Society. This allied to the ongoing series of publications will generate interest in Gozo's rich heritage not only in Gozo itself but in a wider context.

Finally through the very active Committee I will endeavour to mobilise as many people as possible from our membership so that the burden resulting from an increase in activity will be shared by a larger number of people.

Franco Masini
President



Wirt Ghawdex President
Mr. Franco Masini

✧ New President's Orientation Visits ✧

Our new president, Franco Masini attended our latest lecture on Friday, September 16 and was introduced to the many members and friends who were present. This was a good opportunity for everyone to start getting to know Franco better as he gave a brief overview of the way forward he envisions for the society.

Franco also spent the best part of a day visiting the sites and projects we are currently involved with. Giovanni took him around each site and gave him an update of how and why we are involved in each of them.

At the Santa Cecilia chapel, Franco could actually see some of the workers doing the restoration work and could appreciate the meticulous attention given to this project. This tour also gave Franco a



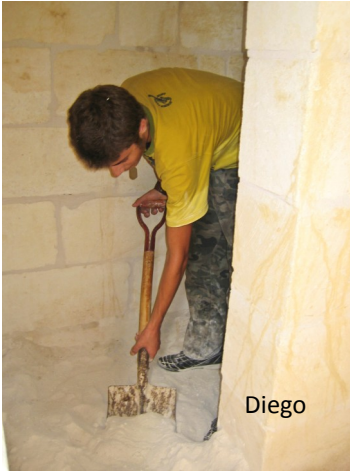
better understanding of how the Eco-Gozo project funding is going to be used on two of our sites and the improvements that are going to be possible because of it.

Franco also had an informal and introductory meeting with the Hon. Minister for Gozo, Giovanna Debono. The Minister congratulated Mr. Masini on his nomination and discussed briefly the ongoing Wirt Ghawdex projects and work including Mr. Masini's vision of the future of the society. The Minister augured the society well and assured him of her ministry's continued support.



Our thanks go to Mr. J.M. Agius of Sliema for his generous donation towards the Kerċem niche.

If you have been to one of our sites lately, you may have noticed something different about the place. First of all the Gunpowder Room, the Silos and the WWII shelters were open every morning, all week. That's because several students volunteered to help support our society.



Diego

S.O.K. Students Maureen and Georgette did not shy away from hard graft. They got down on their hands and knees to do a man's job on the drawbridge.



Maureen and Georgette

Miriam already had a go at coordinating the students into helping with writing articles for this newsletter and a good job she has done too! She also tried her hand at organising the literature that we give our visitors by photocopying the information about the Silos, Gunpowder Room and the WWII Shelters that are up at the Cittadella.



Miriam

Diego is an MCAST student who first heard of Wirt Għawdex during the college's annual Voluntary Day. He was assigned to spend his day with Wirt Għawdex at the Mgarr ix-Xini Tower. He embraced the idea of voluntary work and offered to keep working throughout the rest of the year by doing maintenance work at the Gunpowder Magazine site. When school was over, he also volunteered to open the Mgarr ix-Xini Tower every Saturday where he greets any visitors and also does ongoing maintenance work. Diego starts school again in October but he intends to keep up with as much of his volunteer work as possible. Thank you Diego for volunteering your young energy towards the preservation of Gozo's heritage.

More young people involved with Wirt Għawdex

One of our ongoing aims remains that of making more young people aware of our society and its objectives. The bigger purpose, however, is to instill in this younger generation a sense of pride and responsibility towards our islands' heritage.

In July, ETC (Employment & Training Centre) also launched a scheme where young people could be introduced to a real-life work environment. These applicants had to work 20 hrs per



week and they would be paid a nominal amount (from the ETC) for this work. To our delight, we received 6 applications of young people who had asked to 'work' with us throughout the summer. Even though we would gladly have taken them all on, the scheme only allowed us a maximum of 4 and we had to draw names to pick 4 out of the 6.

