

Contents

Foreword	4
Archaeology, Research and Investigation	6
National Inventory Process	30
Registry and Archives	36
Movable Heritage	38
Heritage Advice on Building Development	46
Guardianship of Museums and Sites	66
Other SCH Responsibilities	72
Public Outreach	78

List of Tables

Table 1:	List of main archaeological investigations and post-excavation work	3
Table 2:	Breakdown of the different types of features and discoveries made in 2023 by category.	15
Table 3:	Significant archaeological discoveries made in 2023.	16
Table 4:	List of scheduling requests still pending as at 2023	33
Table 5:	Number of the different types of development-related consultation requests received in 2023	48
Table 6:	A few of the major projects and best practice cases the Superintendence engaged with in 2023	50
Table 7:	Statistics covering 2018 - 2023 in relation to built heritage restoration	57
Table 8:	Selection of major restoration cases monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Inspectorate in 2023	58
Table 9:	List of Guardianship Deed Renewals signed with Din l-Art Ħelwa in 2023	67
Table 10	: List of signed guardianship deeds as at end 2023	68
 Table 11:	List of requests made to the Lands Authority for which feedback is still pending	69

Foreword

2023 was a significant year for the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. It marked the 20th anniversary since the entity was formally established. To commemorate this achievement, the Superintendence embarked on a special publication that will highlight the important archaeological discoveries made during the last twenty years, which are contributing and reshaping our knowledge of the past across the entire history of Malta and Gozo. The publication is envisaged to be published in 2024.

Another important achievement in 2023 was the and Our Lady of Victories of Church, to name a few. signing of a new collective agreement. The new collective saw SCH employees benefit not only from increased salaries, but also from flexi-hours and other measures aimed at providing a work-life balance. During the year under review a total number of 8 individuals were employed on a full-time basis The year 2023 was another successful year in public with the Superintendence in the role of Executive Officers. The Superintendence also engaged two persons on a Contract for Service basis to work on the 20th anniversary publication.

During 2023, the Superintendence also continued working on the sorting project within its inhouse registry, which has files dating back 90 years. Numerous loose photographs were also collected, The Superintendence has also increased its presence sorted and catalogued. The year under review also saw the start of the scanning and digitisation of files and documents found within the registry, to allow easier access to both staff and researchers.

In December 2023 the Superintendence included 48 new sites/properties in the National Inventory, which is a cultural heritage register compiled by the Superintendence as part of its functions. The addition mainly consists of British period military sites including Fort Mosta, Fort Rinella and the Victoria Lines. During the same year, the Superintendence was also involved in 17 scheduling cases.

The Superintendence's involvement in consultation withiin the planning process continued at a steady pace with more than 10,000 consultations from the Planning Authority, together with over 2,500 consultations related to roadworks.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

In December 2023, the Superintendence successfully concluded and signed renewal of guardianship deeds for a total number of 11 sites with Din l-Art Ħelwa. These include guardianship deeds for important monuments such as St Agatha's Tower (Red Tower)

The Superintendence was also heavily involved in the import/export/movement of cultural items and personal items, dealing with over 750 cases.

relations. The European Archaeology Days event, which was held in June in collaboration with Heritage Malta and BirdLife at the Salina Nature Reserve, allowed visitors the opportunity to attend talks and tour the Reserve as well as participate in a special Virtual Reality experience on Malta's underwater archaeology.

online its news section on the website, as well as on social media through its Facebook page, Instagram account and LinkedIn, where posts are uploaded regularly, providing information on the invaluable work being carried out. The Superintendence also ensures that questions put forward by media houses and newsrooms are answered in a timely manner.

Corporate Obligations

The Superintendence continued to fulfil its State as the National Regulator of Cultural Heritage obligations in participating in a number of local and international committees and fora, representing the

in the Maltese Islands.

February 2024



Kurt Farrugia Superintendent of Cultural Heritage



Elizabeth Vassallo Director Support Services



Research and Investigation

Introduction

2023 was an important year for the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team in terms of investments. The team got underway with a complement of three officers, but following an intake of new recruits in October, a further complement of three officers joined the existing group, one on a part-time basis, while another officer is scheduled to join the team at the start of 2024. As a result, the roles of the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team have been further extended to include additional functions. Throughout 2023, the team was also assisted by two research assistants who were employed for a limited number of hours, specifically to work on a publication project which will be described further in a separate section of this report.

Like previous years, the team was involved in a number of archaeological investigations on archaeological sites discovered during surveillance of development sites. These interventions provided specific archaeological specialisations which supported the investigations already being carried out by the archaeology monitors responsible for the site. In addition, the team participated in researchbased investigations, post-excavation and analysis of material from sites, and interpretation of the data generated through these works. Part of the extended roles to this team included conservation work on materials from archaeological sites being investigated and studied. To this extent, a warranted conservator and conservation assistant (and a second warranted conservator providing assistance

on specific materials), were assigned on a full-time basis to the laboratory since October 2023 in order to carry out extensive work. Further laboratory investment was also carried out through the acquisition of new equipment.

This year also saw further involvement of students carrying out research and practical work with the Archaeology Research and Investigation team at the Superintendence's laboratory, thus allowing a transfer of knowledge and mentoring to aspiring cultural heritage professionals. The Archaeology Research and Investigation Team was also heavily active in publication writing and further population and improvement of the GIS interface. A new role assigned to the team in the last quarter of the year included the upkeep and overseeing of services provided by the SCH repository in Bormla.

Major Archaeological Investigations

In 2023, the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team carried out a number of archaeological excavations, ranging from research projects to development-led excavations. Most of these excavations required the processing of materials being unearthed, and post-excavation was carried out simultaneously with the archaeological investigation; with material being delivered to the Superintendence laboratory where the conservators and archaeologists cleaned and stabilised the materials. Other projects which had been excavated in previous years continued being processed (cleaning, conservation, study, and documentation).

8 < Comparison of Cultural Heritage Annual Report 2023 Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Annual Report 2023

Table 1: List of main archaeological investigations and post-excavation work

Site	Locality	Type of intervention
Prehistoric burial pit (MCD2023)	Ta' Lablab, Xagħra, Gozo	Excavation and post-excavation
Il-Marnisi ancient rural establishment (MRN2018)	Marsaxlokk, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Prehistoric burials (MGS2023)	Naxxar, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Latnija Cave (LAT2023)	Mellieħa, Malta	Excavation
Bronze Age deposit in Rabat, Malta (DAH2022)	Rabat, Malta	Post-excavation
Phoenician tombs from Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet (QAJ2015, GKB2021)	Rabat, Malta	Post-excavation
Punic and Roman Necropolis (TXN2018, MNT2019)	Triq Montebello, Tarxien, Malta	Post-excavation
Prehistoric burial pit (GZP2023)	Xagħra, Gozo	Post-excavation
Mġarr ix-Xini valley Project	Mġarr ix-Xini, Gozo	Post-excavation



Location of sites for major archaeological investigations and post-excavation work carried out in 2023.

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Prehistorial burial pit, at Ta' Lablab, Xagħra, Gozo (Site Code: MCD2023)

In May 2023, during development works carried out under the surveillance of an archaeology monitor working under the direction of the Superintendence, a number of cultural features were unearthed. These features consisted of a small number of agricultural trenches, and a single shallow pit in the rock, which archaeological investigations showed to contain ancient including human materials remains. The Archaeology Research and Investigation Team carried out the investigation of this feature since it required specialised osteological investigation and documentation.

The feature consists of a roughly oval shaped pit, which was for the most part irregular along its sides and base; measuring 1.65m by 1.13m and with a shallow depth of 0.35m. The human remains consisted mainly of fragmented and disarticulated bones, some of which were revealed to be placed in an organised manner in antiquity. This has been interpreted as an intentional placement of remains within the pit, as part of a secondary funerary burial practice. The pottery found with the human remains is being associated typologically to the Temple Period. Other remains that were found included animal bone. Post-excavation of the remains is still being carried out at the Superintendence lab, which includes the cleaning and stabilising of the material collected from the site, as well as the processing of documentation. In the coming months, an analysis of the remains will be required, for which funding is to be sourced. This will eventually lead to the interpretation and publication of the site.



The prehistoric burial pit at Ta' Lablab, Xagħra (Gozo), during the archaeological investigation.

Il-Marnisi ancient rural establishment, Marsaxlokk, Malta (Site Code: MRN2018)

For the third consecutive year, excavations continued at the site of the Roman rural establishment in Marsaxlokk. The site was once again used as part of the annual training fieldwork studying archaeology at the University of Malta. This is an important example of development-led archaeology and research-led archaeology working in tandem. Superintendence Officers, together with staff from the Department of Classics and Archaeology supervised the fieldwork on site as well as some of the post-excavation work. Excavations continued to reveal remains of a Roman agricultural production site, uncovering intact flooring, original wall alignments, and further fragments of oil-pressing equipment. Two fragments of plaster, one of which contained pottery inclusions, were in an advanced state of deterioration and required first aid intervention on site by a warranted conservator at the Superintendence. Given the fragility of the archaeological remains, conservation intervention for their extraction was required. The operation entailed the protection with gauzes of the preparation layers and then casting with expanded polystyrene of the entire thickness of one of the two pieces. This was followed by the lifting of the

fragments which were safely transported in customised foam trays to the laboratory of the Superintendence. These remains will be analysed further before a full restoration intervention will be carried out on them.

The Superintendence has already ensured the preservation and presentation of the site and continues to be engaged in discussions with the site owner and his architect, who have always shown full collaboration, to ensure that development works are carried out whilst safeguarding the most important parts of the site. Further investigations by the Superintendence will be required in 2024 to complete

the understanding of the site. Future works on this project will entail the processing of materials and their interpretation, leading to a joint publication of the site with the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta.

PHOTO: SCH



Archaeological excavation during Summer 2023 at Il-Marnisi site, Marsaxlokk (Malta).

PHOTO: SCH

Prehistoric Burials, Naxxar, Malta (Site Code: MGS2023)

During the archaeological monitoring of infrastructural works in Naxxar in December 2023, archaeology monitors working under the direction of the Superintendence, identified a deep and irregularly shaped pit. Initially this was thought to be a disturbed silo, but at the base of the features human remains emerged. The Superintendence's Archaeology Research and Investigation Team and the Archaeology Monitoring Team intervened to investigate the ancient deposits together with the archaeology monitor. The team consisted of archaeologists, osteologists and conservators. The investigation revealed a minimum of three articulated individuals, two of whom were young individuals laying in a crouched position and on their side. The burials are associated with the Prehistoric Period; however, further analysis on the remains is required to confirm this. Apart from human remains, fragments of animal bones, pottery and worked stones were also found. The nature of the site required that the soil deposits be carefully sieved for small finds, and that these be immediately cleaned at the Superintendence lab by conservators and archaeologists. Post-excavation work for this site will include analysis of all the materials retrieved, the processing of documentation, in addition to specialised scientific testing on the human remains to provide accurate dating of the burials, as well as

to aid in the interpretation of the individuals buried at this site.



Uncovering prehistoric burials at Naxxar (Malta).

PHOTO: SCH



Processing archaeological remains from the prehistoric burial pit of Naxxar (Malta).

PHOTO: SCH

Latnija Cave, Mellieħa, Malta (Site Code: LAT2023)

The archaeological excavations within Latnija Cave in Mellieħa, a project led by the Max Planck Institute for Geoanthropology, together with the University of Malta which is planned to stretch over a number of years, continued with this year's excavation in September 2023. As in the previous year, the Superintendence assisted in this project through on-site excavations with the participation of an archaeologist from the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team. Excavations continued to reveal the archaeological importance of this site with further evidence being gathered towards the understanding of the history of human settlement in this part of Malta. The preliminary results for these investigations will be published by the project leaders in the coming months.

Bronze Age deposit in Rabat, Malta (Site Code: DAH2022)

Following the discovery of a Bronze Age deposit from a silo-pit in Rabat (as reported in the 2022 Annual Report), post-excavation work on the material collected has continued in the Superintendence's laboratory. The material includes extensive amounts of pottery sherd, which include a high amount of diagnostic pottery, as well as loom weights, which require careful cleaning. The post-excavation being carried out also includes the assessment of the pottery fragments which have already started to reveal typologies as well as several decorative and manufacturing techniques.



Cleaning pottery from the Bronze Age pit from Rabat (Malta)
PHOTO: SCH

The finds, typologically appear to date to the Bronze Age phases, shedding light on the importance of Rabat during this late prehistoric period. Postexcavation work on the cultural material will continue in 2024 and will also commence for the animal bones collected form the pit. A database for the finds will be compiled as part of this work.

Phoenician tombs from Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet, Rabat, Malta (Site Codes: QAJ2015, GKB2021)

The post-excavation process, involving the detailed studies of the artefacts retrieved from three Phoenician tombs from the Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet area in Rabat (reported in the 2022 Annual Report), continued throughout 2023. This project is being carried out through the collaboration among the Superintendence, the University of Malta and Heritage Malta, with the ultimate scope of publication and permanent display.



Conservation work being carried out on a Phoenician pot from tomb at Għajn Klieb, Rabat (Malta).

PHOTO: SCH

Conservators from the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team continued working on the pottery vessels that had developed thick and hard-to-remove carbonate encrustations due to water ingress within the tomb chambers over the millennia. The objects were primarily tested until an adequate and less invasive method was found to treat the vessels. The cleaning protocol selected was time consuming

and comprises mild acidic and alkaline baths but was found to be the most effective method. The results revealed fascinating surface decorations on the vessels which were completely hidden by the encrustations, and thus will provide essential information for the study of the pottery vessels.

2023 also saw more scientific analyses carried out on some of the ceramic objects. One such analysis included Organic Residue Analysis (ORA) which is a technique whereby lipids absorbed in porous ceramic fabric is extracted. Using separation and characterisation techniques (Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry) the lipid content of the ceramic vessel is identified, allowing direct evidence for vessel content to be obtained. Other analysis included Petrography, X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) analysis, X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) and Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM analysis), which are scientific techniques used to identify the chemical composition and physical properties of pottery, glass and other archaeological objects. These analyses will provide important data on the potential use, provenance, and the production of the material remains. Some work continued also on the human remains, in particular the cremated bones. This work is proving challenging due to the highly fragmented remains and their poor preservation. Work on the human remains will progress sin the coming months with the compilation of an inventory and interpretation of these fragments. Work has also proceeded with consolidation work by the conservators of the two inhumations found in the stone sarcophagus which are in a severely deteriorated state. All the analysis being carried out on the three tombs, as well as the methodology used during the various stages of investigation, will lead to the publication of a monograph coordinated by the three entities involved, scheduled to be issued in the coming years.

