

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI
SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Foreword

Welcome to the Superintendence's Annual Report for 2025. The report highlights the entity's achievements and milestones during another busy and fruitful year for the entity, the national regulator for cultural heritage.

The Superintendence continued exercising its duties and functions diligently through various operations. Through the Heritage Planning Consultation Unit and the Restoration Monitoring Unit, the Superintendence continued its engagement with development planning applications, roadworks and other projects, whilst monitoring restoration works on built heritage. The year under review saw some decrease in the workload, namely in view of the reduction in planning applications received. However, there was more engagement in direct involvement in emergency works and heritage impact assessment evaluations.

The workload of the Archaeological Monitoring Unit continued at a relatively steady pace, reflecting the same engagement of the previous year, whilst the Archaeology Research and Conservation Team continued its direct involvement in archaeological fieldwork in both Malta and Gozo. The Conservation Lab within the premises has become a very busy hub for the delicate cleaning, conservation and documentation of archaeological artefacts, which increased during the year under review due to the featuring of the artefacts in a publication.

Apart from terrestrial archaeology, the Superintendence increased its presence in maritime archaeology – inspection of known sites, as well as monitoring of works, and direct involvement in underwater investigations, as well as holding stakeholder meetings with diving clubs and clean-up NGOs.

As the National Repository for the Cultural Heritage Inventory, which function is also an electoral manifesto measure, the Superintendence continued its efforts populating further the inventory, whilst recording digitally each listing. During the year under review, just over 300 new entries were included in the inventory ranging from prehistoric archaeological sites to second world war defences and modernist buildings. All the entries are plotted onto the GIS system and are available to the public through the Superintendence's website. Alongside the inventory, all newly discovered archaeological sites and remains are also plotted and made publicly available.

With regards to the movement/import and export of cultural heritage, which the Superintendence exercises control over, the year under review experienced a decrease in the cases reviewed by the Superintendence. Yet, the team increased its presence in the monitoring of both physical and online auctions, as well as the restoration of movable cultural heritage.

The major milestones of 2025 were the finalisation and launching of the publication entitled 'The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, 20 years of discoveries 2003-2022', commemorating the first 20 years of the entity. The publication takes readers on a journey through the history of the Maltese Islands from an archaeological perspective. This publication is not to be seen as the end, but merely the beginning for similar publications on archaeology as well as other projects carried out by the Superintendence. The launch of the book was also a successful event

2025 was also a successful year for educational outreach and events. In fact, the SCH organised the 19th annual meeting of the European Heritage Heads Forum, with the subject revolving around the Convention

for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe, also known as the Valletta Convention, marking the 30th anniversary when it came into force. The event saw a total of 48 heritage heads and delegates coming together for this two-day meeting.

The entity continued its investment in the employees and the strengthening of its departments through an internal promotion exercise that saw the successful filling of a number of middle-management vacancies, together with other posts that arose during the year. It is being planned that further recruitment, both internal and external will continue throughout 2026.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated staff, stakeholders, and partners whose unwavering support and commitment have been instrumental during the past year.

January 2026



Kurt Farrugia

Superintendent of Cultural Heritage

01

Archaeology

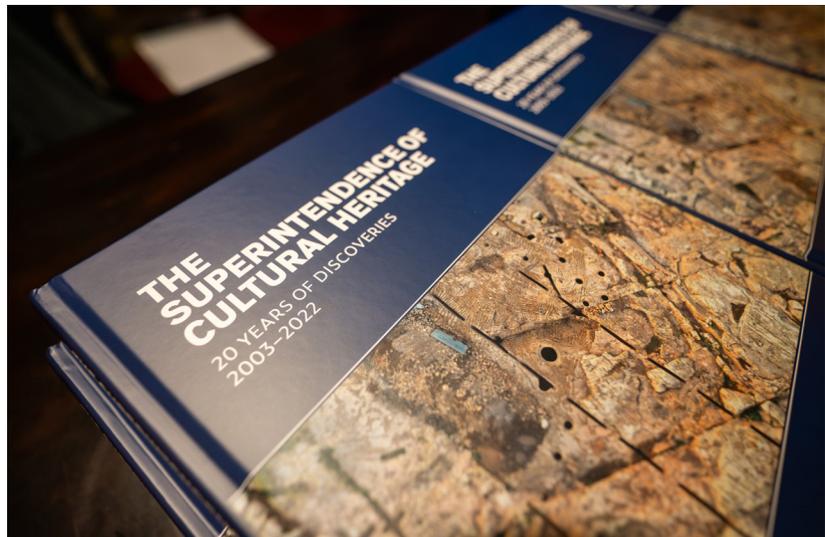
Research, Archaeology and Conservation

Introduction

The Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team strives to promote, support, conduct and collaborate on archaeological research projects. The team actively intervenes during development-led excavations and collaborates on research investigations. It further promotes archaeological discoveries and methods through publications and diverse outreach programmes throughout the year. Post-excavation and conservation fall under the team's remit, ensuring that material culture is properly treated to facilitate analysis and ensuring their preservation for future generations.

