



February 2008

The Newsletter of Wirt Ghawdex

Issue 1/08

Message from the President

It has been quite a while since our last issue. However, in the meantime, we have been striving to have our new website ready. David Pace and Giovanni and Betty Zammit have been working very hard on it and for this I thank them on behalf of all members. Anyone can now access the site at leisure. I cannot stress enough the importance of such a means of communication in this technological age. This is the last time the newsletter is being sent to all members. From the next issue, it will only be sent to those who are not linked to the internet. Naturally this will save us time and money. For the time being and until a volunteer comes along, the editor of our newsletter will be Stephanie Coppini.

I am glad to state that finally emergency repair works are being carried out by the Ministry for Gozo on the Santa Cecilia Chapel. We should be imminently signing an agreement with the Ministry for the joint administration of the site, on similar lines to the one undertaken for the Gunpowder Magazine and the St. John Battery.

Now that we are again actively engaged on various restoration projects, we urgently require more volunteers to help with the various chores, both for the refurbishing and eventual manning of the sites.

As can be noticed from the pages of this edition, we have quite a few interesting activities planned for the coming months. Your attendance at such activities is evidence of your interest in the society.

Please renew your membership at your earliest convenience and try to enrol others who might also be interested in promoting our vast cultural heritage.

Paul Coppini

IMPORTANT NOTICE



Now that the St. John Demi-bastion and Gunpowder Magazine are under the management of *Wirt Ghawdex*, volunteers are urgently needed to help the Committee members furnish the above and recreate a World War II scenario, in the air-bomb shelters, incorporated in the site. The Committee has come up with the idea of forming a sub-committee specifically for this purpose. The work needed should not take long, if there is enough cooperation, as the place is not vast, and much of the work has already been done. By volunteering, you would be helping us work faster and it is in everyone's interest that this site is opened up to the general public as a place of attraction as soon as possible.

Anyone interested, please contact the Executive Secretary on 21563792 or e-mail at info@wirtghawdex.org



Delving into the Past

A focus on cultural and historical aspects of traditional life in Gozo in bygone times

In the last Newsletter, this article delved into the medieval cemetery in Gozo annexed to what is now the Oratory Don Bosco, at St. Augustine Square, Victoria, Gozo. This time, this article delves into an inter-related topic – that of burial rites.

Our ancestors were particularly devoted to burial rites. For a very long time, there was a law prohibiting burial within the towns and the internment of human bodies. However, there was the exception allowing into towns the remains of important persons who contributed significantly to the country. This law was enacted in the year 490. Even the emperors of Constantinople held to this custom. Consequently, some people who could not part with their loved ones being taken far away from them and buried elsewhere, resorted to placing the dead bodies into purposely-made wooden boxes, and burying them inside their own houses. This led to a peculiar cult - that of worshipping gods called 'lari'- home gods. Every house's inhabitants worshipped them devoutly, and in fact, the inner most part of the house was dedicated to them, and was designated as the 'larario'. This corner was theirs, and sacrifices were offered to them. However, due to the eventual stench of the dead bodies, the Jews and those peoples who did not believe in God, and whom the Maltese referred to as 'gentili', buried their dead in a specific place for that purpose (what is commonly called the cemetery - the place for communal burial). The nobles were then buried high up on a hill.

Agius de Soldanis confesses that some local workers notified him that sometimes, while they were working near the foot of a hill or in the fields, they discovered some dead human bodies. Moreover, they sometimes discovered that near these persons were long daggers - symbolising that these particular persons were not commoners like those buried elsewhere, but more high up in the society of the time.

Such human bodies were found in graves scattered all over Gozo, in the fields and in the houses.

BURIAL RITES

-By Stephanie Jean Coppini - P.R.O.

The most widely-known place was the area of St. Francis Square, which in the past was on the outskirts of what is today known as Victoria. In bygone times, this area was called 'Taz-Zuntier'. This area was imbued with graves dug into the hard stone, in which the Phoenician and Jewish community used to bury their dead.

In this district, such graves were found in every house. The skeletons were preserved in clay or glass coffins, with coal, ash, shells, money, as well as ceramic or glass containers of all shapes and sizes, such as jars, generally holding a certain liquid.