Punic and roman Necropolis, Tarxien, Malta (Site Code: TXN2018, MNT2019)

The post-excavation of the Tarxien Punic and Roman necropolis discovered in 2018, entailing ceramic and osteological analysis, continued in 2023. As part of the research process, the Superintendence presented a project named "Tracing populations"

in Punic and Roman Malta (TraPPRom)" by seeking European funds through the IPERION HS Programme. The primary scope of this project was to focus on scientific testing on the human remains of these populations buried in the Tarxien necropolis. The aims of the project were the following:

- Identify ancestry of the population buried in Tarxien through aDNA, thus offering population profiles and studying continuity or change through time among the population buried at the necropolis; this data will also provide comparison to populations across the Mediterranean and thus outline connections;
- Identify chronological sequences for the individuals buried in this necropolis, through radiocarbon dating, thus assisting more secure dating from the wider chronological range provided by the pottery typology;
- 3. Identify stable isotopic signatures to provide information on provenance of the individual and information on diet. The Archaeology Research and Investigation Team worked on identifying samples for these tests and transported most of the samples to specialised laboratories in Sweden and Italy as provided by the Programme. The results from these scientific tests will be presented in the full archaeological report which the Superintendence is preparing on this important discovery.



Sampling of ancient bone from the Tarxien Necropolis for Radiocarbon Dating.

PHOTO: INFN-CHNet Firenze

Prehistoric burial pit, Xagħra, Gozo (Site Code: GZP2023)

2023 saw another prehistoric burial pit discovered in Xagħra, Gozo. The oval rock-cut pit was found during the monitoring works at a site being developed. At first, the pit was thought to be an agricultural trench like the others found on the same site, but upon further excavation of the fills, the archaeology monitor was surprised to find human bones emerging, together with pottery fragments and a whole vessel. The human bones are undergoing post-excavation at the Superintendence laboratory, but from preliminary assessment the majority seem to represent young individuals. The pottery that emerged indicates they belong to the Temple Period and includes an intact cup with Ggantija type decorations. Further assessment will be carried out on these remains in the coming months.



A prehistoric pot from the site GZP2023 in Xagħra (Gozo).

Mġarr ix-Xini Valley Project, Gozo

As part of the post-excavation and research process, the Superintendence is also coordinating a long-term project which had started in 2005, in collaboration with the local councils of Sannat and Xewkija. The final phase of the project entails the processing of all data collected during years of archaeological surveys carried out along the Mgarr ix-Xini valley, with the aim of creating a digital database for the interpretation and publication of the results.

Other post-excavation work – Għajn Qajjet, Rabat, Malta (Site Code: QAJ2015)

An object which has been in the lab for several years awaiting study, received special attention in 2023. Funds were made available to CT scan an amphora which contains the human remains of a young child. This amphora burial comes from a Punic-Roman tomb excavated in 2015 along Triq Għajn Qajjet, Rabat (Malta). Before the human remains cold be excavated from the vessel, CT scans were required to guide the archaeologists during the process of soil and bone extraction. 2024 will see the analysis of the CT scan results and the micro-excavation of the amphora.



CT scanning a Punic-Roman amphora which contains a human burial inside; pot from site QAJ2015 in Rabat (Malta).

PHOTO: SCE

20 Years Anniversary Publication

In 2023 the Superintendence celebrated 20 years from its inception as the regulatory entity for Cultural

Heritage, by the enacting of the Cultural Heritage Act, 2002. In light of this important milestone, the Superintendence embarked on an ambitious project of publishing the major discoveries made during the last 20 years of operations. The volume will present an overview of a selection of the most significant archaeological discoveries made in different regions of the Maltese Islands and will cover all the archaeological and historical periods from Prehistory to the British Period. An approximate 1,500 individual sites which were discovered over this 20-year period, varying in size and importance had to be individually assessed for inclusion in the publication. Two research officers were engaged to assist the team with the assessment of the documentation in the archives and the analysis of cultural material, as well as the drafting of the text. The publication will be issued in 2024.

The Repository in Bormla

As of October 2023, the Superintendence Repository in Bormla has been assigned to the responsibilities

of the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team. Work continued here with the checking of cultural material being brought in from new archaeological sites, as well as material which has been at the stores for years. Researchers who needed to carry out analysis of materials in the store were also assisted. Further shelving was received in 2023 to assist in the storage of new material, and with the projected maintenance works in the coming months, plans are being made by the team to improve the condition of the stores and ensure better preservation of the finds. In 2023, the team, together with other officers, worked on devising a strategy for 2024. The work will entail (1) the setting up of further shelving and other maintenance work, (2) checking material from past sites to assess their conservation state, (3) carrying out preliminary assessment of the material so as to update databases including the national inventory database and GIS, and (4) identify assemblages of interest for further studies, which will in turn assist in the National Research Agenda as well as students seeking to assess material as part of their university

Archaeological Monitoring and Discoveries

The Archaeology Monitoring team at the Superintendence regulates archaeological monitoring of ongoing development works with a very high turnover of ongoing cases which revolves around 400 cases at any given time. Such team continues to maintain an important role in the management of the archaeology resource of development sites falling within areas of archaeological sensitivity. Currently there are five archaeologists, with the fifth member having joined in the last quarter of 2023. It is planned that in the coming years this team is consolidated through the addition of more human resources.

Archaeological monitoring is carried out by professional archaeologists approved to work under the direction of the Superintendence. During 2023, the Superintendence issued 233 Terms of Reference for new developments to be carried out

under archaeology surveillance and carried out 161 inspections in relation to ongoing surveillance. During 2023, archaeological surveillance yielded a total of 143 newly discovered sites, 19 of which were reported as accidental discoveries, meaning that there was no watching brief in place. The archaeologists present on site monitoring these works on behalf of the Superintendence carry out investigations and documentation of these discoveries as directed by the Superintendence's Archaeology Monitoring team. Once such investigations were concluded, various mitigation measures were adopted by the Superintendence to ensure the preservation of these features. By the end of 2023, 176 archaeology monitoring cases from 2023, 2022 and the preceding years have been closed and a total of 136 certifications for the successful completion of archaeological surveillance cases were issued.

In 2023, the Archaeology Monitoring Team started making use of a GIS based system whereby the entire monitoring process is managed through GIS. Requests for Terms of Reference, issuing of Terms of Reference, site inspection information, discoveries and other relevant site information are being plotted

on in a georeferenced system. In 2023 since the introduction of this new system, the Archaeology Monitoring team has plotted more than 650 unique entries, consisting of site points and feature points. The feature points are available through the Superintendence GIS interface.

Table 2: Breakdown of the different types of features and discoveries made in 2023 by category.

Category	Frequency of features in different sites
Burial: Shaft and Chamber Tomb Catacomb Burial Pits	14 9 3 2
Engineering/Industrial of which: • Agricultural Trenches • Qarrying/Quarrying Marks • Water Management Systems • Cart-Ruts • Other	167 70 28 11 4 13
Military: Shelters Other	14 10 4
Natural Heritage	3
Unclassified: Structural Remains Rock-cut Features Unknown Post Holes Pottery Scatter/Cultural Deposit Flooring Other	81 18 16 15 14 5 4

The below is an overview of the more remarkable archaeological discoveries made during 2023:

Table 3: Significant archaeological discoveries made in 2023.

Site	Locality
Railway Embankment Remains	Attard
Late Medieval Flooring	Gudja
Classical Structural Remains	Iklin
Domestic, Water Management and Agricultural Remains	Mġarr, Malta
Shaft and Chamber Tombs	Luqa
WW2 Military Remains	Luqa
Classical Structural Remains	Marsa
Pottery Vessel Remains	Naxxar
Catacomb Remains	Rabat, Malta
Classical Structural Remains and Archaeological Deposits	Rabat, Malta
Shaft and Chamber Tomb	Rabat, Malta
British Period Remains	San Ġiljan
Quarrying Remains	Rabat, Għawdex
Cave Tomb	Rabat, Għawdex
Archaeological Deposits	Xagħra
Prehistoric Burial Pit	Xagħra
Shaft and Chamber Tomb	Żejtun

Railway Embankment Remains, Triq il-Linja, Attard

During trenching works for the installation of a storm water culvert in a main road in Attard, a stretch of dressed masonry laid out to form a low wall running parallel to the street, was identified by the archaeology monitor who was carrying out

constant surveillance of these works under the direction provided by the Superintendence. The remains were identified as forming part of the historic railway embankment which was in use in the early 20th century when Malta had a short-lived train service. There was a high predictability that such a

discovery was made not only because of the name of the road, but also because the Superintendence has plotted on its GIS the original route of the railway, together with associated stations, bridges and other associated infrastructure.

The embankment stretches approximately 28m in length and is constructed of medium-sized rectangular limestone blocks. The blocks had an oblique angle on the exposed surface which were resting on a flab slab. The Superintendence and the entity responsible for these trenching works reached a suitable compromise to accommodate the necessary services whilst preserving the discovered feature.





Railway Embankement Wall Remains, Triq il-Linja, Attard.

Late Medieval Flooring, Triq Santa Katerina, Gudja

The site is located within the Urban Conservation Area of Gudja and is indicated as occupied on the 1914 Ordinance Map and on the 1968 Survey Sheet. The structure is a large room, characterised by high pointed arches and cangatura flooring, stylistically dating back to the Late Medieval period, even though

the street elevation was extensively altered in recent times. The room has significant cultural heritage value and is typologically the same as other medieval structures which were used variously as mill rooms and chapels. Therefore, any works requiring ground disturbance had to be archaeologically monitored. The relevant Terms of Reference were issued by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and clearing works commenced. Stratigraphically, a second level of cangatura flooring was exposed at the westernmost extent of the structure. Such a discovery indicated a possible earlier dating sequence to the structure. Cangatura flooring measured between 75cm (length) by 30cm (width) by 20cm (depth) – (largest) by 45cm (length) by 40cm (width) by 10cm (depth) – (smallest). All exposed cangatura flooring has been preserved





Late Medieval Flooring, Triq Santa Katerina, Gudja.
PHOTOS: QPML Archaeology

Classical Structural Remains, Triq Stefano Erardi,

The site is in a highly archaeological sensitive area of Iklin whereby in the neighbouring plot, Roman Period structural remains had been discovered and investigated in the 1970s during a developmentled intervention on site. In 1975, the Museums Department had briefly investigated these remains, however records were unclear as what was preserved in situ.





Classical Period Remains, Triq Stefano Erardi, Iklin. PHOTOS: IB Arch Team

During soil removal, several features were uncovered consisting of Roman period structural remains, a circular rock-cut cistern, as well as other rock-cut features and agricultural trenches. The structural remains are L-shaped in plan, and a small portion of flooring made of cocciopesto was identified. Whilst investigating this feature, a considerable amount of Classical Period pottery sherds - including a number of diagnostic pieces - were identified and collected as well as a lozenge shaped tile. Next to the structural remains, evidence of a foundation cut was also identified and documented. The positioning of this cut suggests that it is related to the structural remains.

The cistern consists of two interconnected apses which were accessible from one circular cut on top. The cistern appears to have been recently modified for reuse in modern times. Several rectangular rock cut trenches, indicating agricultural use, were also discovered, consistent with a classical period

> occupation of the site. Further agricultural activity on site, may also be indicated by a circular pit which may have been used as a tree pit. Another water catchment feature was noted which consisted of a rectangular cut in bedrock with a narrow channel leading into the feature. This feature was plastered suggesting that it was used to store liquids and prevent any leakages.

> The structural remains and water catchment features identified on site have been preserved

as requested by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

Domestic, Water Management and Agricultural Remains, Triq l-Iskorba c/w Triq l-Imqades, Mgarr,

A varied number or features were discovered on this site during development works under archaeological monitoring. These features included shallow surface quarrying, rock-cut channels which were probably associated with animal pens as well as other foundation cuts relating to a farmstead which was in the area. A 9m-deep ground water well and associated water run-off channels were also discovered during these works, and this was found to be connected to a series of rock-cut rooms which were accessed from a separate entrance. A flight of stairs leads down to an antechamber opening into three separate and sizeable underground rooms and two unfinished corridors. One of the rooms connects to the well through a rock-cut window which seems to have been cut to facilitate the retrieval of water. Although the function of these underground rooms cannot be confirmed, they are highly likely to have been used in conjunction with the farmhouse in the

area. The Superintendence instructed that these features are to be preserved and will be incorporated in the proposed development.





Rock cut Rooms at Triq Triq L-Iskorba c/w Triq l-Imqades, Imgarr.



Ground Water Well at Triq Triq L-Iskorba c/w Triq l-Imqades, Imgarr.

Shaft and Chamber Tombs, Malta International Airport, Luga

Since the beginning of aviation in Malta, the construction of the Malta International Airport, together with its annexes, the grounds and various extensions to the airstrips, led to various archaeological discoveries throughout various interventions across the decades. The area has always been known to be archaeologically sensitive and during the construction of a new Apron at the Malta International Airport, the Superintendence deemed it necessary to have archaeology monitored during the project. Works on site commenced in the last guarter of 2022 and continued throughout 2023. The discoveries, which were mostly made during 2023, consisted of quarrying, which has been previously documented also within the survey sheets. Extensive quarries have been uncovered, most probably dating from the 18th century onwards and recorded on the early 20th century Ordinance survey sheets. These quarries appear to have disturbed previous archaeological remains pertaining to much earlier periods. Also worth noting are the considerable quantities of agricultural trenches, cisterns and reservoirs and shallow grooves across substantial areas, indicative of a well-planned modification of the landscape to create an agricultural landscape. This varied cultural landscape also includes 2 stretches of cart-ruts and 4 shaft and chamber tombs. Also of interest is the occurrence of a high frequency of natural fissures, some of which reach considerable depths. The tombs appear to have been rifled during past interventions in the area, as no skeletal articulations and sealing slabs were present during their investigation. One of the discovered tombs was slightly different in typology than the rest and the 'most common' ones found throughout the island. There was a continuation of the shaft underneath the chamber, which during the investigation led to believe that there might be a second chamber further down, however the full investigation of the feature proved otherwise. A series of slabs were separating the chamber from the continuation of the shaft. Together with Malta International Airport, the Superintendence mitigated to safeguard and incorporate three of the tombs which have been discovered. In the circumstances,



made as works progress.



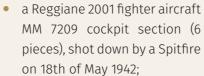
WW2 Military Remains, Saint Vincent de Paule,

Works for the development of a garden dedicated to persons with dementia within the SVP grounds in Luqa were being carried out under archaeology monitoring in view of the archaeological sensitivity of the area. This in view that archaeological features consisting of structures, deposits and funerary

remains within the grounds had been identified in past interventions. However, during works, within fills large metal scraps were being uncovered. The archaeology monitor immediately informed the Superintendence and upon close inspection it was discovered that these metal pieces formed part of WWII fighter planes. The remains pertain to:

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage





 and a Spitfire wing main spar & undercarriage leg with bullet hole.

Other parts of various fighter planes were also retrieved. All parts and historical information were identified and provided by the Malta Aviation Museum Foundation. These remains were not in their original crash location but were dumped there at some point after the war. These artefacts are an integral part of Malta's Second World War History and they have been transferred to

the care of the Malta Aviation Museum for restoration and eventual display.





Shaft and Chamber Tombs, Malta International Airport, Luqa. PHOTO: QP Archaeolo



Part of the remains during their discovery and once excavated from SVP Luqa.

PHOTO: QPML Archaeology



Part of the remains during their discovery and once excavated from SVP Luqa.