20-year anniversary publication

This year marked a milestone in the finalisation and launch of the 20th Anniversary publication. During this year, the team worked on the final editing of the manuscript, completed the digitisation of plans, and finalised the preparation of the photographs for publication. The final version of the book was completed in October, and the book was launched on 3rd December 2025 at an event hosted by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage at the Malta Society of Arts in Valletta. During the event, the team presented



Book published by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in 2025 to commemorate 20 years since its establishment.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

highlights of the major discoveries made through development-led excavation in the last two decades, spanning from the Quaternary period to the Modern Era, and emphasised the importance of these discoveries as crucial to the Maltese archaeological repertoire, and the need for further research. In parallel, the Superintendence's Geographic Information System (GIS) interface, was updated to ensure the integration and organisation of spatial data related to the sites included in the 20th Anniversary book.

Other Publications

In February, the team submitted a paper to the *Quaderni della Società Siracusana di Storia Patria*, titled, "Catacombs and Hypogea of the Maltese Islands: an update from the last 20 years of discoveries from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage". In this paper, the team reported on hypogea and catacombs discovered in the last two decades by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, including hypogea discovered on College Street in Rabat (Malta; GRD2007), a funerary complex found at St Paul's Missionary School in Rabat (Malta; AGT2016), hypogea found on Triq Għajn Qajjet, Rabat (Malta; QAJ2015 & GQJ2020), tombs identified at the Bulebel Industrial Estate in Żejtun (BLB2012), at the Safi Aviation Park (Hal Safi; KRW2010) and Triq

Taž-Żebbiegħ in Hal Kirkop (KKP2021). The paper presents first observations on the commencement and subsequent development of these funerary spaces, adding new data on Late Roman hypogea and catacombs on the Maltese Islands, and providing more secure dating, charting their development.

Editorial work continued to be carried out this year on a forthcoming publication in collaboration with the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government. It will detail the outcome following a seminar held in 2022, during which strategies for the development of a Malta National Research Agenda for Cultural Heritage (NARCH) were discussed. The publication, which is currently in the final stages of preparation, is earmarked for completion early next year.

The proceedings of a workshop on development-led archaeology organised by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in February 2025 (see below) are currently being prepared. This edited volume will present work carried out by Registered Archaeology Monitors, showcasing significant themes in development-led archaeology and important discoveries made. The proceedings are earmarked for publication in the first quarter of 2026.

Research Projects

In May 2025, the team applied for a research grant under the joint Xjenza Malta – *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* (CNR) call, “SPIRE: Seed Grants for International Research Programme 2025.” The call was successful, and funding was allocated to support a joint research project titled, “Cooperative and innovative research in ceramic exchange - a multidisciplinary framework for production technology and provenance in Roman Maltese pottery (CIRCE).” Together with our Italian partners from the CNR, beginning in January 2026, we will be launching an archaeometric programme during which we will be scientifically studying Maltese Roman pottery from selected key sites in Malta and Gozo, which will help us better understand Maltese ceramic production during the Roman period, and reconstruct trade networks across the central Mediterranean. The project will also include training of Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officers in portable non-invasive technologies for onsite analysis, and we will be instructing our Italian colleagues on the geological formation of the Maltese Islands and sharing knowledge on Roman pottery traditions. Together, we will work not only on achieving new scientific data which will add new knowledge on Roman Malta, but also towards community engagement and heritage valorisation.

Another research project commenced this year, titled, “Genomic analysis and environmental adaptation in the prehistoric western Mediterranean”, is being carried out in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy. Radiocarbon dating and aDNA analysis are being carried out on prehistoric human remains recovered from key sites discovered through development-led archaeology to better explore the interplay between biological and cultural variation in prehistoric populations, with an emphasis on human-environment interactions during the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. For this project, ancient human remains from five recently excavated prehistoric burials, discovered during development-led projects, were carefully selected for radiocarbon dating and aDNA analysis, and were studied and documented before sampling was carried out.

Throughout the year, the team further supported eight external research projects, proposed by students, academics and external researchers, through the evaluation of project proposals and the finalisation of research agreements granting access to archival records and associated material culture stored within the depository of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Of significant interest is the gradual increase in research requests made for the application of scientific analyses.