(compiled from Mons. Dun Guzepp Farrugia's Maltese translation, 1936, *Għawdex Bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Vol. II, of Agius de Soldanis' manuscript, *Gozo Antico e Moderno, Sacro e Profano*, which was never pub-



After the last Newsletter was prepared by Angelica Coppini as part of her 6th Form Systems of Knowledge Project, from now onwards, the Newsletter will be prepared by Stephanie Jean Coppini, the P.R.O. of *Wirt Għawdex*, who has now therefore taken the role of editor as well.

Any comments, or anyone wishing to contribute to the Newsletter, call 21563792 or e-mail Stephanie via pro@wirtghawdex.org.

Wirt Għawdex would publicly like to thank the previous editors John Walsh and his dear wife Pam, who passed away last year, for taking care of all the previous Newsletters.

ENROL A FRIEND!

Try to pass the word around and encourage your friends to become members of *Wirt Għawdex*. Members not only help the society reach its aims, but receive the Newsletter and enjoy discounts on the organised activities.

Forthcoming Events for 2008

The committee of *Wirt Ghawdex* has come up with the following exciting activities for the next two months, for members and non-members alike. Jot down the following dates on your diary:

Planned Events:

Sunday, 16th March:

A Guided Tour by Mr. Mark Sagona, around St. Augustine Church and Convent, Victoria. We will be able to appreciate the beautiful building and the numerous works of art. This will be followed by lunch in the refectory.

Menu: Timpana, Pork & vegs.

Time: Meet outside Church at 9.45a.m.

Lunch: 12.30p.m.

Price: € 15 members; € 20 non-members and
€ 7 child under 12 years

Sunday, 20th April:

A Guided Tour at Casa Rocca Piccola, Valletta. This tour will take us around the beautiful majestic stately home, right in the heart of Malta's capital city. After a break for lunch, we will visit the Knights Hospitalliers Exhibit at the Mediterranean Conference Centre.

Time: Meet on the 9.00a.m. ferry.

Return by the 15.00 ferry.

Price: € 18 members; € 23 non-members and
€ 9 child under 12 years

Includes entrance fees and coach transfer to and from Valletta. Does not include ferry fare.

Limited numbers available on both tours—first come, first served.

**For the above events, booking is necessary.
Please contact the Membership Secretary by
phone: 21563792 or on
membership@wirtghawdex.org**



Other Events in the Pipeline:

Unlike for the above however, given that the following events are not yet confirmed, we cannot issue details. Therefore, those of you who have access to the internet, please access our website and click on 'Last Event' from the 'Home' page, on which all details will be posted.

Those of you who do not have internet access, then call the Membership Secretary or look up the Gozo page of *The Sunday Times*, on which the activity would be advertised.

We have drawn up a very interesting *collage* of different activities, and throughout the year we also intend to organise:

An On-site Guided Lecture-Tour around **St. George's Basilica**, Victoria. This tour will enlighten us on the basilica's history, architecture and numerous works of art.

A Guided Tour at the **Pomskizillious Museum of Toys**, Xaghra. Go back to your childhood days and re-visit the world of magic and make-belief! The owners Edwin and Susan Lowe, who are Wirt Ghawdex, will take you all around the exhibits of toys from all around the world, recounting their stories and fate. Afterwards, we proceed to Nadur to visit the **Kelinu Grima Maritime Museum**. We will go about the curious exhibits, Maltese and foreign (particularly British), the owner lovingly collected throughout his life.

A Public Lecture about **Gozo's Chapels**, by Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina, the author of *Gems of Gozo: An Appreciation of Twenty Chapels*. Fascinate yourself with the quaint wayside chapels within Gozo's small villages or which dot the countryside, immerse into their old stories, appreciate their works of art and architecture, and learn about any legends associated with them.

A Public Lecture delivered by Profs. Anthony Bonanno, Head of the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta, on the mysterious so-called '**Pans**' at **Mgarr ix-Xini**.

An On-site Guided Lecture-Tour around **Gozo's Cathedral and its ancillary Museum**, at the Citadel in Victoria, by Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina. Immerse yourself into the deep history this Church and its riches have to offer.

An Adventurous Trip to **Xerri's Grotto and Ninu's Cave** at Xaghra.