Classical Structural Remains, Triq it-Tigrija, Marsa

During soil/material removal works in a private development in Marsa, several cultural heritage features were discovered. The features consisted of a large rectangular quarry, a medium sized pit, large ashlar blocks and a culvert. The Superintendence had identified the area as archaeology sensitive at PA consultation stage due to similar remains having been discovered in the previous years during development. Hence, works were being constantly monitored by an approved archaeologist.

The ashlars are contained within the quarry cut and continue under third-party property. From the typology of the ashlars, the structural remains correspond to those of Classical period, as previously discovered in adjacent sites during course of works.





Classical Period Structural Remains, Triq it-Tigrija, Marsa. PHOTO: Chantal Cassar

Pottery Vessel Remains, Salina, Naxxar

During archaeological monitoring works for the laying of services in the limits of Salina, a rock-cut feature was discovered during works being monitored by the archaeology monitor. The feature was not visible during soil removal works, and it was truncated at its very edge during trenching works. The archaeology monitor, together with officials from the Superintendence continued to investigate this archaeological feature which resulted to be an agricultural trench. Although agricultural

trenches are a common occurrence in the Maltese landscape, the peculiarity of this agricultural trench was that within it, Roman period pottery consisting of a large open bowl with a lid, a small plate and a jug had been carefully placed within this feature. Such an occurrence is very rare, and there are few comparable occurrences. Some of the vessels had been squashed with the weight of the tarmac and road buildup over the years. The trench and the vessels were documented, and the latter extracted. The vessels are in the process of being analyzed, conserved, and where possible re-constructed.

catacomb clearly indicates that it was mutilated in



Entrance to catacomb, Triq San Tumas, Rabat (Malta).







PHOTO: Chantal Cassar

Cistern, Trig San Tumas, Rabat (Malta).

The cistern found on site has an atypical shape and continues under the third-party property. It is lined with recent lime-based cement suggesting that it was still in use in recent years. The Superintendence requested minor changes in the proposed works to avoid any damage to the features, and their preservation.



Classical Structural Remains and Archaeological

A number of archaeological layers were discovered during development works at basement level of a townhouse located in Rabat, Malta, in what would have been the residential area of ancient Melite. All works were being monitored by an approved archaeology monitor. Following the removal of the modern tiles and a thin layer of torba, various archaeological deposits were identified containing pottery, seashells and animal bone. Two crude stone alignments made of irregular stones were discovered in this process which were overlying a cocciopesto flooring. The flooring was found at depth of only 50cm from the modern tiles and the various layers which contained a large amount of material culture, including classical pottery sherds. Due to its cultural significance, the flooring and the archaeological layers were preserved in situ.



Remains Identified at Triq il-Labini, Rabat (Malta). PHOTO: Samuela Bossin

Shaft and Chamber Tomb, Tas-Salib, Rabat, Malta

The site of the proposed development is located in an Area of High Landscape Value specifically in a rural area on the outskirts of Rabat. The surroundings contain an array of rock cut features, including rockcut tombs, cart ruts (a pair of which can be seen passing within 50 metres of the site in satellite imagery), cave dwellings, and features possibly related to olive oil production discovered during previous development works. The relevant Terms of Reference were issued by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and clearing works commenced.



Shaft Entrance of Tomb, Tas-Salib, Rabat (Malta).



Entrance of Chamber, Tas-Salib, Rabat (Malta).

PHOTO: IB Arch Team



Funerary Chamber and Niche, Tas-Salib, Rabat (Malta).

Following detailed cleaning of the exposed rock surface in the North half of the site, the bedrock was found to be bare. In the Southern half, a classical tomb



Pottery Vessels in Situ, Salina, Naxxar.

Catacomb Remains, Triq San Tumas, Rabat, Malta In the highly archaeological sensitive area of Rabat

(Malta), during constant monitoring, a truncated catacomb and cistern were discovered. The monitor reported these finds and after instructions issued by the Superintendence, the catacomb and cistern were investigated. The catacomb consists of three entrances. One is not accessible as it continues under third party property. The deposits within the catacomb consisted of disturbed material, which

together with truncation in some areas of the

Deposits, Triq il-Labini, Rabat, Malta

was discovered, as well as patches of deposit with small bones. The tomb's shaft is semi-circular in plan and is approximately 1-1.2m across. A single chamber extends circa 50cm beneath the bedrock surface, towards the Northeast. The chamber is 1.7m deep, and approximately 2m wide. The shaft and chamber were found to be both full of a highly contaminated deposit, composed of rubble and modern debris. No original deposits or artefacts were noted during archaeological investigation works. It is important to note that even though the deposits were highly contaminated, these were still sieved to ensure no loss of data. This discovery is to be fully preserved and integrated within the proposed development.

Quarrying Remains, Triq Fortunato Mizzi c/w Triq l-Università, Rabat, Għawdex

Development works at the site in caption have uncovered poorly preserved remnants of a quarry, which most probably is a continuation of previously discovered classical quarrying spanning across a number of sites in the lower Victoria area. Due to the archaeological potential of archaeological discoveries, these works were monitored throughout the process. Although this site had been heavily impacted by works carried out prior to the introduction of archaeological monitoring, the remains discovered clearly show that the recorded extensive quarrying in this part of Rabat extended also to this area. A 4m-deep bell-shaped cistern of an unknown date was also discovered during works, at the boundary of the site. Features have been retained and incorporated with the proposed development.



Quarrying Remains, Triq Fortunato Mizzi c/w Triq L-Università, Rabat (Gozo). PHOTO: Chantal Cassai

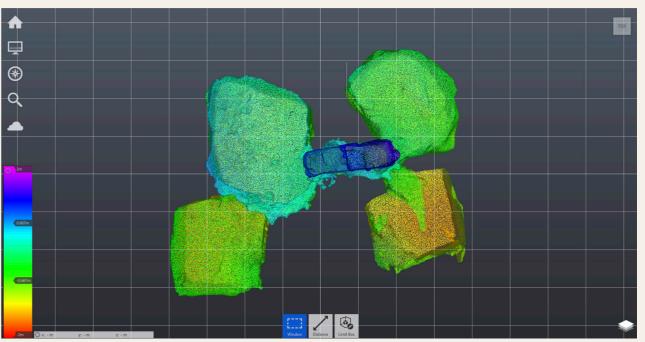
Cave Tomb, Ministry for Gozo Building, Pjazza San Frangisk, Rabat, Għawdex

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

During renovation works at the Ministry for Gozo premises, a burial site possibly dating back to the Classical Period was discovered. The areas surrounding Pjazza San Frangisk, including Triq Vajringa and Triq Ghajn Qatet, are rich in recorded burial remains as reported by Antonio Annetto Caruana's "Ancient Pagan Tombs and Christian Cemeteries in the Islands of Malta" in 1898. The publication shows tombs discovered in Gozo, including Rabat. The tomb consists of a shaft and four-irregularly shaped cave-like chambers, which are similar to those described by Caruana. The material within the chambers indicates that the features have been disturbed in early modern and more recent periods. This is evidenced by pottery and ceramic pieces dating to the Knights and British period found within it. The disturbances are also historical in their nature. Investigation works on this tomb are still ongoing.



Shaft leading to the Chamber tombs, Ministry of Gozo, Pjazza San Frangisk, Rabat (Gozo). PHOTO: Ioseph Grima



Lidar Plan of Shaft and Chamber tomb, Ministry of Gozo, Pjazza San Frangisk, Rabat (Gozo).









Sherds of Pottery discovered within the tomb, Ministry of Gozo, Pjazza San Frangisk, Rabat (Gozo). PHOTO: Joseph Grima



26 <<<< Annual Report 2023 Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Annual Report 2023 >>>> 2

Burial Pit, Triq Gużeppi Grech, Xagħra, Għawdex

During archaeology monitoring works for a private development in Xagħra, within the Area of Archaeological Importance of Ġgantija, agricultural trenches and a pit was identified. The pit discovered contained pottery and a considerable amount of human bones. A whole vessel and a partial vessel pertaining to the Ġgantija phase were amongst the associated pottery remains found within the burial pit. The burial pit together with the remaining archaeological features of an agricultural nature will be preserved on site and integrated within the development.



Associated Ġgantija Phase Pottery, Triq Ġużeppi Grech, Xagħra.

PHOTO: Chantal Cass



Burial Pit, Triq Guzeppi Grech, Xaghra.

PHOTO: Chantal Cassar

Shaft and Chamber Tomb, Triq Luqa Briffa, Żejtun, Malta

The development site is located within the Urban Conservation Area of Żejtun and within a Class A Archaeological Buffer Zone for a Roman Villa. Several other archaeological discoveries are recorded to have been made in the immediate vicinity, which include, vine trenches, bell shaped wells, rock-cut trenches, circular cuts, and tombs. In light of the above, works on site were being monitored by an archaeologist approved by the Superintendence during all stages



Associated Remains, Triq Luqa Briffa, Żejtun.

PHOTOS: Chantal Cassa

of work. Once soil/material works were completed, the archaeological monitor identified various agricultural trenches and a shaft like feature. The Superintendence requested the investigation of these features starting from the shaft like feature. During the investigation, the archaeology monitor observed that the feature had been disturbed in the past, since it contained globigerina limestone ashlars serving as foundations for the previous building. Part of the chamber had also been truncated in antiquity during the cutting of the agricultural trenches. The chamber discovered is very small, and was possibly used for cremation burials, however no cinerary urn has been discovered. Associated artifacts such as small plates and oil lamps have been recovered from this disturbed tomb. Small bone fragments, pottery sherds, and land and seashells have also been discovered. The tomb has been retained and incorporated within the development.





Shaft and Chamber Tomb, Triq Luqa Briffa, Żejtun. PHOTOS: Chantal Cassai

Underwater Projects

National projects which take place along the coast or underwater in Maltese Territorial waters require guidance from the Superintendence to ensure cultural heritage is not negatively impacted. With the increase in tourism, the search for alternative energy resources, and the need for the refurbishment of coastal areas for safety reasons, coastal site management becomes critical and the threat to underwater cultural heritage must be mitigated. Climate change, increased sea water levels and temperature rises are also factors which are affecting our coastal and underwater cultural heritage. SCH staff have been involved in various events to engage the public on adaptive strategies and gave a number of presentations at various conferences to highlight sites which are at considerable risk. In this capacity, SCH staff in the Underwater Heritage Team have been visiting underwater areas which are archaeologically sensitive as well as sites located in coastal areas to assess any potential concerns. In addition they have been collaborating with other entities to address strategies for the future.



Location of Works and area to be monitored at Fort St Angelo

Terms of Reference (TORs) are issued for all planning permit applications including those for national projects which take place in areas underwater where potential archaeological or historical features, sites, or artefacts may be impacted. These TORs provide developers with the guidance required to ensure potential archaeology in the sediment on the seabed is not impacted and conditions and restrictions are officially issued to ensure cultural heritage preservation. Several articles in the Cultural Heritage Act 2002 (as amended) (CAP 445), namely Articles 44 to 48, outline legislation that pertain to underwater cultural heritage to conserve historical and archaeological underwater heritage.



Works at Fort St Angelo being monitored.

PHOTO: SCH

National projects that take place along the coast and subsequently underwater are reviewed by SCH Executive Officers in the Underwater Heritage Team. As many of the areas off the coast are archaeologically sensitive, projects require archaeological monitors approved by SCH to be present continuously or periodically during works, to assess the site for any potential archaeological or historical finds. In 2023, several key projects were taking place amongst which were the expansion of the walkway/vehicular bridge at Fort St Angelo and Grand Harbour of Valletta where the upgrading or extension of wharfs was taking place.



Sediment sieved from dredged material from Valletta Grand Harbour Project.

PHOTO: Rossano Cherubini

Aside from historical and archaeological artefacts often found in the harbour, geological assessments

and geotechnical investigations have shown that quaternary deposits are known to be in the area. Archaeological monitors must sieve through the material that is extracted (see photo below) and collect and test samples of the sediment which could provide information for future studies on paleoclimates and how climate has impacted the Maltese Islands.

Another example of preserving cultural heritage and simultaneously ensuring public safety involved the relocation of

WWII Dragon's Teeth at Ghajn Tuffieha, Golden Bay. These are pyramidical structures made of concrete with iron bar spikes that resemble dragon's teeth (hence the name) utilized as anti-amphibian and anti-tank defensive countermeasures during WWII and are therefore of high heritage value. The 'teeth' were originally installed underwater and along the shores to function as obstacles to prevent continued movement of anything in their passageway and had to be moved to a greater depth outside of the main bays for safety reasons.

In 2023, SCH engaged with professional diving associations and beach/underwater diver cleanup crews, to discuss processes when encountering potential cultural heritage while diving in Maltese Territorial waters. The aim was to stress the importance of reporting any finds of potential cultural heritage immediately as required by the Cultural Heritage Act and to ensure the preservation of material in situ. Finds which were inadvertently collected during clean up events in 2023 are presently being desalinated, conserved, and studied to determine their origins. Once this is complete, the information will be made publicly available.

The Underwater Heritage team at SCH also regularly collaborates with the Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit at Heritage Malta and various departments at the University of Malta to protect cultural heritage through joint investigations, declarations



'Dragon's Teeth' - at Għajn Tuffieħa & Golden Bay

PHOTO: Tourism Zone Regeneration Agency

of archaeological zones, and issuance of research permits. In 2023, SCH declared three underwater archaeological zones to preserve significant underwater cultural heritage sites off the coast of Gozo and these were published in the Government Gazette with Notices to Mariners.

Eighteen permits were issued to sample textile fibres, wood, human or animal bone, and resins from material extracted from underwater archaeological

sites to determine fabric, origin, period and to gain further insight into Malta's history, population, and climate. In addition, permits were issued to University of Malta researchers as well as environmental consulting firms to survey the seabed in Maltese Territorial waters which may provide significant information on potential archaeological sites not yet documented. All reports from these studies are submitted to SCH for future reference and research.



Immovable National Inventory

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage finalised a two-year process aimed at updating the National Inventory's structure through a re-categorization of all existing entries and also finalised standard and efficient operating procedures. This process facilitates data capture and analysis for both SCH employees and members of the general public, in an effort to protect our cultural assets and share data. All the preparation done in the last two years came to fruition when in December 2023, the first batch of immovable property was published in the National Inventory after 9 years.

The entity's work on the National Inventory had four major goals:

- To revise the attributes which are collected and published on each and every property in the Inventory, and to standardise and consolidate terminology. This ties in with the Movable Inventory in an effort for standardisation.
- To go through the entire Inventory of 2552 existing properties, translate the data on every property into the revised format whilst checking the validity and accuracy of the data.
- To continue with the data capture exercises, finalise those carried over from last year and outline new thematic exercises to be undertaken, and
- To study and analyse collected data in order to compile the results and propose for inclusion in the National Inventory those assets which are worth protecting.

Data verification of existing inventory entries

Following the publication of the new GIS Interface on SCH's website in December 2022, the Superintendence started a project to revise the attributes which can be seen for each feature in the layer, which corresponded to the Data Cards attached. This was the first revision of the sort since the introduction of the first National Inventory, CHIMS, which was launched in 2008. This revision simplified the list

of attributes and introduced new ones in line with International Charters. In addition to a revised set of attributes, the Superintendence also looked at the values for each attribute and introduced standard operating procedures on how each attribute should be compiled as well as the introduction of standard values for a number of attributes. This is a vital step for any list published on a GIS platform (GIS software allows for fast and efficient filtering and analysis but without this step the data is not coherent, and it would not be possible for users to filter through the data and extract accurate statistics).