Archaeological Fieldwork

The Research, Archaeology and Conservation team actively led and participated in four excavations during 2025 (see Table 1), which included both development-led interventions and research investigations.

A total of 678 intact artefacts and 1,570 ceramic fragments underwent conservation treatment at the SCH laboratory during 2025. The intact artefacts cover a range of materials, namely ceramic vessels, metals, glass objects and stone artefacts. Most of the conservation was carried out on artefacts related to the 20-year anniversary publication mentioned earlier. Additionally, over 60 digitised conservation reports were compiled this year.

Table 1: List of sites excavated by the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team in 2025

Site	Locality	Type of intervention
MCA2025	Xaghra, Għawdex	Development-led excavation
MRN2018	Marsaxlokk, Malta	Development-led excavation
BDJ2024	Bidnija, Mosta, Malta	Research-led excavation
TMB2025	Baħrija, Rabat, Malta	Evaluation and excavation

At the end of July, the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team participated in an archaeological investigation at Ta' Lablab, in Xaghra, Għawdex (MCA2025). The intervention formed part of a wider holistic archaeological evaluation intended to assess the full archaeological potential of the area, which had already been subject to investigations in 2012. SCH representatives were present on site to assist the archaeology monitors currently conducting the investigations under the direction of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

Excavations were also carried out at the Roman rural establishment at Ta' Marnisi in Marsaxlokk (MRN2018). The team had already been present on site in previous years, where undergraduate archaeology students from the University of Malta carried out their mandatory field work. This year the team engaged at this site for over three months. The archaeological investigation involved different types of interventions, which comprised the excavation of targeted sondages and open areas to



Aerial view of the site at Ta' Marnisi (Marsaxlokk, MRN2018).

PHOTO SOURCE: QP

clarify the nature and extent of the archaeological remains, and hence inform the development project.

Excavations carried out in February and April uncovered extensive foundations of structures, large quantities of material culture and a substantial concentration of charred olive stones, which were not recorded in previous interventions carried out between 2021 and 2023 (more information on these investigations can be found in the SCH Annual Reports, 2023, 2022, 2021). Further investigations were carried out between August and October, which also required first-aid conservation interventions by the team's conservator. These new areas subject to development yielded significant primary contexts dating to the Roman use of the site. Small storage vessels were found within a mortar flooring level, while extensive ashy deposits provide evidence for the abandonment of the site.



Detail view of the small storage vessels found at Ta' Marnisi (Marsaxlokk, MRN2018).

PHOTO SOURCE: OP

Sections of *cocciopesto* flooring were also uncovered, and these required onsite first-aid interventions on two aspects: consolidation of the parts to be preserved in situ, and the safe extraction of the *cocciopesto* floors which were not found in a primary context. Furthermore, mural plaster from sections of walls uncovered during excavations were consolidated and preserved in situ. Collapsed plaster was extracted and transported to the laboratory at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to ensure preservation. The Roman horizon was heavily affected by later agricultural transformations. The archaeological investigation uncovered an extensive system of field preparation, comprising a series of north-west to south-east stone alignments, parallel to each other, whose gaps were filled with stone packing. The system appears to be functional to the agricultural exploitation of the area in the modern period. The site is currently being studied in collaboration with the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta, with the aim of carrying out specialised scientific analysis, which will lead to the publication of the excavation results.

For the second year running, the team was involved in the annual research-led excavation at the site of Bidnija (BDJ2024), which is being carried out as a joint research project between Heritage Malta, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, and the University of Malta. During this excavation,

the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team was also involved in mentoring archaeology students following the undergraduate programme in Archaeology at the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta, as this excavation also serves as a training programme in archaeological fieldwork. Archaeology students are taught best practice in archaeological fieldwork, post-excavation, and conservation practices. The site being investigated at Bidnija was part of a larger area explored in 2010 through a fieldwalking exercise, carried out jointly by the Universities of Malta and Ghent, and the

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (FHVL187). Through fieldwalking, concentrations of ancient ceramic finds were found, particularly at the location of the current investigation (BDJ2024). This site was known to have been used extensively in ancient Roman times since the structural remains, which include olive oil production paraphernalia, were discovered in the early 20th century (Docter et al., 2012; M.A.R., 1911–1912, p. 4).