See and touch for yourself the strange but marvelous ancient stalactites and stalagmites.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- The last Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Friday, 30th November, 2007, at the Conference Hall of the Ministry for Gozo. The President opened it with his message, outlining what the society had done throughout the whole year. The Executive Secretary followed by giving an administration report, highlighting the 2006 AGM, Committee Meetings, Newsletters, lectures, guided tours, press releases, published articles, and the projects. All this was followed by a powerpoint slide show. The Treasurer tendered the financial report for the year. This, together with a *resumé* of the above, was distributed to all those present.

The Committee for the year ending 2007, was again confirmed.

The society's new website was publicly announced – *vide* pages 5 and 6 of this Newsletter.

At the end, light refreshments were served, serving as a get-together.

It was in all a very pleasant evening.

- On Thursday, 6th December, 2007, the Executive Secretary and the P.R.O. attended the annual National Forum for Cultural Heritage, organised by the Ministry for Tourism and Culture at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. Two members of *Wirt Ghawdex* were also present, but appearing in other official capacities. It was an interesting half-day Forum, in which various aspects of cultural heritage were discussed, and presentations delivered by established academics. NGOs were also given the opportunity to give a short presentation about their society and work. The P.R.O. of *Wirt Ghawdex* thus delivered a powerpoint slide presentation. This was received very well by the attendees, and the interest shown in our society was very encouraging. Besides, at the end of the Forum, *Wirt Ghawdex* made various suggestions, which were all taken note of by the Minister. *Wirt Ghawdex* truly made an impact that day.
- Before the start of 2007, in line with the Euro changeover, *Wirt Ghawdex* converted the membership fees and publications prices into Euro. A Committee decision was taken that all prices be rounded down, thus giving you some savings.

- Since the last AGM, two press releases were issued, both in January 2008 – one concerned the damage to the west wall of the St. Cecilia Chapel; the other the building permits for a villa near the Xaghra Stone Circle. In January as well, on the 6th, an article about *Wirt Ghawdex* in general was published in the Gozo Page of *The Sunday Times*. On *The Sunday Times* issue of 20th January, an article was published on the state of St. Cecilia Chapel. On the 10th February, the same newspaper published *Wirt Ghawdex's* letter of appreciation for an article concerning the state of Gozo's cultural heritage written by Mr. Mark Sagona on 27th January, in which he also mentioned the St. Cecilia Chapel.

- Last year, *Wirt Ghawdex* had applied for a grant from the Ministry for Gozo towards the restoration of St. Cecilia Chapel. Being a full member of the Gozo NGOs Association, the P.R.O. of *Wirt Ghawdex* attended the AGM of the Gozo NGOs Association held on Friday, 18th January, 2008, and collected a cheque of €699.

- The Rotary Club—Gozo has invited *Wirt Ghawdex* to give a presentation on the society at one of their activities, on Thursday, 10th April, 2008. The Executive Secretary and the P.R.O. will attend.



Flash News!

Press Release

Santa Cecilia Chapel Management Agreement

Wirt Ghawdex announces that an agreement has been reached with the Ministry for Gozo for the restoration and eventual administration of this Late Medieval chapel, situated on the outskirts of Ghajnsielem, Gozo, to be affected by a project team composed of representatives of the Ministry and the society.

It is planned that once fully-restored, the building would be used for exhibitions, lectures and other cultural activities.

Stephanie Jean Coppini
P.R.O. *Wirt Ghawdex*
February 29, 2008

Wirt G]awdex now has a new website!

The past months have seen the birth of our very own website, thanks to one of *Wirt Ghawdex's* members, Mr. David Pace, of Pace IT Webservices © 2007. Also crucial in this process have been our Executive Secretary Giovanni N. Zammit and the Membership Secretary Betty Zammit, who painstakingly helped in posting up all the material. *Wirt Ghawdex* is indebted towards Mr. Pace for saving us some €1,048.22 for offering to do the website as his donation to the society.

The website was first publicly announced during the last Annual General Meeting, even though at that time it was still at its very early stages. Mr. Pace showed some slides of it, while he and Mr. Zammit explained the process involved, while answering questions put to them by the public. Many suggestions were also put forward. Since then, much more work has been done, and we can say that the website is almost complete now, albeit some still additions and final touches. One can appreciate that this entails much hard work and commitment, and therefore the process has to take quite some time. Besides, the website can never really be finalised, because material would always be posted on it, and it will be constantly updated.