Conversion of existing data to new format

Once the structure was optimised and operating procedures clear, the existing data had to be translated. Every feature point (individually plotted sites) previously published in the National Inventory (published between 2011 and 2014) was translated; 2,552 cultural assets over Malta, Gozo and Comino. This exercise often went back to original, decade old data captures to retrieve missing data, but also brought to light a number of inaccuracies. In light of this information, the Superintendence followed the translation with a correction of spatial and tabular data for the existing Inventory, which is expected to be completed in early months of 2024. Upon completion of this process, the data of the existing Inventory would be precise and available to the public in the revised format, but the entity aims to improve this by assessing its validity and augment it with new research and appraisals.

Data Capture

Through 2023, the Superintendence focused on two main data capture exercises: Religious Monuments and British Military Architecture. The vastness and variety of cultural heritage in the Maltese Islands requires a thematic perspective when considering additions to the existing inventory to ensure a holistic approach.

Previously, the Superintendence had embarked on a data capturing exercise to record and publish in the Inventory niches, statues and religious monuments scattered around towns and villages, with first entries published in June 2012. Despite over 1800 individual monuments recorded, this exercise was left incomplete. Starting in 2022, the entity undertook the mammoth task of revising this data and extend this exercise to those localities where religious monuments were still undocumented. The spatial data of the published monuments was checked for accuracy in 2022 and in 2023 the corrections were published on the GIS Interface. These corrections amounted to 412 recorded in 2022 and 36 others in 2023 for a total of 448 points republished on the platform. In addition, 370 religious monuments were identified for potential inclusion in the National Inventory during 2022, and in 2023, a further 261 monuments were documented. The identification process covers months of desktop data capture and onsite inspections (the desktop exercise alone yielded almost 900 monuments to be inspected, out of which, around 200 were eliminated at the initial stage). With less than 50 more monuments still to be inspected, and data population for this group already in process, the Superintendence aims to publish these religious monuments in the Inventory in 2024, and finally have a comprehensive list of niches, statues, and other religious monuments in the Maltese Islands fully included in the National Inventory and readily available on the Superintendence's GIS Interface. Concurrently, the Superintendence has already started the data capture of the second part Finally, the first stage of the British Military of this theme - religious buildings.

During the last months of 2023, the Superintendence started working on another thematic capture: the British Military Architecture. This entails research on several structures, varying from forts to smaller structures like towers, shelters and pillboxes. The entity successfully compiled a list of fortifications, built and/or used during the British period, as well as Anti-Aircraft Batteries. This included desktop data capture, with site inspections scheduled for

2024. Other thematic data capture is planned for the coming years, in line with the Superintendence's mission to maintain and augment the National

Inclusion in the Inventory

The updating of the National Inventory is in fulfilment of the Superintendence's obligation in line with Article 53 of the Cultural Heritage Act 2002 (as amended). Inclusion of properties in the National inventory comes at the end of data capture and validation processes and consists in publishing the list of properties in the Government Gazette and uploading onto the GIS interface, which is the chosen interface through which the Inventory is publicly accessible. In 2023, a total of 221 religious monuments were identified for inclusion, and the data compilation on these monuments is already in hand. It is expected that in 2024, around 100 more monuments will be added to this list and published in the inventory.

In addition to the religious monuments, 192 properties which derived from scheduled properties in line with provisions of Article 53(4) of the Cultural Heritage Act were identified for inclusion in the Inventory. The data compilation on these properties is almost complete and it is envisaged that these will be included in the Inventory in 2024.

Architecture data capture yielded 48 forts, lines, barracks, position stations and anti-aircraft batteries for inclusion in the inventory. Data on the properties was compiled and in December 2023, these were presented to the Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, who concurred with the entity's proposal for their inclusion. At the end of the year the Superintendence published 48 British Military Structures in the National Inventory through G.N. 1804/23.

Scheduling

During 2023, the Superintendence was involved in 17 scheduling cases and exercises, taking a consultee role in 13 of them (10 appeals and 3 new scheduling led by HPU). In addition, the Superintendence had proposed the scheduling of Palazzina Vincenti in St. Julians back in 2021, which was scheduled in 2023 and carried out appraisal exercises on 3 de-scheduling requests received by the Planning Authority. On the entity's recommendation, the Planning Authority

refused 1 request in Siggiewi, modified another in Rabat, Gozo, and the final request in Mgabba resulted in a modification of the scheduling extents of the property and the inclusion of another. The Superintendence did not propose the scheduling of any property this year, since there is a backlog of open cases as seen below, where the Superintendence is waiting to be called upon:

Table 4: List of scheduling requests still pending as at 2023

Property	Number of Properties	Grade (Proposed / Existing)	Nature
Sliema	1	Grade 2 (p.)	New Scheduling
Mosta	2	Grade 1 (p.)	New Scheduling
Żebbuġ	1	Grade 1 (p.)	New Scheduling
Żejtun	1	Grade 1 (p.)	New Scheduling
Third Party Request (NGO)	9	Various (p.)	New Scheduling
Third Party Request (NGO)	29	Various (p.)	New Scheduling
Sliema	1	Grade 2 (p.)	New Scheduling
Reconsideration from the 2020 scheduling of Archaeological Features in Xagħra, Gozo	1	Class A (ex.)	Reconsideration

In the Maltese legislative framework, whilst scheduling is regulated by the Planning Act, the Superintendence is given the authority to recommend

properties for scheduling through article 58 of the Cultural Heritage Act.

GIS (Geographic Information Systems)

2023 was an important year for capacity in GIS development. The Superintendence had already signed an Enterprise Agreement with Esri in 2021 and renewed in 2022, which enabled the Superintendence to focus on the development of spatial data which is being used not only as a platform on which to make

readily available cultural heritage data, but also streamline workflows and work processes. In fact, whilst 2021 and 2022 were more focused towards the creation of geo spatial data, in 2023 the focus was directed towards the streamlining of work process through a GIS platform. In February 2023, MITA, on

behalf of Maltese Government, signed an Enterprise Agreement with ESRI, the former which incorporates a number of participant National Entities, including the Superintendence. In effect, the previous agreement entered into by the Superintendence was superseded by this new state-wide agreement. Through this agreement, the Superintendence enjoys improved access to technical support as well as a wide range of training programmes. Throughout the year, SCH staff have made ample use of available training as part of their continued professional development. In November, the Superintendence has also participated in the first Local Users Conference organised by MITA and ESRI, and the Superintendence was one of 4 local entities which was chosen to present its success story with GIS application in its operational procedures.

Building on the work of previous years, the Superintendence continued to increase data on its

GIS platform for Superintendence officers who use the data for consultation and guidance on monitoring projects, as well as for research purposes, as part of post-excavation and publication work. Public data on the GIS interface was also updated with the latest archaeological discoveries as well as sites added to the national inventory. This data is available to the public through the Superintendence website. Officers of the Superintendence also attended, for the first time, the ESRI user conference, where government entities had a chance to present how they are utilizing GIS tools within their own work.

Some officers, including two from the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team, also benefitted from further training on GIS as part of the ESRI user agreement, through which several courses, videos, tutorials and training have been made available to allow entities to strengthen their skills on GIS.

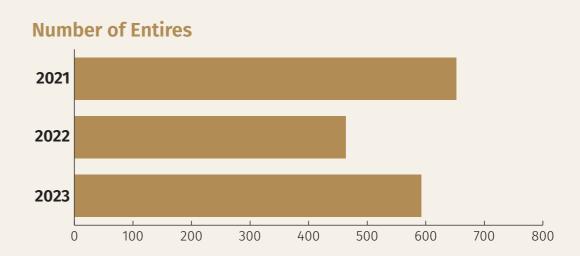
Inventory of Movables

The collation of the movable collection within the repository of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage continued within the year 2023. New entries were included within the National Inventory, whilst further research was undertaken on previously inventorised items. Newly listed artefacts included ceramic vessels, metal items, beads, numismatic objects, glass items, coins, and silverware.

The Superintendence has a repository that includes cultural material discovered in the last 30 years, all of which are obtained from secure contexts. As part of the inventorying process, each item is given a unique number, photographed, and a number of attributes intended to properly and aptly describe each item is filled in. A total of 592 individual artefacts were inventorised during the year 2023. This included 308 new records and 284 updated entries.

The inventory of the Valletta repository was completed in 2022, with further efforts undertaken in 2023 to ensure the safeguard, conservation and preservation of these items within the SCH laboratories. The late months of 2023 involved further endeavours in preparation for the inventorying of the off-site repository.

Figure 1: Number of entries in inventory per year



The remit of the National Inventory is far and widereaching as defined in the Cultural Heritage Act, and this aspect of movable cultural heritage had so far remained untapped. Apart from the above exercise, it is also being extended to include stolen goods which are being returned to the Superintendence by the Malta Police Force on the termination of

the associated criminal procedures; and finds as reported by citizens. Central to this task will be the acquisition of a Collections Management System which will improve the management of the inventory and its accessibility in the future which can be extended to different stakeholders.



The Registry and Archives at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage houses data collected from the early 1900s to the present day covering the workings of the then Museums Department. It includes correspondence regarding planning application files, as well as research, drawings, plans, and photographs

to those who obtain permission to access files for the purpose of higher studies, the Registry and Archives are crucial pillars of information that must be preserved.

documenting archaeological and historical sites. Used for investigative research by staff and open

SCH Registry and Archives.

Over the last two years, 380 boxes with approximately 7,500 files in the Registry and over 250 binders in the Archives have been reorganized and filtered, and the digitisation of all documentation has been ongoing to allow for efficient access in future. This has been done with the help of internship students

and dedicated staff with extensive experience in data management. In addition, thousands of photographs, slides and videos of all excavations are being reviewed, categorized, and digitised to ensure they are preserved for future access by internal staff and public researchers.

While upgrading the Registry and Archives, additional archaeological and historical site locations were plotted, and relevant details were added on the SCH GIS portal to enhance the level of information made available to staff and the public. This included any

> sites or finds that were discovered not only on land, but also during underwater archaeological investigations both near the coast and in open areas within Maltese territorial waters. Staff continuously utilized the Registry and Archives to assist with their research and formulation of their consultation replies to planning proposals. Throughout 2023, 20 students from various universities both from Malta and abroad, were given direct access to the Registry and Archives to complete their thesis. Their final submissions will be stored in the SCH library for future cross reference by others.

РНОТО: SCH



The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage regulates the import and export of cultural goods between Malta and EU Member States, as well as from, or to non-EU countries. These cases are referred to the Superintendence by the Malta Customs Department, shipping companies or by MaltaPost.

This work is mainly carried out by two SCH officers who

Certification for the Movement of Goods (personal items excluding cultural heritage objects)

In keeping with long-standing practice, the Superintendence also reviews the export and movement of "personal items", to ensure that these do not include cultural heritage items. In 2020 the Superintendence introduced processing fees for applications pertaining to the permanent export of non-cultural personal effects, standard processing fee being €35 and €65 in case of express service.

are assigned to tasks related to movable heritage. However, following an intake of new employees in the last quarter, more officers have been assigned to this team resulting in more staff availability to assist when required.

Figure 2: Movement of personal items (non-cultural goods) between 2019 and 2023

401 2019 373 2020 434 2021 2022 367 2023 320 340 360 380 400 420 440

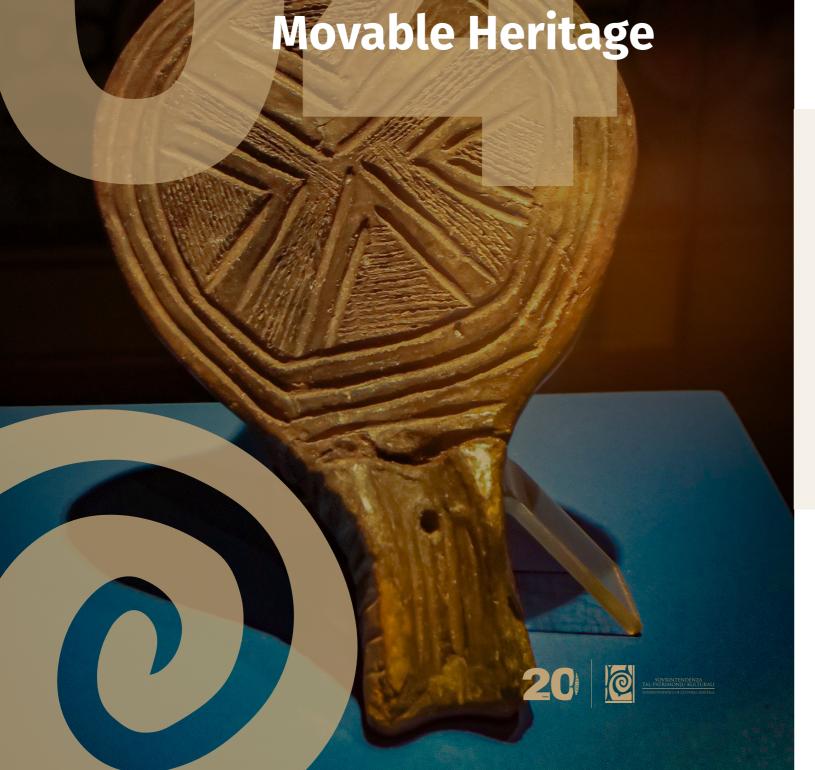
Movement of Personal Items (Non-Cultural Goods)

In the course of 2023, the Superintendence reviewed 367 cases of export and movement, in which cases the exporter had declared that no item of cultural heritage value was being exported. The number of cases marked a slight decrease on the previous year, being 44 cases less than in 2022 (411), 67 cases less than in 2021 (434), 6 cases less than in 2020 (373), and 34 cases less than those processed in 2019 (401).

Cultural Heritage items leaving the **National Territory**

As stated by law, the export of cultural heritage items from Malta requires permission from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

April 2023 saw the introduction of a reviewed



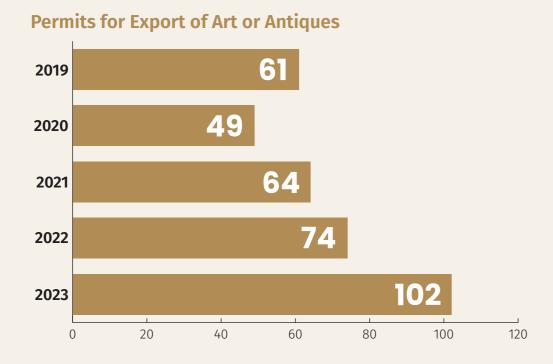
procedure whereby such requests are subject to established fees in terms of export or re-export of cultural heritage items. An administrative charge of €55.00 upon registration and receipt of the requested documentation applies for all cultural heritage items over 50 years old proposed for export (outside EU). Subsequently, the payment of a 15% *ad valorem* fee is applicable if the export or re-export of cultural heritage items is permitted. Such fee would not be applicable in case the request is refused.