Following the fieldwalking exercise, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) was carried out at the site, which revealed the presence of substantial structural remains, interpreted as a possible Roman villa, which led to



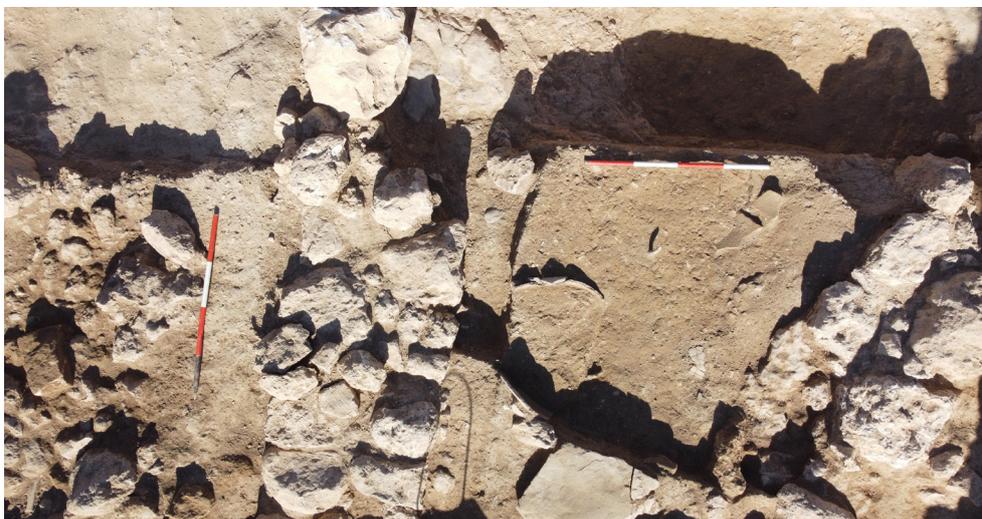
Extraction of the plaster fragments at the archaeological site of Bidnija (Mosta, BDJ2024).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

the first excavation season in 2024. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage play a key role in the project. Two of the four archaeologists in the team act as Area Supervisors, while the conservator is an integral part of the team of conservators working on the study and conservation of the extremely high amount of plaster being uncovered on site. The conservation intervention is seeing the extraction of several layers of decorated plaster from a possible collapse in one of the trenches.

This particularly high concentration of plaster was uncovered in the 2024 season and progressed in 2025. It is expected to continue in the coming seasons. The 2025 season continued to unearth more evidence on the Roman structural remains and the later use of the area. Furthermore, during this season, an intense investigation of the area where human remains were noted in 2024, was carried out, led by an Osteologist from the team. One burial with an intact skeleton was uncovered, documented and extracted, providing secure evidence that the site was used in medieval or later times for burial purposes, and strongly suggesting evidence of settlement in this area even in post-Roman times. Other areas of the site revealed more of the architectural features connected to the construction of the main Roman villa. A section of exposed wall bears evidence to the building technique, which consisted of a wooden framework or shutters to contain the mortar mixed with small sized stones.

The final excavation for this year was carried out in November, when the team excavated a Bronze Age site discovered during an evaluation in Baħrija (TMB2025). During this excavation, a substantial assemblage of Bronze Age pottery was found, most of which belong to the beautifully decorated black



Aerial view of the structural remains and deposits discovered at Baħrija (TMB2025).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

slipped Late Bronze Age Baħrija Phase. The ceramic assemblage consisted mainly of large, coarse ware storage vessels, and smaller, fine ware vessels, including dipper cups. Strap handles were also found.

The investigation revealed a primary context of objects broken in situ, probably due to the abandonment of the site. A section of a wall alignment was also uncovered in phase with the main Bronze Age deposits, potentially part of a structure. These contexts were partially disturbed by a second wall, whose construction fill appears to date to the Late Medieval period. The evidence appears consistent with the data gathered during previous excavations carried out in the 20th century by Peet in 1909 (Peet, 1910; Tanasi and Cardona, 2020) and Trump in the late 1950s (M.A.R., 1959–1960).

Conservation, Post-excavation and Analysis

Conservation, post-excavation and analytical work carried out in the laboratory over the past year has been copious. Post-excavation and conservation of material culture from five sites was completed, while artefacts recovered during excavations from another six sites are currently being processed. Post-excavation work includes the selection of material for scientific study, cleaning of artefacts, application of conservation treatments, and inventorying. This work ensures that the material culture is accessible for further study and is handled and stored appropriately pending future research. Analytical work carried out on human remains and material culture is also included in this section, which helps formulate interpretations of the sites investigated by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Table 2 provides a list of the sites which have undergone, or are undergoing post-excavation treatment; sites whose material culture has been conserved, and sites for which analytical work is being carried out.

Table 2: List of sites for which post-excavation, conservation treatment and analysis has been completed, or which are undergoing processing.