Hereunder, will follow an explanation of the classification of the website.

First of all, the website is extremely user-friendly and easy to roam about. It is beautifully-illustrated throughout. From the 'Home' page, you can easily access the whole lot. You will be greeted by the aim of the society, which is part of its statute, together with a picture of our logo and premises at the Lunzjata valley. You will also see the icons 'Latest news' and 'Last event'. In the former section you can see a series of photographs, which will enlarge if clicked on. The 'Last event' comprises of the latest event to be organised by *Wirt Ghawdex*.

The portal 'About us' gives the 'Mission' of the society; 'Committee' lists the members of the Committee with their respective tasks; from 'Statute', you can easily scroll down and read the society's statute; 'History' gives a short background to the society; while 'Contacts' gives you

www.wirtghawdex.org

You can send an e-mail directly by just clicking on the e-mail addresses.

Under 'News', you can access all press releases issued by *Wirt Ghawdex* since 2005, with their respective dates and titles, and also all the Newsletters. These are all in pdf format, with their respective issue numbers, and can be easily downloaded and printed for your reference. Published articles are also available.

The 'Activities' portal gives details of the various lectures and tours organised by *Wirt Ghawdex*, accompanied with photos.

'Projects' gives you details and photos of the various project of the society, under three different categories - 'Under Restoration', 'Completed' and 'Sites'.

Another section is dedicated to *Wirt Ghawdex's* publications, separated under different categories. Each will show details of what they are about, how to order and purchase them, prices and availability.

'Support Us' consists of 'Membership' and 'Sponsors'. Under the former, you find details of the various forms of membership types, with subscription fees, and you can also subscribe online, submitting your filled-in form.

There is then also a 'Map of Gozo', whereby you can scroll over it, and easily zoom-in and zoom-out.

'Links' provides you with several links to the websites of other related organisations.

It has been decided that the website will cover from the year 2005 onwards. However, it is intended to create an 'Archives' section, comprising of a list of all past news and activities. This is mainly intended to serve as a research-tool. A 'Photo Gallery' is also in the pipeline, whereby you could access *Wirt Ghawdex's* photos and save or print them for yourself.

So what are you waiting for? Go on and log on our portal and see for yourself! Please send in your comments; many have already done so, and so far we have received very encouraging comments. Yet do not hesitate to tell us what you don't like or what you would like to see added.

WIRT GHAWDEX'S NEW CONTACT DETAILS

Following the creation of its website, take note that *Wirt Ghawdex* has new contact details, i.e. the e-mail addresses but not the telephone numbers. Consequently, please ignore the previous e-mail addresses.

	E-mail Addresses	Telephone Numbers
Executive Secretary:	info@wirtghawdex.org	21563792
Membership Secretary:	membership@wirtghawdex.org	21563792
P.R.O.:	pro@wirtghawdex.org	
Publications Officer:	publications@wirtghawdex.org	
Office:	Postal Address : <i>Wirt Ghawdex</i> , , c/o Dar il-Lunzjata, Lunzjata Valley. Victoria, Gozo	

**Help us save
Gozo's Heritage**



join wirt ghawdex

www.wirtghawdex.org

Now that a new year has begun, *Wirt Ghawdex* would like to remind those of you who have not yet renewed their membership and would like to do so, to contact the Membership Secretary. For those who have renewed their subscription, new membership cards are enclosed with this Newsletter.

Wirt Ghawdex thanks all its existing members for their support, and welcomes the new ones.

Look out for the above poster which will be used in our first national membership campaign, which will be launched soon. We hope that this campaign will increase our exposure and membership.

**IMPORTANT NOTE
TO ALL MEMBERS**

Please note that this is the last time that the Newsletter is being sent by post to all members, due to the creation of our website.