We advised Maria, Rachelle, Rebecca and Nathaniel that they would be the ones working with us for the summer. They

were eager to learn what their 'work' would be and we gave them a brief history of our society, a tour of our Gunpowder Magazine site and we outlined the tasks they would be assigned. They took the information leaflets home with them to study the site's history and we asked some of the more experienced sitters to show them how visitors are taken around.

Within a very short time, all 4 of them were doing their own 'tours' and they were very encouraged by the complimentary remarks left in our visitors' book. Even though they started this work during our busiest period at the site, they managed to cope and settled down with a minimum of supervision. They will keep sitting the site till the end of September when most of them are thinking of going on to Sixth Form.

One can easily see the big progress these young people have made in their self-confidence and their communication and teamwork skills. They accepted all responsibilities we gave them including keeping keys to open and close the site, keeping track of donations and even making suggestions on how to improve the visitors' experience. They enjoyed this opportunity so much that they are already putting in more than the required 20 hours even though they know they will not be paid for them.

As for us, this was a great chance to give our regular sitters a well-deserved break for the summer. They helped train the new sitters and made sure that they were coping well before they took their break. We thank them for willingly taking on this unexpected task and hope to see them again in October.

We will keep striving to attract the younger generation to the beauty of the heritage around them since we will have to count on them to be the future guardians of what our forefathers left us.

One of Malta's National Days falls on the 8th of September. This date honours some special events in the history and culture of our islands. The victory of the Great Siege by the Knights of St. John and the islanders against the Turks of 1565. The rebellion against the French troops in Malta and Gozo which ended the occupation of the islands in 1800. Co-incidentally enough, the armistice of the Fascist regime



in Italy was publicly declared in September 8, 1943. Italy became Germany's enemy, bombardment stopped and the end of WWII for the Maltese and Gozitans. It is on this day in September that the people of Malta and Gozo remember the victories of their forefathers by ceremonies, military parades and celebrations.



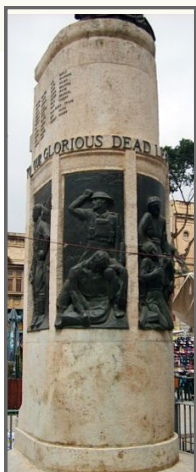
The flight and departure of the Ottoman army from Malta on 13 September 1565 depicted on the left on an Italian print. At the centre is a tightly packed formation of Ottoman troops making its way towards the ships in the bay to the left, harried all the way by Christian infantry and cavalry. Two other Christian formations close in from the right and from the base of the picture. In the background the Ottoman Turkish fleet, mostly consisting of galleys but also including large sailing transports, sets out on its return journey back to Istanbul.

This extract was taken from the book – Malta 1565, Last Battle of the Crusades by Tim Pickles.

Napoleon captured Malta on 11th of June 1798, while he was sailing on his way to Egypt during the French Revolutionary Wars. The Knights offered Napoleon a safe harbour but denied Napoleon fresh water. As the Knights had lost their former fighting spirit they quickly lost to the French and had to leave Malta. On 2 September 1798 the Maltese rebelled against the French and the French withdrew to Valletta. The French stayed in Valletta for the next two years, until General Claude-Henri Belgrand de Vaubois surrendered to British forces on 5 September 1800. Malta was grateful for the British help and wanted to become a part of the British Empire. They presented the islands to Sir Alexander Ball who also accepted the Maltese Declaration of Rights. This stated that Malta and Gozo would come under the protection of the King and that the King has no rights to hand over the Islands to any other power.