In the course of 2023, the Superintendence issued a total of 102 permits for the export of cultural heritage items. Of these 102 permits, 48 cases were for the export of cultural heritage items (over a hundred cultural heritage items of which included collections

of silverware, paintings and military armour) and 54 cases were for the export of contemporary or decorative art (a total of 364 modern cultural items). Few of the cases treated required inspecting the items, since adequate documentation for assessment had been made available to the Superintendence.

The 102 permissions granted in 2023 marked a significant increase over permissions as issued in 2022 (74), as well as those in 2021 (64 cases), 2020 (49 cases), and in 2019 (61 cases). A total of €440 in administrative charges was collected as of April 2023, followed by the total sum of €3,973 ad valorem fees for cases which were granted a permit for permanent export.

Figure 3: Permits for Permanent Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2019 and 2023

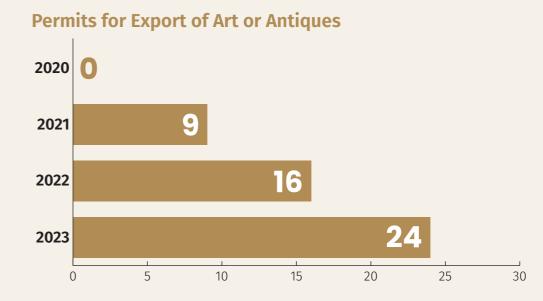


Temporary Movement and Export of Cultural Goods

The Superintendence also reviews and regulates applications for the temporary export of cultural goods out of the Maltese territory for purposes of

restoration, exhibition, study or analysis. A total of 24 permits involving the temporary movement/ export of various cultural heritage items were issued in 2023, marking a significant increase on the 16 permits issued in 2022, the 9 permits issued in 2021, and the previous 0 permits issued in 2020.

Figure 4: Permits for Temporary Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2020 and 2023



Inspection and Certification of Cultural Items imported from outside the European Union

As stated by law, the Superintendence is also called upon by Customs to inspect and certify cultural items that are imported from outside the European Union. This process is initiated by the importer to comply with Malta Customs' procedures.

Items inspected in 2023 included an array of antique furniture, numismatic collections, silverware, ceramics, etchings, military antiques, memorabilia, paintings, archaeological artefacts, and glassware.

The Superintendence inspected and certified the importation of 437 consignments amounting to over 1,500 cultural items. These 437 cases mark an extraordinary increase on the 238 consignments inspected in 2022, the 52 consignments inspected in 2021, the 25 registered cases inspected in 2020 and the 25 cases inspected in 2019. The Brexit phenomena has had a notable impact on this procedure since the United Kingdom is now subject to the same procedures as other countries which fall outside the EU.

These inspections of imported items generated a total revenue of $\[\in \]$ 79,600.9. This is a similar sum compared to the $\[\in \]$ 72,809 generated from inspecting imported cultural goods in 2022, and a substantial increase in comparison to the $\[\in \]$ 20,377.7 generated in 2021, the $\[\in \]$ 4,640.60 collected for import inspections in 2020 and the $\[\in \]$ 23,228.50 collected for import inspections in 2019.

These unpredictable spikes in revenue are indicative of the exceptional import of prestigious and costly items in the course of a given year.

The Customs Department may choose to release cultural goods without prior consent of the Superintendence when items of cultural value are imported from within or outside the EU. A number of such instances in 2023 involved the release of imported cultural goods originating from outside the EU which were initially registered with the Superintendence but consequently cleared by the Customs Department.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Annual Report 2023 >>>>

Figure 5: Certifications issued for imported cultural goods between 2018 and 2023

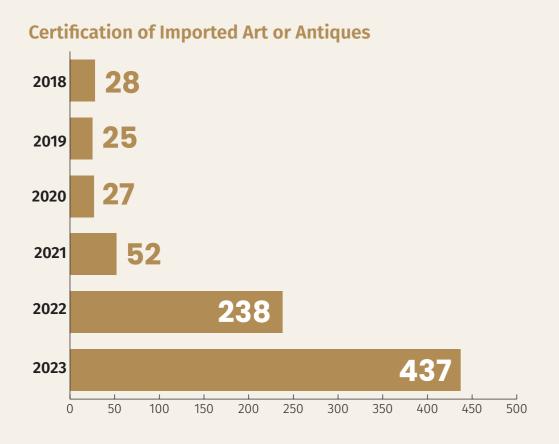
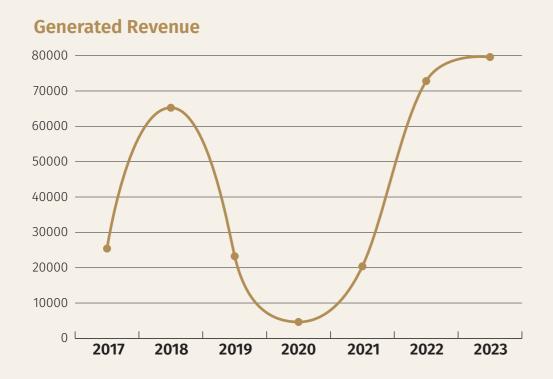


Figure 6: Revenue generated from certification inspections between 2017 and 2023



Import for educational, restoration or public exhibition purposes

In 2023, twenty-seven cases involved the inspection of cultural effects which were imported for restoration or public exhibition purposes. The *ad valorem* fee of five per cent of the items' value as accepted by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, together with such expenses as may be necessary in connection with such examination as per L.N. 35.03, were waived as the nature of these imports was for the aforementioned purposes.

Liaison with National and International Agencies in enforcing movement of cultural items

In 2023, the Superintendence continued to attend Expert Group meetings and Project Groups presently organised by TAXUD and the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council between all Member States on Customs issues related to cultural

goods and governing EU policy. During these meetings, Member States discuss pressing issues including the return of cultural objects under directive 2014/60/EU, the preparation for the implementation of the Import Regulation 880/2019, and the upcoming introduction of an EU-wide registration system.

The Superintendence retained access to the EU's Commission International Market Information System known as the IMI portal, which allows for direct and bilateral exchanges between Member States. The system is used when an authority or regulatory entity has reason to believe that a return of a cultural item is possible through this administrative procedure. The information as made available to the respective authorities must be sufficient for the assigned officials to identify the concerned item.

The Superintendence continued to attend workshops and meetings featuring further discussion on organised crime and counterterrorism, and also addressing the issue of illicit trade in cultural goods.

Monitoring of Restoration Works on Movable Cultural Property

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a number of requests for the restoration of works of art. These were supported by a restoration method statement drawn up by warranted restorers who managed the restoration interventions. The majority of these cases pertained to church property and thus subsequent clearance and restoration monitoring was carried out by the Catholic Cultural Heritage Commission.

Following a revised registration procedure, which

was introduced in the late months of 2022, the Superintendence received limited notices, instigating a further need to revise this procedure to ensure that restoration projects being undertaken on movable cultural property by warranted conservators is communicated to the SCH. As stated at law, all warranted conservators are to communicate their intent to start works before undertaking such projects. Such notices apply for movable church property and movable private property alike.

Right of Preference

As prescribed by Article 40 of the Cultural Heritage Act, "In the case of sale, export, exchange, emphyteutic grant or lease of an object of cultural property the Superintendent shall have the right, with the approval of the Minister in consultation with the

Committee of acquiring the same, in preference to all others on equal conditions including consideration as that concluded between the parties".

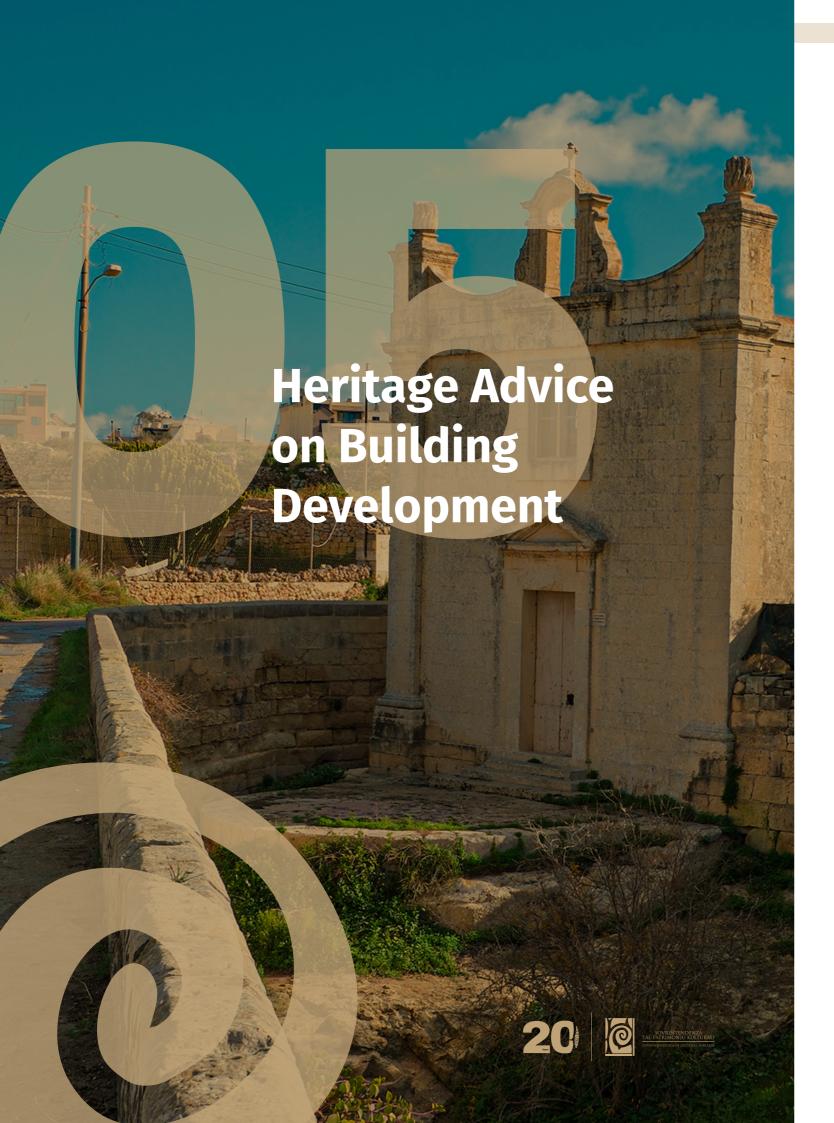
In the course of 2023, this measure was exercised for

44 <--- Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

a total of 9 of the 15 tentative Right of Preference cases, which comprised an array of cultural items including publications, Maltese silverware, paintings, manuscripts and photographs which were tentatively to be acquired by Heritage Malta for the National Collection. Right of preference is generally carried out in the case of sale at auction, or in connection with proposed permanent export of cultural heritage items. Such action (in connection with sale at auction) is generally initiated on request of Heritage Malta or directly by the Superintendence, with the intention of acquiring items deemed as significant assets for inclusion in the National Collection.

Years Years





Administrative changes

The overall staff complement of the Heritage Planning Consultation Unit (HPCU) has remained the same during 2023. Although one officer left the HPCU and assumed new duties as part of the Build Heritage Restoration Inspectorate (BHRI), this vacancy was filled up by recruiting a new official. The new officer underwent induction training including lectures, workshops and job-shadowing.

The HPCU consists of 1 unit head (with responsibility also for the BHRI), 3 senior cultural heritage executives, 10 executive officers and 1 administrative assistant (also covering the administrative work of the BHRI). One of the executive officers is responsible for handling all road works applications submitted to Transport Malta. The unit is divided in three teams, one responsible for applications within the UCA and the other two for applications within the development scheme and ODZ. Each team is under the responsibility of a senior executive officer providing all officers with immediate access to technical advice and support. This structure provides efficiency and consistency in the Superintendence's direction given to architects and clients during the processing of the planning applications. In addition, all senior officials hold weekly meetings with the unit head to discuss collegially challenging applications which provides an optimum environment for the sharing of experiences and knowledge.

Development Consultations: Land use and development applications

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, through its Heritage Planning Consultations Unit (HPCU), continued fulfilling its role as a designated statutory external consultee to the Planning Authority on land use and development planning applications. The Superintendence is consulted on all full development planning applications received by the Planning Authority, as well as on minor amendment applications, summary planning applications, development notification orders, dangerous structures, regularisation applications and planning

control applications which may have an impact on cultural heritage.

The Superintendence is also consulted on roadworks permit applications by Transport Malta and by the Environment and Resources Authority on reports of cultural heritage surveys as part of the Environment Impact Assessments. A classification by type and quantities of development applications is found in Table 5.

Overview of development application

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a total of 10,307 consultation requests from the Planning Authority on development planning applications (PA applications) in 2023. These include 6,213 first consultations (including Summary applications), 3,167 re-consultations, and 927 minor amendment consultations (see Table 5). This amount excludes other types of development applications, such as Development Notification Orders, Planning Control Applications, Dangerous Structures, Regularisations and others. This marks a decrease of 9% on the previous year when 11,287 planning consultations were received.

Apart from the development planning applications, the Superintendence also reviews most applications regarding roadworks (RWP1s) permitted by Transport Malta. The road works permit applications received increased from 2,399 in 2022 to 2,633 in 2023.

Of the 6,213 first consultations, 2,211 applications were responded to at filtering stage, which amounts to 36% of the total new consultations received. Once again, significant increases were experienced in consultations related to minor amendments, post-decision requirements, DNOs and Dangerous Structures. Together with the increase in the number of re-consultations, this indicates a healthy and strengthened engagement in the assessment of cases which impact on cultural heritage between the Planning Authority and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. It is well augured that this

momentum of cooperation between the two entities is maintained and fostered even further.

Heritage Planning Consultation Data

All official planning consultation is carried out via the Planning Authority's online portal E-Apps. A significant amount of correspondence is still carried out by e-mail. However, it is difficult to keep exact track of quantities, as e-mails are sent to multiple officers and generic e-mails, often in copy of each other. Thus, the figures below refer only to official correspondence logged on E-Apps.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

Table 5: Number of the different types of development-related consultation requests received in 2023

Property	2021	2023	2023		
Planning Applications (PAs)					
Planning Directorate Consultation (Inclusive of Summary Applications)	6,662	6,376	6,213		
Screening Consultation (Major Projects)	69	62	44		
Planning Directorate Re-Consultation	2,662	2,548	3,167		
Minor Amendment Consultation	686	866	927		
DNO - Development Notification Order	96	122	229		
DS - Dangerous Structures	9	32	42		
PC - Planning Control		35	41		
Consultation through Transport Malta electronic online system and through e-mail					
RWP - Road Work Permit	1,759	2,399	2,633		

Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (CHAC)

The Superintendence refers for discussion complex development-related cases to the CHAC. The CHAC is an internal committee within the Superintendence which makes recommendations to the Superintendence on development-related issues and scheduling/de-scheduling requests. During 2023, the CHAC held 34 meetings, made 149 recommendations on development applications and de/scheduling request proposals. The planning

applications referred were mainly projects having a major impact on cultural heritage: major projects, impact on scheduled buildings, demolition, extensive alterations and additions, adverse visual impact, and development applications impacting on World Heritage Sites.