*Consequently, the Newsletter will be posted on the website, where it can be easily viewed in full colour and printed if necessary. Obviously, this is an environmentally-friendly measure to save trees and simultaneously to allow the society to save more money towards our restoration projects. As a result, you will be indirectly contributing to *Wirt Ghawdex*.*

Those of you who have given us an up-to-date e-mail address, will be notified, on a regular basis, whenever our website has been updated or new information added. You will get such an e-mail notification whenever we post a newsletter amongst other things. You can then go and browse our website at your leisure. It is therefore important that you ensure that we have your correct e-mail address. You can do this by sending an e-mail to: membership@wirtghawdex.org

However, those of you who do not have internet access, can just notify the Membership Secretary on 21563792, and we would be glad to keep sending it to you by post.

The Maltese 'Luzzu' Charmaine

(Continues from previous editions)

Member Peter Goodwin

The first job to do before paint removal began was to mark the waterline by pinning brass pins along its length. Once the hull painting is complete the waterline will be re-struck before applying the antifouling. The local Hempel paint proved to be immovable, hence the blow torch preferred by the local fishermen. I noticed many of them literally burning the wooden planks. Obviously this process damages the wood quite badly. I decided to use an electric heat gun with a cooling action that blistered the paint without burning the wood. Liquid paint remover was used on the stem and stern posts as they were going to be teak oiled and required a more refined method to remove the ingrained paint. As a consequence, paint removal took me considerably longer than I had anticipated and over this period Charmaine started to dry out rather badly. I did eventually cover her with sun block netting but only after the damage had been done. Consultation with Ian Kingsley-Brown revealed that my concerns were rather pessimistic and that re-caulking would not be required if I could wet her down every few days and keep some water in the bilge. All of the brass rubbing strips on the gunnels ('cinta'), stempost ('rastal-pruwa') and transom ('hanzira') were removed and replaced as necessary. At last I was ready to apply the two coats of linseed oil followed by two coats of oil mixed with red lead. Again, this process took a lot longer than I expected as the dry wood was soaking up the mix at a tremendous rate.

The next step was to fill all the cracks, indentations and joins in the planks. I tried making my own putty using ground chalk and linseed oil. Whilst it was far easier to use than pre-mixed tubs it took a long time to make and it was more expedient to buy in bulk considering how much I used. On certain areas where load bearing or water ingress would be an issue, modern day fillers were used and rubbed down to a smooth finish. Modern flexible compounds were also applied to sections where swelling would occur once she was back in the water.

Horror of horrors, along with all the other boat owners we receive an edict from the police that we have to move Charmaine from Żewwieqa. Although we pleaded that we were on private land

the police would not budge. I had two days to find an alternative location thereby losing water and electricity supplies. A spot was found adjacent to the old pumping station in the harbour and the continual overflowing cesspit!! This lack of close amenities considerably slowed down the whole operation and my moral was at its lowest ebb, but my Scottish spider pulled me through once more! Prior to being moved I was able to hose Charmaine down regularly. Now it was a case of buckets of water twice *per* day, climbing up the ladder to ensure the water went on the boat and not on me!

Traditionally the early Gozo boats had a very deep moustache. However, most of the local fishermen prefer the modern steep-angled moustache, despite my attempts to convince them that this was a relatively new style. Whilst taking off the original marker strips I found black paint. This indicated that at some stage a close relative of the owner had died as tradition has it that the moustache is painted in black at this time. I learned that this actually happened under the original ownership. As mentioned in an earlier chapter paint colours were researched and we decided upon a pale green with a brown moustache. It transpired that the undercoat colours matched our requirements better than we had hoped and in the end Ta' Ġamri from Ġhajnsielem mixed a top coat gloss to match our specifications. The one exception was the moustache which has been painted more orange than brown. Although not entirely traditional we felt that they were a good combination. Various small sections on the boat were picked out in white; the top gunnels ('falki') the rubbing strip ('cinta') and the water line. The penultimate painting job was two coats of antifouling. The final paint job on Charmaine's exterior was the Eye.

Probably more time was spent on researching the Eye of Hourus than anything. There is a plethora of sites on the internet relating to this subject. After much deliberation a painted eye in black was decided upon. There are many versions of the Eye but we chose the one similar to the design on a Gozo boat painted by Girolamo Gianni in 1875. Linda did the design on the computer and jiggged it to a compatible size. A stencil was made and cut out and we used two coats of blackboard paint as a base with a black gloss topcoat. In the fullness of time we may rout the Eye out.

To be continued.....