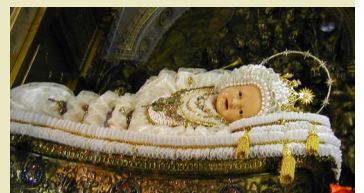


Malta with the the French ship 'Charlemagne' and the English ship 'Trafalgar'



On the left is the Victims of War memorial in Rabat, Gozo. The inscription says *In memory of the Gozitans who lost their lives through enemy action 1939-1945 unveiled by HM Queen Elizabeth II on the 7th May 1954.* Peace was finally achieved when Italy ceased its Fascist rule and in September 8 declared to be an enemy of Germany. This marked the end of bombardment on our islands and the end of WWII

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The traditional date of the feast, September 8, falls exactly nine months after the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. There are at least four towns in Malta and Gozo, which celebrate the feast of Our Lady as a Child (Maria Bambina/ Our Lady of Victory). The Xaghra parish Church is one of the Churches dedicated to Maria Bambina. Indeed the feast which is centuries old changed its name to Il-Madonna tal-Vitorja (Madonna of Victory), following the end of the Great Siege of 1565.



The 8th September is synonymous in most locals' minds with the battle of the Grand Harbour oarsmen as they pitch brawn (and brain, in tactics and staying power) in the ritual Dhajsa (boat) rowing competitions.



The traditional rowing boat regatta is held in the Grand Harbour in Malta where teams from Valletta, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Kalkara, Cospicua Marsaxlokk and Marsa practise for months to ensure they make a fighting attempt to win the Regatta. The link with all the historic celebratory reasons above? Well, there's the fighting spirit (reminiscent of the Great Siege) and the zeal and passion (similar to the levels that go into parish festas).

So, while some reasons for public holidays can be mundane or irrelevant to today's society, at least 8th September has a bit more panache than most. And it's still a day of victory for some.



eco-gozo Project update

As most of you know, we were successful in obtaining substantial funding from the Eco-Gozo Funding Scheme to enable us to make environmentally sound changes to our Gunpowder Magazine site and the Santa Cecilia chapel.

Specifically, the work at the Gunpowder Magazine involves primarily the installation of LED lighting and emergency lighting within the whole site, including walkways and platforms for the protection of the Silos and the safety of volunteers and visitors.

These changes will reduce the energy footprint from some 4,000 watts to 477/hour, i.e: to one-tenth of the current usage. At the Santa Cecilia chapel, there will be the introduction of low energy lighting, both internally and externally, the installation of hardwood flooring for the protection of the original floor, hardwood doors and windows and a security system so that the chapel may be protected from vandalism and may be used for various cultural activities.

Once we knew that the funding we requested had been approved, a Tender was issued for the proposed work and Attard Installations was awarded the contract. The work has started on both sites and since there will be considerable disruption during the on-site work, the Gunpowder Magazine location may have to be closed for a short period of time while the work is going on. It is projected that these works will be completed on schedule and within budget.



Wirt Ghawdex (founded 1981)

Members of:
- Voluntary Organisations 100/2227
- Cgo2002 Association

Mission Statement
"To Foster the Knowledge of and Safeguard the Natural, Archaeological, Historical and Anthropological Heritage of the Islands of Gozo and Comino."

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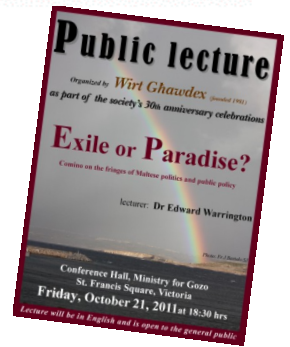
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Friday, October 21/11

A lecture by Dr. Edward Warrington entitled **Exile or Paradise?**

This lecture examines the diverse roles that Comino played on the fringes of Maltese politics and public policy, weaving the island into the broader fabric of Maltese and Gozitan history.



A. Vassallo winner of the No. 1/11 issue

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**COMPETITION**

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N. Refalo winner of the No. 2/11 issue

Competition in this issue is:

Name one event that we commemorate or celebrate on September 8th

Send in your right answers not later than the 7th November 2011, to :

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Alternatively email me the editor at:
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The first correct entry will win our 3 Wirt Ghawdex publications
Good Luck