Site	Locality	Type of intervention
Prehistoric megalithic site (BĠB1922)	Buġibba, San Pawl il-Baħar, Malta	Conservation and restoration of material culture.
Prehistoric burial (KRĊ2008)	Kerċem, Ġhawdex	Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.
Prehistoric burial (QĊĊ2018)	Xaġhra, Ġhawdex	Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.
Prehistoric burial (DBD2019)	Luqa, Malta	Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.
Prehistoric burial (MLH2020)	Mellieħa, Malta	Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.

Site	Locality	Type of intervention
Prehistoric burial (GZP2023)	Xagħra, Ghawdex	Post-excavation and cleaning of the cultural material is in progress. Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.
Prehistoric burial (MCD2023)	Xagħra, Ghawdex	Osteological assessment and documentation of the human remains is partially complete.
Bronze Age pit (DAH2022)	Rabat, Malta	Post-excavation and cleaning of the material is, for the most part, completed.
Bronze Age strata (GJN2023)	Għajnsielem, Ghawdex	Post-excavation and cleaning of the cultural material is in progress.
Bronze Age and medieval strata (TMB2025)	Baħrija, Rabat, Malta	Post-excavation and cleaning of the cultural material is in progress.
Phoenician tomb (GKB2021)	Rabat, Malta	Research of the material culture and osteological remains recovered from Tomb 2 are in progress.
Phoenician tombs (QAJ2015)	Rabat, Malta	Research of the material culture and osteological remains recovered from tombs 21 and 22 are in progress.
Punic Roman tomb (QAJ2015)	Rabat, Malta	Research and conservation of the material culture recovered from tomb 1 is in progress.
Punic burial complex (SAM2025)	Birkirkara, Malta	Completed the conservation and inventory of the material culture recovered. The human remains were organised and cleaned in preparation for the osteological analysis.
Punic-Roman tomb (SMB2025)	Attard, Malta	Micro-excavation of the deposit found within two urns is in progress, allowing for preliminary conservation treatment of the ceramic urns. Cleaning and sorting of the human remains, including those recovered from the urns, has commenced, as has the osteological analysis.
Punic and Roman pits (GBO2025)	Rabat, Malta	Preliminary assessment of the material culture recovered, compilation of the inventory, pottery selection for scientific analysis, and the selection of artefacts requiring conservation is in progress.
Punic Roman tomb (VBT2021)	Żabbar, Malta	Completed the conservation and inventory of the material culture recovered.
Relics and bone assemblages from the Jesuit Church (JST2024)	Valletta, Malta	Osteological analysis and documentation are completed. Data processing is in progress.

In total, 90 artefacts (comprising ceramics, metals, and stones), including 16 crates of archaeological fragments and bones were conserved, while 44 conservation reports were digitised.

Material culture from two sites, one in Buġibba (BGB1992) and another in Żabbar (VBT2021) were fully conserved in preparation for dedicated exhibitions, and micro-excavation of an urn uncovered at Attard (SMB2025) is currently underway.

Human remains from six prehistoric sites dating to the Temple period, including KRĊ2008, QĊĊ2018, DBD2019, MLH2020, GZP2023, and MCD2023 were subject to osteological assessment and documentation. The findings were presented as a podium presentation at the “Island Legacies” Conference held in Valletta in June 2025. Furthermore, this research informed sample selection for destructive aDNA analysis and Radiocarbon Dating, in the above-mentioned project, “Genomic analysis and environmental adaptation in the prehistoric western Mediterranean”. The

material culture from GZP2023, a prehistoric burial found in Xagħra, comprising a small tomb containing human remains associated with prehistoric pottery and several vine trenches, are currently being processed.



Photo showing joining and plastic repair of a prehistoric bowl from Buġibba (BGB1992).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Photo showing the complete conservation of the prehistoric bowl from Buġibba (BGB1992).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Photo showing detailed cleaning of prehistoric pottery.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Post-excavation work and conservation treatment on the ceramic assemblages recovered from a prehistoric burial found in Luqa (DBD2019), and a Bronze Age silo-pit at Daħlet id-Dejr in Rabat (Malta) was completed. The material from the latter site is earmarked for further study. Material culture recovered from a site in Ghajnsielem in Gozo (GJN2023), which comprised rock-cut features discovered along with cultural deposits containing Bronze Age pottery, is currently undergoing post-excavation processes and conservation treatment. Post-excavation work is also being carried out on a ceramic assemblage consisting mainly of Late Bronze Age ceramics, consistent with the black-slipped, intricately decorated pottery from the Baħrija Phase. The assemblage was recovered from the recent excavation carried out by the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team at Baħrija (TMB2025; described above). Ongoing work includes a preliminary assessment of the finds to establish their current condition, together with preliminary

cleaning and sorting. Further studies on this assemblage are expected to take place in 2026. Prehistoric pottery is characterised by low firing techniques and the use of a white paste used as decoration on the engraved surface. Thus, prehistoric pottery is usually cleaned as much as possible with dry methods and using small quantities of water with the support of mechanical tools such as blades and ultrasonic scalers.