National World Heritage Technical Committee

The National World Heritage Technical Committee

(NWHTC) has been instituted in 2022 as a result of recent changes to the Cultural Heritage Act. The NWHTC is chaired by H.E, the Maltese Ambassador to the UNESCO and includes representatives and technical experts from the Ministry of Culture, the Superintendence, the Planning Authority, and ICOMOS (Malta). The Superintendence has regularly referred development-related cases that may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of ascribed and candidate sites on the World Heritage List to the NWHTC for discussion. This new process is proving to be a success and a number of high-profile development applications were significantly revised, re-dimensioned or refused by the Planning Authority on the strength of the recommendations of the NWHTC in conjunction with the Superintendence.

Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (Planning Appeals)

As a statutory consultee in the planning process the Superintendence regularly receives notification that an appeal has been lodged to the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (EPRT). The Superintendence has the right to participate as an interested entity in these third party appeals in line with the provisions of Article 21 of Cap 551 and has exercised this right in 34 new cases during 2023. The Tribunal also requested the Superintendent's attendance as witness in several cases. The Superintendence notes with satisfaction that its strategy to expand its footprint at the EPRT is leaving a significant positive outcome with decisions by the Tribunal increasingly giving more weight to the role and impact of the cultural

heritage values in the planning of our townscapes and rural landscapes.

Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB)

Starting in 2021, the Superintendence began collaborating with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) by attending joint inspections and sessions of the Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB) to discuss those cases whereby Access-for-All requirements may have an impact on cultural heritage buildings and features. The results of this new initiative are exceptionally good with most cases being resolved by directing architects and applicants towards solutions that are acceptable to both the CRPD/TORB and the Superintendence. The success of this initiative augurs well for the continued collaboration between these two entities.

Major Projects and Best Practice Cases

Major projects and cultural heritage sensitive development applications are a critical part of the consultations that the Planning Authority refer to the Superintendence. Such projects usually involve a much heavier interaction in terms of time, thought and resources, and include site inspections, research, assessments, and various meetings with stakeholders and the architect/applicant. Below is a list of the main major projects or landmark cases that the Superintendence engaged with during the past year (see Table 6 below).

50 <<<< Annual Report 2023 >>>> 51

Table 6: A few of the major projects and best practice cases the Superintendence engaged with in 2023

PA number	Site	Comments
PA/07826/21	Sqaq fi, Triq ta' Dun Luqa, Sannat	This application concerned a vernacular building of evident cultural heritage interest that was clearly used for the rearing of animals and other agricultural activities, and which was located within the development zone. A site inspection confirmed the existence of an intact millroom with an original centimolo (mill mechanism), a rarity of high cultural heritage interest. The architect collaborated closely with the Superintendence to identify adequate solutions to preserve the millroom and its mechanism and integrate them within a modern habitable space. The final proposal is considered to be a fine example of design solutions that preserve cultural heritage, integrated with modern amenities.



Detail of centimolo structure in property in Triq ta' Dun Luqa, Sannat.

PHOTO: SCH

PA/00294/22	Sqaq Harper, Telgħet il-Kurċifiss, Floriana	The proposal sought to restore an existing building, which forms part of a cluster of houses in a historic area of Floriana designed by the well-reknowned architect Gustavo Vincenti. The original proposal was deemed insensitive to the heritage qualities of the building. However, revised drawings were submitted in line with the Superintendence's direction that retained the legibility of the original spaces, and which safeguarded the surviving inscription of the name of the block.
PA/01401/22	Triq Borg Għarib, Għajnsielem	The application concerned a significant vernacular building located within an ODZ area. A site inspection confirmed that the property was constructed in various phases up to the late 20th century. The older core included double thickness walls and rooms roofed with traditional kileb and masonry arches. Another part of the complex exhibited a formal entrance hall with traditional roofing systems. The original proposal was not deemed sensitive to the heritage values of the property. The Superintendence worked closely with the architect leading to a revised proposal that safeguarded the vernacular and historical values of the building whilst permitting contemporary residential use.

PA number Site Comments





Detail of internal spaces of vernacular building in Għajnsielem.

РНОТО: SCH

PA/02058/22

Triq Santa Katerina c/w, Triq tal-Ħamrija, Xewkija

The property in PA/02508/22 has evident vernacular and historical significance. The building has two bread ovens that are of cultural heritage value, indicating that the property may have been used as a bakery in the past. To convert the property into residential use, the Superintendence worked closely with the architect to ensure that the vernacular and historical values of the building and its features were not compromised. One of the ovens was carefully dismantled and relocated within the same property due to its inconvenient position, after being documented by a detailed report. The second oven was preserved in situ and integrated into the modern development. The final solution successfully preserves the Maltese cultural heritage while also adapting traditional dwellings to meet current standards.



Detail of internal spaces of vernacular property in Xewkija.



One of the traditional bread ovens found in property in Xewkija.

PHOTO: Taken from PA 2058/22

PHOTO: Taken from PA 2058/22

PA/02535/23

Triq Santa Luċija, Il-Belt Valletta The proposal sought to merge two shops into one, remove the existing vetrina, and propose a new shopfront. The site is located opposite the rear façade of St John's Co-Cathedral and thus in a very sensitive environment of the historic city of Valletta. The property originally formed part of a Knights period palazzo, which was transformed into a woodwork factory sometime in the late 19th or early 20th century. The proposal was redesigned following direction by the Superintendence so that the rhythm, overall design, and materials were in line with the characteristics of a traditional shopfront in Valletta.

52 <<<< Annual Report 2023 >>>> 5

PA number	Site	Comments
PA/02621/23	Site at, Ex-Sewage Plant at ir-Ramla tal- Mixquqa, Triq Għajn Tuffieħa, Mellieħa	Situated amidst the pristine and delicate environs on Għajn Tuffieħa in Mellieħa, this planning proposal consisted of the demolition and removal of a reinforced concrete tank dating back to the British period. This tank was an integral component of a sewage plant associated with the Għajn Tuffieħa Military Complex. Upon closer examination and a site inspection, the Superintendence noted and acknowledged the structure's distinctive significance in relation to local industrial heritage, which warranted preservation. Subsequently, a recommendation advocating the preservation and protection of the tank was submitted. Ultimately, the application was withdrawn, ensuring the safeguarding of this unique aspect of industrial heritage, a rarity with only a handful of comparable instances remaining.
PA/05763/22	Triq it-Torri, Msida	The application was initially proposing extremely insensitive alterations within a historic building forming part of a row of scheduled townhouses in Triq it-Torri, Msida. Proposed works included the near total gutting of the building including the removal of significant architectural features such as entrance hall and staircase to impose an open plan layout. Following intervention from the Superintendence, the proposal was revised to retain the building's significant features and historic layout while allowing for the contemporary reuse of the building, with the only additional volume being a small washroom at roof level. Incongruous aluminium apertures on the façade were also changed to timber at the request of the Superintendence with a consequent improvement on the significant streetscape.
PA/06908/22	Triq l-Ispirtu Santu c/w, Triq San Franġisk, Żejtun	The site in question is located within the UCA of Żejtun, and its footprint is shown as occupied in the 1914 Ordnance Sheet. The building is located at a corner within a very traditional context, characterised by properties built to similar style and proportions. The site has been subject to previous permit PA/02223/21, in which the Superintendence objected to the garage's opening. Site inspection carried out by SCH officers confirmed the significant vernacular value of this building, which retains various traditional building techniques. These include an austere facade with a traditional opening, double-thickness walls, ceilings borne on beams, kileb, masonry arches and xorok. The application initially proposed extensive demolition and redefinition of internal spaces. Following intervention from the Superintendence, the proposal was revised to allow the retention of thick walls and several vernacular features, such as the marbat within the garden and the cantilevered stairs on the first floor. Additionally, the revised proposal ensured the reuse of the building for contemporary use whilst protecting and valorising the heritage values of the building.



Facade of vernacular building in Triq l-Ispirtu s-Santu c/w Triq San Franġisk, Żejtun.

РНОТО: SCH



Traditional external staircase in property in Triq l-Ispirtu s-Santu c/w Triq San Franġisk, Żejtun. _{РНОТО: SCH}



Detail of internal spaces of property in Triq l-Ispirtu s-Santu c/w Triq San Frangisk, Żejtun.

PHOTO: SCH

PA number	Site	Comments
PA/06971/22	Triq il-Kbira, Ħal Qormi	This project entailed the extension of a full floor and another receded level to an already existing three-storey residence. The Superintendence expressed reservations about the increased volume, because of its proximity to the historic Qormi Armeria which is a Grade 1 scheduled monument and the UCA boundary. Consequently, the applicant decided to withdraw the application.
PA/07289/22	Triq is-Sellum, Rabat (Għawdex)	The proposed development originally requested extensive demolition and alterations of a vernacular building located within an ODZ area within the limits of Rabat (Għawdex). The Superintendence insisted on a more sensitive course of action resulting in a completely revised proposal that minimised the interventions on the historic fabric, and which is more compatible with the vernacular character of the property whilst permitting contemporary residential use.
PA/07466/22	Misraħ ir-Repubblika, Ħal Tarxien	The building subject to PA/07466/22 is located within the UCA of Tarxien with its footprint shown as occupied in the 1912 Ordnance Sheet. The building is just 5 meters opposite the Parish Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady of Tarxien, which is a Grade 1 scheduled monument. Part of the building in question is also scheduled at Grade 2. A site inspection carried out by SCH officers confirmed the exceptional architectural and historical value of the property, which warrants appropriate treatment to ensure the protection of its cultural heritage values. The property includes an ornate main door, double-thickness walls, ceilings borne on masonry arches, a stone staircase, a 'birth room' and a large formal garden at the rear side. Initial concerns expressed by the Superintendence regarding proposed design elements on the façade and the increase in massing and volumes given the property's immediate proximity to the church were addressed by appropriately. Excavations in the garden area were also rethought to protect the historic well. Final drawings were recommended positively subject to archaeological and restoration monitoring and a suitable bank guarantee.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Annual Report 2023

Site PA number Comments



Facade of building in Misraħ ir-Repubblika, Tarxien.

РНОТО: SCH



Detail of internal spaces of building in Misraħ ir-Repubblika, Tarxien.

Fontana

Triq tal-Għajn & Triq PA/07494/22 was submitted to carry out alterations and additions off, Trejqet ix-Xagħri, to a building of high-quality vernacular architecture characterised by traditional spaces articulated around a courtyard in the UCA of Fontana. Close collaboration between the Superintendence and the project architect achieved high-level solutions that preserve the building's values while also adapting it to modern living requirements. The final project successfully integrated the property's traditional features, whilst the new addition was designed to preserve the traditional profile of the building and minimise any adverse impact on the surrounding context.



Detail of door overlooking garden of building in Misraħ ir-Repubblika, Tarxien.

РНОТО: SCH



Detail of facade of building in Misraћ ir-Repubblika, Tarxien. РНОТО: SCH



Site

Comments



Facade of vernacular building in Triq tal-Għajn, Trejqet ix-Xagħri, Fontana. РНОТО: SCH



Detail of internal spaces of building in Triq tal-Għajn, Trejqet ix-Xagħri, Fontana. РНОТО: SCH

PA/07645/22 and

Triq Pawlu Inguanez, Rabat, Malta

These two separate applications for new apartment blocks are located in the Area of Archaeological Importance of Rabat and Mdina, and close to the Urban Conservation Area, the Roman ditch and the Chapel of the Nativity of Our Lady (Kappella tal-Għeriexem). In one case, the Superintendence successfully engaged with the project promoters to eliminate rock cutting (in view of the archaeological sensitivity) and to significantly reduce the proposed volumes in view of their negative visual impacts on the views towards the chapel and its immediate context. The other case was withdrawn by the applicant following the Superintendence's objection.

PA/03497/23

Malta International Airport, Area off Apron 7, Airport, Luqa

The original proposal requested the backfilling of a large void space within the Malta International Airport grounds. Proper documentation and research highlighted that the site forms part of an extensive underground military complex dating to the British period used for the storage of fuel during WW2. The Superintendence objected to the loss of this heritage space and the application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant.

PA/07494/22

PA/06285/23

Built Heritage Monitoring

Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate

The Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate (BHRI) within the Superintendence continued with its role of monitoring the conservation and restoration of the built heritage in line with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act.

A further qualified conservator was engaged with the BHRI in 2023. Additionally, an officer from the Heritage Planning Consultation team who is qualified in art history and cultural heritage management with significant experience in conservation practices has joined the BHRI to replace a warranted conservator within the Inspectorate that moved to the newly set up Archaeology Conservation Lab team. The BHRI now consists of seven professional officers, all specialised and conversant in the built heritage and cultural heritage conservation practices, supported by an administrative assistant and is supervised by a senior manager.

Responsibilities outside the team's remit are now integrated within the Archaeology Conservation Lab's core function. These include participation in the European Standards for Conservation and Restoration (CEN Standards) and in the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS) as well as the operation of the first-aid conservation lab for archaeological artefacts. The embryonic but strategic role in the conservation of small-scale built heritage monuments that require rapid intervention and mobilisation, usually as a result of vandalism, damage or rapid deteriorating conditions have also shifted to the Archaeology Conservation Lab team.

The main business functions of the BHRI are to:

- 1. provide professional assistance to the Superintendence related to restoration practices of built heritage;
- Method Statements (RMSs / WMSs) during

- the consultation stages of the planning development application process;
- 3. formulate and communicate to the Planning Authority the development permit conditions (including Bank Guarantees) to ensure that the built heritage is safeguarded during development;
- 4. monitor restoration works. This includes the monitoring of trial patches before cleaning works commence and periodical monitoring to ensure works are in line with the approved methodology;
- 5. provide professional assistance to architects during restoration - for instance when changes to the approved methodology and plans are required.
- 6. Ensure the documentation of updates on progress of restoration projects.

Review of Restoration Method Statements/Works Method Statements

The number of Restoration and Work Method Statements (RMSs and WMSs) assessed by the Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate in 2023 has increased over the previous year (2022) and even surpassed the number of statements assessed in

In 2023 the combined number of RMSs and WMSs assessed increased by 15% to 1,382 compared to the 1205 processed in 2022. This increase reflects, in part, the number of Irrestawra Darek grants for the restoration of scheduled buildings and within Urban Conservation Areas that is financed and administered by the Planning Authority. However, when considering that there was a general drop in the quantity of development planning applications during 2023, in comparison to the previous year, this increasing number of RMSs and WMSs assessed indicate (1) 2. assess and review Restoration and Works a growing interest in development applications involving heritage buildings and (2) increasing level

of assessment by the Superintendence to ensure best practices in the rehabilitation and restoration of heritage buildings.

The number of RMS/WMS submitted for assessment by the BHRI has also increased significantly in relation to the previous year (+15%) notwithstanding that there was a decline in the amount of development planning applications. This scenario is mostly attributed to having more applications that involve alterations and interventions in heritage buildings and the Superintendence exercising better control of such interventions to ensure the integrity of the historic fabric.

Reflecting the increase in the number of RMS/WMS assessed by the Superintendence, the number of inspections carried out in connection with the monitoring or restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings has also increased again

substantially. In 2023, the Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate conducted 2,933 inspections to monitor restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings (including major projects); an increase of 25% when compared to the previous year (2,350 inspections). This is the result of a conscious effort by the Superintendence to increase the frequency of restoration monitoring inspections to ensure better adherence to permit conditions and restoration best practice.