Osteological analysis and documentation, as well as the study of the material culture recovered from the Phoenician period tombs of Ġhajj Klieb (Tomb 2, GKB2021) and Ġhajj Qajjet (Tombs 21 and 22, QAJ2015), located in Rabat (Malta), continued throughout 2025. This is part of an ongoing collaboration between the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta and the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta. The excavation records and material culture from these sites are being collaboratively studied in preparation for a joint publication.

Post-excavation processing and conservation treatment was completed on the material culture and human bone assemblage recovered from the Punic tomb found at Birkirkara (SAM2021), which was excavated in 2024. The bone assemblage was cleaned and organised with the assistance of students following their MA in Archaeological Practice at the University of Malta, who worked on this assemblage as part of their coursework. Osteological analysis will be carried out in the near future. The material culture was cleaned with water and chemicals when necessary. Most of the objects were highly deteriorated and needed further conservation treatments such as consolidation of cracks, reconstruction of fragmented vessels and plastic repairs. Finally, an inventory of the finds that were recovered was compiled. The same process was finalized for the objects recovered in another Punic tomb, found in the outskirts of Żabbar (VBT2021) which started in 2024. The bone assemblage for this site is still to be analysed and inventoried.

A post-excavation and conservation project which saw the intervention of the Research, Archaeology and Conservation team focused on the Punic-Roman rock-cut tomb discovered in Attard earlier this year (SMB2025). Human remains, urns containing cremated bone and grave goods were discovered within the tomb. Assessment and cleaning of the human bones were carried out by a Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officer specialised in human osteology within the Archaeology Monitoring Team, who also carried out the recording and extraction of the remains onsite. The urns in particular, were found to require immediate conservation treatment.

To facilitate this, the urns were first pre-consolidated and the deposit in both urns was micro-excavated, to safeguard the urns and their contents. The urns are now in the process of receiving full consolidation treatment and the fragmented parts are being reconstructed.



Photo showing the mechanical cleaning of a Punic oil lamp from Haż-Żabbar (VBT2021).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Another important site was discovered in Rabat (Malta) this year, along Triq Gorg Borg Olivier (GBO2025; see also section under archaeological monitoring). Copious quantities of miniature lamps, small jars, plates and other ceramic objects were recovered. A preliminary assessment of the material culture suggests a Hellenistic date for the assemblage, which is currently being inventoried. The nature of the ceramic assemblage retrieved from a single feature found at this site suggests their use as votive offerings, however, more

investigations are currently being carried out to better understand the purpose and context of this finding.



Photo showing the consolidation of a Roman perfume bottle from Haż-Żabbar (VBT2021).

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Throughout 2025, three Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officers specialised in human osteology studied religious relics housed within the Jesuits' Church in Valletta, which was undergoing restoration work. Research comprises analysis of the relics through methods based on observation and biometrics to establish bone type, biological evidence (i.e. biological sex, age and ancestry), pathologies, and their preservation status. Human remains were also found during the restoration works, and these too are being studied. The results of the analysis will be published in a monograph dedicated to the restoration of the Jesuits' church.

Depository, Archive and Library

In 2025, a total of 130 crates containing archaeological material culture recovered by Registered Archaeology Monitors during development-led excavations were delivered to the Depository of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in Bormla. The Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team was responsible for accepting the deliveries and ensuring that the material culture was curated following standards issued by the Superintendence

of Cultural Heritage. The material culture recovered is handled and stored carefully, to ensure preservation and accessibility for research by both Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officers, and external researchers. Between the end of November and the beginning of December, the team provided access to archaeologists from the Italian Archaeology Mission, who visit the Bormla Depository regularly to study material recovered from past excavations at the sanctuary of Tas-Silġ in Marsaxlokk.

The Archive and Library fall under the responsibility of the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team. These are made accessible to Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officers for internal use, as well as to external researchers, upon the signing of a Research Agreement and General Data Protection Regulation Agreement.

Archaeological Monitoring and Discoveries

Introduction

The archaeology monitoring team at the Superintendence regulates archaeological monitoring of ongoing development works and continues to maintain a role in the management of the archaeology resource which may be discovered within development sites falling in areas of archaeological sensitivity. The team's function is not limited to the identification of archaeological features but also ensures proper documentation and safeguarding.

Archaeological monitoring is carried out by archaeologists approved to work under the direction of the Superintendence. The current team comprising six archaeologists oversees an average turnover of 400 cases at any given time. In 2025 the Superintendence issued 340 Terms of Reference for new developments to be carried out under archaeological surveillance. The team carried out 183 inspections in relation to ongoing surveillance. During 2025, archaeological watching briefs and evaluations yielded a total of 172 newly discovered or rediscovered sites, 9 of which were accidental discoveries, meaning that there was no watching brief in place for the latter. Approved archaeologists on site monitored works on behalf of the Superintendence and carried out investigation and documentation of the discoveries as directed by the archaeology monitoring team. Once this process was completed, the Superintendence adopted various mitigation measures to ensure the preservation of these features. All Cultural Heritage features are important; however, they can vary in importance between outstanding, high, medium or low. When determining mitigation matters on how to preserve these features on site, the Superintendence considers such values and in cases of high or medium value, retention is requested and approved plans are amended accordingly. In 2025, 161 archaeology watching briefs dating from 2025 as well as from previous years have been closed. This implies that all relevant documentation and artefacts have been submitted to the Superintendence and works on site are completed, resulting in a total of 163 certifications for the completion of archaeological surveillance being issued.

In 2025, the Archaeology Monitoring Team continued making use of the GIS based system to strengthen data capture and collection through this process. The archaeological features as discovered on site are plotted as individual feature points on the GIS system, and these can be viewed on the Superintendence's GIS interface.

Archaeological Discoveries

The table below shows the different types of features and discoveries made in 2025 by category:

Table 3: Breakdown of the different types of features and discoveries made in 2025 by category

Category	Frequency of features in different sites
Burial:	15
▶ <i>Shaft and Chamber Tomb</i>	7
▶ <i>Catacomb</i>	3
▶ <i>Burial Features/Spaces</i>	5

Category	Frequency of features in different sites
Engineering/Industrial:	168
▶ <i>Agricultural Trenches</i>	68
▶ <i>Quarrying/Quarrying Marks</i>	13
▶ <i>Water Management Systems</i>	80
▶ <i>Cart-Ruts</i>	7
Military:	18
▶ <i>Shelter discoveries and rediscoveries</i>	17
▶ <i>Counterscarp</i>	1
Miscellaneous:	107
▶ <i>Structural Remains</i>	15
▶ <i>Rock-cut Features</i>	28
▶ <i>Unknown</i>	21
▶ <i>Post Holes</i>	20
▶ <i>Pottery Scatter/Cultural Deposit</i>	11
▶ <i>Flooring</i>	11
▶ <i>Other</i>	1

Below is a table of the more interesting archaeological discoveries made in 2025. Details of each discovery is provided further in the report:

Table 4: Interesting archaeological discoveries made in 2025

Site	Locality
Shaft and chamber tomb and water management systems	Attard
Structural remains and water management systems	Balzan
Structural remains and water management systems	Birgu
Structural remains and archaeological deposits	Rabat, Malta
Structural remains and archaeological deposits	Rabat, Malta
Cultural deposits and rock cut features	Rabat, Malta
Cultural deposits and rock cut features	Rabat, Malta
Shaft and chamber tombs	Raħal Ġdid
Agricultural features and shaft and chamber tombs	Qrendi
Agricultural features, rock cut feature and shaft and chamber tombs	Qrendi/Siġġiewi

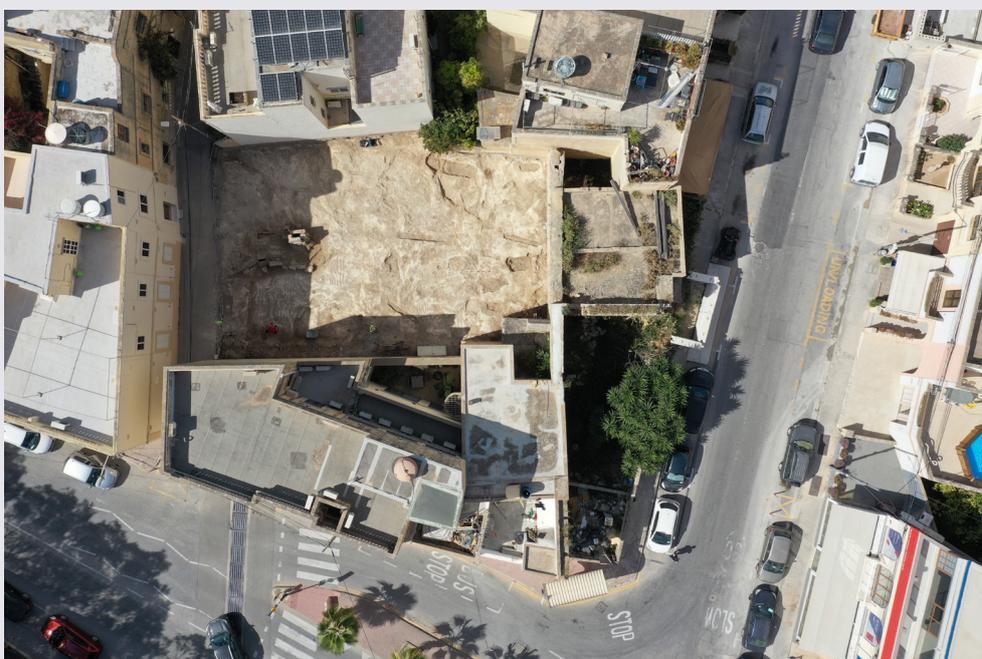
Site	Locality
Cart ruts and catacomb	Hal Kirkop
Catacomb and quarry	San Pawl il-Baħar