The Superintendence processed 180 cases of recommendations to the Planning Authority for the release or withholding of restoration compliance bank guarantees and Irrestawra Darek grants associated with restoration works. This is a decrease of 26% over the previous year when 243 requests were processed. This decrease is a result of a lower number of RMSs and WMSs processed in 2021 and

Table 7: Statistics covering 2018 - 2023 in relation to built heritage restoration

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Review of Restoration and Works Method Statement (RMSs + WMSs)	1209	1323	1601	1327	1205	1382
Built heritage monitoring site inspections	883	1091	2102	1819	2350	2933
Release of Bank Guarantee and Irrestawra Darek Grants	99	335	226	384	243	180

Surveillance and Enforcement

As part of its regulatory function and in keeping with its role at law, the Superintendence is also responsible to carry out surveillance to ensure the protection of the cultural heritage which may come about:

- by officials of the Superintendence during the implementation of their duties;
- further to accidental archaeological discoveries made during works carried out that may impact on the cultural heritage;

• in response to third party reports from the public or police informing of damage (or threat of damage) to the cultural heritage.

Any of the above situations necessitate a site inspection and may require direct enforcement by the Superintendence. Where necessary, the Superintendence issues a 'Conservation and Protection Order' or a 'notification to stop works'. Subsequent imposition of conditions or measures to safeguard the cultural heritage may follow. Depending on the nature and circumstances of the infringement the Superintendence may liaise

One (1) Conservation and Protection Order (for the emergency repair of the niche of Our Lady of the Assumption and rural room at Ta' Buqana) issued in late 2020, has been executed during 2023 with the intervention of the Restoration Directorate.

The Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate handled 48 cases in support of the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority and carried out a further 6 cases of enforcement action and/ or direct suspension of works (excluding routine

suspensions during restoration monitoring) on its own steam. Most of these cases have been concluded satisfactorily except for a few ones where remedial measures are still ongoing. Several emergencies and infringements were avoided by early detection by the Superintendence's vigilance, pre-empting damage.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

Best Practice Cases (Restoration Monitoring)

The following are a selection of major restoration cases that were monitored by the Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate during 2023.

Table 8: Selection of major restoration cases monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Inspectorate in 2023

Site	Locality
Good Shepherd Convent	Balzan
Notre Dame Wall and Gate, Cottonera Lines	Birgu
Villa Overhills	Birżebbuġa
St Helen's Curtain Wall and Gate, Santa Margherita Lines	Bormla
St Nicholas Curtain Wall, Cottonera Lines	Bormla
Former Wembley ice-cream factory façade	Gżira
Old Railway Station	Ħamrun
St. Philip Band Club	Ħaż-Żebbuġ
Boiler Wharf	Isla
Fort Ricasoli	Kalkara
Corradino Old Power Station at Hibs Rugby Pitch	Kordin, Paola
Ras Ħanżir Polverista	Kordin, Paola

Site	Locality
Il-Knisja Parrokkjali l-Qadima Tas-Salvatur	Ħal Lija
Għammieri Experimental Farmhouse	Ħal Luqa
St Thomas Tower	Marsascala
Ex-RAF Air Craft Hanger	Marsaxlokk
Medieval Fortification Wall and Greeks Gate	Mdina
Casa Gourgion	Mdina
Torri Qalet Marku	Naxxar
Ex Raffles discotheque	Pembroke
Villa Frere	Pietà
St John Cavalier, Ċitadella	Rabat, Għawdex
Niche of Saint Paul	Rabat, Malta
Ta' Buqana Niche and Rural Room	Rabat, Malta
Villa Luginsland	Rabat, Malta
Balluta Buildings	San Ġiljan
Adelaide Cini Institute	Santa Venera
Wignacourt Tower	Santa Venera
Chapel Building as part of the Ħal Ferħ Complex	Mellieħa
St Agatha's Tower	Mellieħa
Various niches around Malta and Gozo	

The Superintendence would like to highlight the Statues at St Augustine Square, Rabat, Għawdex following examples of best practice restoration which were carried out under the monitoring of the Built Heritage Restoration Inspectorate.

A set of four limestone statues located on the parvis of St Augustine's church in Rabat, Għawdex were restored in early 2023. The statues suffered from

flaking paint, powdering, and deterioration because their pedestal was covered by a cement-based render. The restoration works consisted of the removal of flaking paint, the consolidation of powdered areas in the statues, affecting plastic repair and repainting in stone-colour lime-based renders.



Statue of St Augustine in Pjazza Santu Wistin, Rabat (Gozo).

Niche of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ħal Tarxien

This beautiful niche of the Annunciation of Our Lady was sculpted in the 20th Century, and it is located on the façade of a private residence next to the Parish Church of the Annunciation in Tarxien. This niche forms part of the National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands inventory number 2043. The Niche of the Annunciation was commissioned by Salvu Portelli, designed by Manwel Buhagiar, and sculpted by Franku Faure in the Baroque style. The niche and statues were suffering mainly from flaking paint and pollution. The restoration works involved the removal of oil paint, consolidation of the stone surface and the reapplication of a limebased colour to serve as a protective layer. The existing colour scheme of the niche was in different shades of pink and the statues were painted in white.

During the cleaning process, it was noted that the statues and the niche were painted on multiple occasions in different colours. However, none of the colours were enough to determine which colour scheme was the original, therefore a neutral lime-based colour scheme was adopted. The restoration works were undertaken under the supervision and direction of the restoration monitoring team within the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.



Niche of the Annunciation of Our Lady in Tarxien.

PHOTO: SCH

Wembley ice cream factory

The former Wembley ice cream factory designed by Antonio Grech Dimech, is a fine example of pre-war industrial architecture expressed in the Art Deco style. The façade was built in *franka* stone and was completed in 1937.

The approved works entailed the dismantling of the original façade and reinstating it at the centre of the new project. Under the surveillance of the BHRI, the old, deteriorated paint on the facade was removed by hand tools and each stone block was meticulously mapped and numbered, dismantled, and carefully rebuilt. After the reinstatement of the façade, a

macroporous lime-based render was applied and painted in neutral lime-based stone colour to serve as a protective layer.



Restored facade of Wembley Ice Cream Factory.

РНОТО: SCH

Ta' Buqana Niche and Rural Room

The niche and rural room are situated in the limits of Rabat and Mosta along the Ta' Bugana Road. The rural room was originally roofed over by stone slabs being supported by corbels (kileb). It was left abandoned, and the roof had eventually collapsed. This room also serves as a base for a niche with the statue of Our Lady (il-Madonna tar-Raġġi) encased within the southern wall. A stone scroll beneath the niche, refers to Bishop Labini who was bishop of Malta between 1780 and 1807, signifying that both the room and niche might have been erected sometime between these dates. The restoration works, carried out by the Restoration and Preservation Department, restored the structure of the room as well as the niche. The collapsed roof was reinstated with a new deffun layer applied to avoid rainwater from percolating into the room. Stone replacement was carried out particularly along the very deteriorated niche whilst other areas were plastic repaired, and joints were re-pointed. Evident shrapnel marks were restored and retained.



Niche at Ta' Buqana I/o Mosta and Rabat (Malta).

PHOTO: SCH

Mdina Fortification Wall and Greeks Gate

The curtain wall that overlooks the small square upon entering Greeks Gate (also known as Bieb il-Gharregin) in Mdina is one of the few visible stretches of the town's fortifications which may have once formed part of the medieval defences. This wall was later grafted into the Baroque fortifications works carried out by François Mondion, the Order's resident engineer, in the early 18th Century. Significant traces of masonry possibly dating to Late Antiquity or the Byzantine period survive along most of the lower sections of the wall, although further studies are required to determine whether these are original in situ blocks or reutilised at a later period. Most of the remaining inner medieval wall lies behind houses that are situated along Inguanez Street in Mdina. The upper sections of the wall are characterised by small medieval stone blocks with some areas having been clearly rebuilt or repaired in more modern times. The restoration of this wall was proved to be an interesting challenge as this feature has both archaeological and architectural heritage values. The works were carried out by the Restoration and Preservation Department limited to light cleaning, uprooting of vegetation, and consolidation and plastic repair of

deteriorated stonework. Stone replacement was kept to a minimum whilst old historical plaster was retained with any new necessary pointing carried out with a receded finish to allow for the legibility of the stone block size.



Mdina fortification wall and Greeks Gate.

РНОТО: SCH

Farmhouse at Ta' Landrijiet, limits of Rabat, Malta

This farmhouse overlooks Wied il-Busbies in Rabat and is of evident heritage value because of its antiquity, construction typology and architectural style. This rural structure, which was found to be in a ruinous state having lost most of its roof, was granted a development permit to be rehabilitated into a dwelling. The Superintendence has recognised the superior cultural heritage value of this building from early stages and was in favour of the proposal as this provided the right opportunity to safeguard it. The Superintendence engaged extensively with the project's architects to make sure that the rehabilitation and conservation works treat the remains of the building as archaeological material culture rather than as purely architecture. The original elongated structure was retained in its entirety whilst later accretions that are not significant to the heritage value of the building were dismantled manually. The oldest core of this rural structure consists of a mix of random and ashlar construction with pointed arches and a buttress along the façade. The restoration works were limited to the re-pointing of the internal and some of the external areas, and

consolidation of the main historic fabric. The new roofing is an independent steel extension in view that it was difficult to understand the original roofing technique and form as this was mostly lost. This steel structure was sensitively designed to create a delicate contrast with the original fabric whilst retaining its full legibility.



Farmhouse at Landrijiet I/o Rabat (Malta).

РНОТО: SCH



Internal detail of farmhouse at Landrijiet, l/o Rabat (Malta).

Il-Knisja Parrokkjali l-Qadima Tas-Salvatur, Ħal Lija

The Old Church of Our Saviour served as the Ħal Lija Parish Church for almost a century, from 1594 to the end of the 17th Century. Like other early sixteenthcentury churches in Malta, it originally consisted of a long rectangular nave, roofed over with a fine barrel vault supported on arched ribs. Towards the end of the 16th Century, it was enlarged with the construction of a transept across its east end. The church is currently being restored externally by the Restoration and Preservation Department. The project mainly focuses on the cleaning and repointing of the external facades, replacement and repair of several broken elements. Currently, analysis of traces of paint on the two Renaissance portals is being carried out to establish whether they were originally painted so as to be able to decide on the final restoration render of the façade.

Torri Qalet Marku, Bahar Iċ-Ċaghaq, Naxxar



Torri Qalet Marku, Baħar iċ-Ċagħag, l/o Naxxar.

PHOTO: SCH

Torri Qalet Marku is one of the thirteen watch towers built by Grand Master de Redin and is situated a few hundred metres away from the Torri tal-Għallis, along the coast of Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq. Built between 1658 and 1659, this tower is externally built in coralline limestone (tal-Qawwi) which is weather resistant,

and whilst the inner wall is globigerina limestone (tal-Franka). Torri Qalet Marku is currently under the Guardianship Deed between the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and Din l-Art Helwa. The restoration project is fundamental for the stability of the south-facing façade which is suffering high levels of deterioration since the latest restoration carried out in 1997. Other conservation works are still being carried out on the other sides of the tower, following the minimum intervention approach involving minimal cleaning and repointing of open joints.

The Old Hamrun Central Railway Station, Triq il-Ferrovija, Ħamrun

The Hamrun Central Railway Station was part of the historic Malta Railway system, consisting of a single railway line from Valletta to Mdina-Mtarfa, and which operated from 1883 to 1931. The Hamrun Station, which was re-developed and enlarged in 1904, was given to the 1st Hamrun Scout Group in 1968. The Station Building is a one-storey stone masonry building constructed in franka stone and roofed over with stone slabs borne on steel beams. It has been recently restored under the surveillance of the Superintendence. The restoration works are aimed at increasing the legibility of the station building in its heyday, between 1904 and 1931. A meticulous and detailed chromatic stratigraphic investigation has been undertaken to retrace the numerous paint layers that have embellished the station over the years. Based on the historical information and the paint stratigraphy, it has been possible to identify the latest colour scheme applied to the building, when serving as a railway station, and best evokes its memory as railway station.



64 <<< Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

Restoration Projects carried out by or with the direct support of the Superintendence

British period underground water junction inspection chamber, Ħal Lija

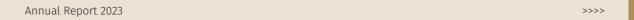
The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a report late last year that a British period water inspection chamber next to the Tal-Mirakli Church in Hal Lija has been destroyed after apparently an identified vehicle crashed into it. This feature is an important historic landmark from the late 1890s that served as a junction or 'maksar' in Maltese to veer piped water from the Fiddien towards Hal Lija or Hal Balzan. The Superintendence immediately inspected the site and liaised with local authorities to cordon and secure the area and sought the professional assistance of the Public Works Department to restore back the historic chamber. Public Works Department (PWD) architects and masons were deployed to the site and remedial works were undertaken in collaboration with the Superintendence's architects and conservators. The works consisted in classifying all masonry blockwork and to reassemble them in their correct positioning. All blockwork was reused and erected to the original stereotomy of the structure. A new timber aperture was also installed to complete the installation. The Superintendence would like to extend its appreciation to all officials of the Public Works Department involved in this work for their professionalism.



British-period underground water junction inspection chamber. РНОТО: SCH









In 2023 the Superintendence signed the renewal of commitment to the maintenance and protection of Din l-Art Helwa, thereby securing a decade-long Table below.

11 guardianship deeds with cultural heritage NGO these sites. The comprehensive list is provided in the

Table 9: List of Guardianship Deed Renewals signed with Din l-Art Helwa in 2023

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian
Qalet Marku Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Għallis Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Red Tower / Santa Agatha Tower)	Mellieħa	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Wignacourt Tower	San Pawl il-Baħar	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Mamo Tower	Marsaskala	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Santa Maria Tower	Għajnsielem	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Dwejra Tower	San Lawrenz	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Santa Maria Battery	Għajnsielem	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Msida Bastion Cemetery	Floriana	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Our Lady of Victory Church	Valletta	Din l-Art Ħelwa
Wied Iż-Żurrieq Tower	Qrendi	Din l-Art Ħelwa





Signing of renewal of Guardianship Deeds with Din l-Art Helwa.

PHOTO: SCH

Status of Guardianship Deeds

Guardianship Deeds up till the end of 2023, whilst which is still pending. Table 11 shows the list of requests for Guardianship

Table 10 below shows the status of the signed Deeds made to the Lands Authority, feedback for

Table 10: List of signed guardianship deeds as at end 2023

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Year of Signature
Qalet Marku Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Għallis Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Red Tower / Santa Agatha Tower)	Mellieħa	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Wignacourt Tower	San Pawl il-Baħar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Mamo Tower	Marsaskala	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Santa Maria Tower	Għajnsielem	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Dwejra Tower	San Lawrenz	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Santa Maria Battery	Għajnsielem	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Msida Bastion Cemetery	Floriana	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Lascaris War Headquarters Complex	Valletta	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2009 / renewal in progress

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Year of Signature
Couvre Porte Barracks (10 rooms at lower level) and underlying WWII shelter	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2011 / renewal in progress
Our Lady of Victory Church	Valletta	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2011 / Renewed 2023
Wied Iż-Żurrieq Tower	Qrendi	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2013 / Renewed 2023
Fort Rinella	Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Madliena Tower and adjacent structures, Room off Mediterranean Street and Bridge and Weir	Pembroke	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Tower at Triq il-Wiesgħa	Xagħjra	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Three World War II Pill Boxes: Reserve Post R15 (Naxxar), AB1 Beach post (Mellieħa) and RAO beach post (Kalkara)	Naxxar Mellieħa Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Notre Dame Gate	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
St Thomas Tower	Marsaskala	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016

Table 11: List of requests made to the Lands Authority for which feedback is still pending

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Chapel of San Mikiel is-Sanċir
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Australian Bungalow
Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	Renewal & additions	Saluting Battery & Lascaris War HQ Complex, Valletta
Heritage Malta	New request	Tarxien Temples Complex
Heritage Malta	New request	Fort Delimara - Fort and Ditches
Heritage Malta	New request	Roman Baths
Heritage Malta	New request	Auberge de Provence (National Museum of Archaeology)
Heritage Malta	New request	Għar Dalam
Heritage Malta	New request	Tas-Silġ Archaeological Complex

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Heritage Malta	New request	Vilhena Palace (National Museum of Natural History)
Heritage Malta	New request	Ta' Ħaġrat Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	Ta' Skorba Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum
Heritage Malta	New request	Kordin III Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	Ħaġar Qim Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	<i>Mnajdra</i> Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	Domus Romana
Heritage Malta	New request	St Paul's Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	St Augustine's Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	Abbatija tad-Dejr Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	Palace State Rooms (Grandmaster's Palace)
Heritage Malta	New request	Palace Armoury (Grandmaster's Palace)
Heritage Malta	New request	Vendome Bastion (War Museum)
Heritage Malta	New request	Inquisitor's Palace
Heritage Malta	New request	Fort St Angelo
Heritage Malta	New request	Ex-Naval Bakery (Malta Maritime Museum)
Heritage Malta	New request	Gozo Museum of Archaeology
Heritage Malta	New request	<i>Ġgantija</i> Temples Complex
Heritage Malta	New request	Gran Castello Historic House
Heritage Malta	New request	Old Prison
Heritage Malta	New request	Ħaġra ta' Sansuna

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Heritage Malta	New request	Ta' Kola Windmill
Heritage Malta	New request	Old Armoury, Nature Museum and offices
Heritage Malta	New request	Fougasse
Heritage Malta	New request	Madonna del Pilar Chapel
Heritage Malta	New request	Borġ in-Nadur Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	Ta' Bistra Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	Auberge d'Italie (MUŻA)
Ramblers Association of Malta	New request	<i>Il-Mitħna l-Qadima </i> Jesus of Nazareth Windmill
Gabriel Caruana Foundation	New request	Ta' Ganu Windmill / Il-Mithna tal-Maħlut
Heritage Malta	New request	Torri tal-Kaptan
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Qbajjar Battery / It-Torri tal-Qolla l-Bajda
Heritage Malta	New request	Torri San Luċjan
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Razzett tax-Xitan
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Il-Palazz l-Аћmar / Wied Musa Battery



Advice to Government and Entities

The Superintendence provided valuable policy guidance to Government and public Entities in the cultural heritage sector, replied to Parliamentary Questions, and provided feedback to investigations by the Ombudsman.

Governing Committee - Electronic Vehicles **Charging Infrastructure (MEEE)**

The Superintendence has actively contributed in the inter-governmental committee for the Electronic Vehicles Charging Infrastructure headed by the then Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise (MEEE). This committee is entrusted with the steering of the rolling of this critical national infrastructure. The Superintendence's role is primary to advise where and how charging points can be installed without affecting cultural heritage assets such historic centres and the surrounding buildings, as well as areas of archaeological importance. The Superintendence also advises on issues of the design and installation requirements of certain charging points to safeguard issues of cultural heritage.

Inter-Ministerial Committee - Accelerated Permitting for Renewable Energy Projects (MPWP & MEEE)

The Superintendence has also participated extensively in the inter-ministerial committee set up in 2023 and entrusted with developing a policy and permitting framework for renewable energy projects. The role of the Superintendence in this committee, which is 2023 was headed by the Ministry for Public Works and Planning (MPWP) & the Ministry for Environment, Energy and Enterprise (MEEE), is to advise on new policies and procedures that ensure the safeguard of cultural heritage from any possible impacts resulting from renewable energy projects both at land and at sea. Concurrently, the Superintendence collaborated with the Department of Classics and Archaeology (Maritime Unit) at the University of Malta in mapping the underwater cultural heritage to guide the siting of potential offshore renewable energy projects. The Superintendence has also contributed to the National Policy Framework for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy Generation spearheaded by the MEEE.

Registrar to the Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage provides technical assistance to the Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi as Registrar. As Registry, the Heritage Planning Consultation team handles most administration support duties to the Bord including:

- 1. Handling all communication with applicants;
- 2. Handling general queries from applicants/ non-applicants;
- 3. Preparing information material publication;
- 4. Assisting the Board in its functions, including interviews:
- 5. Attending board meetings;
- 6. Organisation and presentation of all data.
- 7. Vetting of applications.

Following the processing of applications by the Registry on behalf of the Board, five (5) applicants were granted the warrant to practice the profession of Conservator-Restorer in 2023. In addition, the Board received and processed applications for the registration of persons having a Heritage Skill as per Article 32(2) of the Cultural Heritage Act. These skills include the application of a heritage trade or craft, knowledge, custom, art, technique and skill as have been developed and safeguarded, whether through tradition or instruction, and having a conservation context. It is augured that upon the successful consideration of the Board, these persons will be registered as having one or more Heritage Skills in the upcoming year.

European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) on Restoration and Conservation

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage continued participating in the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) for Restoration and Conservation under the aegis of the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) in 2023. The Superintendence is collaborating with the University of Malta (UoM), the Restoration Directorate, the Planning Authority and Heritage Malta in the drafting and compiling of European Standards for restoration and conservation. Together with the other entities, the Superintendence provides its expertise to this international endeavour to achieve a holistic, comprehensive and unified regulatory framework and common terminology for cultural heritage conservation across the European Union.

The Superintendence collaborated on the following standards for conservation of cultural heritage:

- Investigation and monitoring of archaeological deposits for preservation in situ:
- Specifications for the management of movable cultural heritage collections;
- 3. Finishes of built heritage investigation and documentation;
- 4. Procedures for the analytical evaluation and selection of cleaning methods for porous inorganic materials used in cultural heritage.

Projects

OCTAI – An MDIA Financed Project

The Superintendence has concluded OCTAI, an AIcentric project funded by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority spearheaded by the Superintendence with the essential backing of Spazju Kreattiv and with the support of its research partners Culture Hint and Culture Venture. The Superintendence is interested in developing and promoting scientificallysound research in the sustainable use of historic sites, and in exploring ways how to increase access and attendance to these often-challenging places. The scope of the project is to develop a transferable methodology combining the use of AI and audience development techniques in the cultural tourism sector using Spazju Kreattiv, Malta's national arts centre in Valletta as the research subject. This project specifically sought to increase the daily footfall inside Spazju Kreattiv which is housed at St James Cavalier in Valletta. Culture Venture designed and implemented surveys outside Spazju Kreattiv as part of the audience development efforts, whilst Culture Hint used its FlowHint monitoring devices to monitor people flow outside of Spazju Kreattiv, to make use of its forecasting algorithms to predict the flow in advance, and its optimising engine to implement shifts outside *Spazju Kreattiv* to convert non visitors into visitors. The results indicate that the methodology developed during this project has led to a successful discernible increase in the visitation rates proving the viability of the use of advanced technology in the valorisation of cultural heritage.

EU Funded Projects

During 2023, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage established a new team to manage Policies and European Funded Projects. One of the key projects included BCThubs: Blue Culture Technology Excellence Hubs in EU Widening Member States (https://bcthubs.eu/).

The Superintendence initiated its collaboration in this project to promote innovative technologies

which are to be developed to support underwater cultural heritage in terms of scientific research, accessibility, and valorisation, through Blue Culture Technology. Commencing on 1st January 2023, the project will continue for a duration of four years and will conclude in December 2026. The overall EU contribution was €4,997,562 provided through the European Union's Horizon 2021-2027 Research and Innovation Programme under the HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ACCESS-04-01 (Excellence Hubs).



BCThubs Partners from Greece, Bulgaria and Malta during Plenary Meeting held in November 2023.

PHOTO: BCThubs

As a partner, SCH was awarded €373,125 for the four-year duration of the project which is being led by a consortium involving fifteen partners from Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, and Malta. These partners involve research entities, public authorities, NGOs, and Research & Innovation Small and Medium Enterprises with the aim to provide support and innovative solutions and products for the sustainable protection, restoration, valorisation, management, and promotion of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

As a Work Package Leader, the SCH is tasked with the establishment of the BCT Hubs within Greece, Bulgaria and Malta, by developing robust stakeholder ecosystems, engaging future partners, and promoting the activities and research capabilities of the Hubs. Beyond the term of the project the objective will be to involve other countries to set up Hubs and provide cutting-edge scientific and innovative solutions and

76 <>< Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

products in areas of sustainable Blue Economy and Culture. This will empower maritime clusters and networks, public authorities, and other key actors to boost Blue Culture Technology within the Mediterranean and across Europe.

Several technologies and solutions will be generated through this project including:

- opto-acoustic survey modelling & reconstruction of the seafloor;
- Digital Terrain Models and photomosaics integrated with remote sensing;
- high resolution electro-resistivity supporting underwater archaeological research;
- shallow water sediment coring;
- underwater navigation and positioning;
- Digital Twining models of underwater cultural heritage sites;
- health & safety services and capabilities related to the diver's physiognomy;
- services for improving on-site and remote accessibility to cultural heritage.

These technologies will assist in the monitoring of sites for degradation and looting, creation of methods and technologies for underwater restoration and conservation, establishment of Knowledge Awareness Centres across the three countries and beyond, and use of virtual and augmented realities for enabling remote accessibility to these sites.

Throughout 2023, the Superintendence began the process of engaging several stakeholders within the Blue Culture Technology sphere to assist in the establishment of the Malta BCT Hub. Several key milestones and subtasks were identified to accomplish this which include the development of a stakeholder register, detailed stakeholder mapping and the implementation of an endorsement campaign. The work throughout this year culminated in a report which was submitted to the granting authority in December 2023 for review and included the Research and Innovation (R&I) Strategy for the three

Hubs, a discussion on the stakeholder landscapes within each of the three Hubs, and a presentation of the proposed endorsement campaign. Results obtained from both the stakeholder mapping and the endorsement campaign were also presented and updates throughout the duration of the project will be completed to include additional details and developments.

The aims of this project and its results will aid in the Superintendence's ongoing work to safeguard, promote, research, and valorise the numerous underwater archaeological sites. This project will provide a springboard for SCH to collaborate further with other entities in projects to develop innovative strategies and technologies to preserve cultural heritage.

The Superintendence is also a collaborating partner and stakeholder in the ART4SEA: Inspiring Change for a Healthy Ocean project, awarded through the CREA-CULT-2022-COOP scheme and co-funded by the European Union (https://art4sea.eu/).

ART4SEA promotes the interdisciplinary collaboration between creative professions, scientists, and digital technology experts, with focus on the engagement of citizens. The aim of this project is to marry these three disciplinaries to showcase the Mediterranean Sea, while engaging people to change their relationship with the ocean and act individually and collectively. Artwork designed by candidates will be selected to be stationed underwater in selected areas around Malta in areas that are deemed accessible and appropriate, encouraging appreciation of our seas, with the involvement of the Superintendence.

Years Years



European Archaeology Days

Once again, the Superintendence coordinated a number of events in conjunction with European Archaeology Days, a yearly celebration of archaeology in all of its aspects, a programme led by France's Ministry of Culture and co-ordinated by the National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research. The Superintendence collaborated on a number of events with Heritage Malta, including tours and workshops. The key event was organised at the

Salina Nature Reserve in collaboration with Birdlife Malta and Heritage Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit. Visitors were allowed to experience underwater themed VR as well as seeing first-hand the processing of archaeological material recently discovered in the area. Themed lectures and tours of the salt pans were also provided. The event was free of charge.



EAD 2023 Event at Salina.

PHOTO: SCH

European Heritage Days

Following a gap of some years, since 2020 the Superintendence, in its role as National Coordinator for European Heritage Days continued to participate and promote this event. The Superintendence was present for meetings held for National coordinators in Vienna and in Strasbourg. In 2023, Malta celebrated EHD on the weekend of the 6th to the 8th of October and a total of 11 events were registered in 2023. The Superintendence is proud of the fact that the

largest cultural event on the Island – *Notte Bianca* – was for the first time registered as an EHD event. In 2023 a number of new partners joined the EHD initiative, namely the Floriana Local Council, Birdlife Malta, Queer Tourism Malta and the Valletta Design Cluster, whilst established partnership with Heritage Malta was continued. With such a range of partners, the programme was vastly varied and covered all aspects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

80 <<<< Annual Report 2023 >>>>

Freshers' Week

In 2023, the Superintendence, participated in Freshers' Week held in various educational institutions such as Gian Frangisk Abela Junior College and MCAST. Officers with various educational backgrounds, provided information to students about the work carried out by the Superintendence and also provided an insight about what career opportunities are available in the cultural heritage sector.



SCH officers at MCAST Paola Freshers' Week.





SCH officers at MCAST Mosta Freshers' Week.

PHOTO: SCH



SCH officers at Junior College Freshers' Week.

РНОТО: SCH

Educational Outreach and Mentorship

In 2023, the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team led a number of educational and mentorship activities. In April, Year 10 students from Savio College, who are following the subject of Applied Archaeology, visited the Superintendence offices. They participated in an information session on the work of the Superintendence and the professions in the Cultural Heritage sector. This was followed by a hands-on archaeology activity at the Superintendence laboratory, where the students learnt how archaeologists treat different materials which emerge from archaeological sites. St Paul's Missionary College also participated in a similar event where younger children visited the laboratory and spoke to the archaeologists from the Archaeology Research and Investigation Team, and other teams at the Superintendence.

Further educational opportunities were extended to the students of the Department of Classics and Archaeology from the University of Malta. Students who were following a specific study-unit "Principles of Conservation", as part of their BA studies, required hands-on practical work on archaeological objects. The students, under the supervision of Superintendence conservators and archaeologists, learnt how to document an object through photography, how to assess the conservation state of the object whilst keeping in mind the archaeological context it came from, and how to carry out preliminary cleaning on the pottery vessel. This activity was a great opportunity for the students to become more familiar with archaeological artefacts and gain confidence around archaeological objects. The Superintendence laboratory has carried out

these practical sessions on several pottery vessels from sites excavated in previous years and which are currently being studied to be incorporated in a major publication (details provided in a separate section of this report). When the students' session was completed, Superintendence conservators continued working on these objects, so that they can be analysed and documented in full in the future, whilst ascertaining they are in a stable condition.



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