Shaft and chamber tomb and water management systems - Attard

The site is in the vicinity of a cluster of tombs at Hal Warda, which were discovered in the past, indicative of a possible necropolis in the area which would have been used by a community living in the area. Given this high incidence of previously recorded archaeological remains, the Superintendence requested an archaeological evaluation of the site which is subject to a development application. The evaluation revealed a combination of domestic, funerary, and agricultural features that together provide insight into the occupation and land-use practices of the area.

Apart from a late medieval room still standing on site, two cisterns and a bell-shaped well were identified having different levels of preservation. Their proximity suggests they formed part of a broader water-management system, likely serving a household or small-scale agricultural needs. A rock-cut tomb was also documented, containing a single almost complete inhumation as well as evidence of possible previous interments which were no longer very legible within the burial space.

Skeleton 1 was determined to most likely be a female, between the ages of 25 and 31. This was based on the complete fusion of all bones except the clavicles. A preliminary observation concluded that this individual appeared to have been suffering from various dental infections including abscesses and caries. Multiple ceramic vessels were found in association with this individual, as well as two simple ivory beads in association with the vertebrae of the neck, indicating that this person was buried wearing a necklace. Two urns possibly containing cremated remains were also noted within the chamber's water trench, indicating that the tomb was re-utilised in a second moment to place cremated individuals within this funerary space. An osteologist from the Superintendence's monitoring team assisted the monitors on site with the excavation of the burial chamber in view of the specialisation required.



Orthophoto of the site.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

In addition to these features, several agricultural installations were recorded, including field walls, possible tree pits, and shallow channels and agricultural trenches interpreted as irrigation or cultivation lines. These elements point to sustained agricultural activity, possibly linked to the same community responsible for the construction of the cistern. Collectively, the features reflect a rural occupational unit characterized by localised water management, agricultural production, and on-site burial activity. Further stratigraphic, artefactual, and environmental analyses will refine the chronology and functional relationships among these components.

Structural remains and water management systems - Balzan

This development site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area in the Balzan development zone and is situated approximately 12–35 metres away from other recorded discoveries which include classical period structural remains, agricultural trenches, and cultural deposits. Given that the site consisted of an undeveloped piece of land, the likelihood of uncovering similar or continuing features was high, and thus, during the determination of the development application



Inhumation and cultural material discovered within the tomb.
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

submitted for the site, the Superintendence requested an evaluation to inform the development process. The archaeology monitor opened a one-metre-wide trial trench running along the middle of the site and this trench was then excavated stratigraphically down to bedrock. This exercise revealed disturbed soil layers overlying pottery sherds, and cultural material, prompting a full archaeological investigation of the site.



Photo showing the possible dolium at the moment of discovery.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

The investigation uncovered significant features on site. An archaeological deposit showed evidence of burning and pottery, as indicated by a blackish layer with charcoal traces and pottery. This deposit was truncated by a concrete footing for the laying of a



Orthophoto showing rock cut reservoir, channel and archaeological deposits.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

foundation relating to third party activity in the past. A layer, consisting of flat and squared aligned stones, was noted on either side the concrete foundation to which plastering was still attached. This was indicative of the remains of finished space, possibly a room. Rock-cut features consisting of a cistern, channel and an agricultural trench, all possibly linked were also uncovered. The more significant cultural material retrieved from the site is large open ceramic ‘dolium type’ pot still in situ, found to be filled with charcoal and pottery fragments. These findings, together with nearby discoveries, exhibit hints of a Roman agricultural landscape in Balzan.

Structural remains and water management systems - Birgu



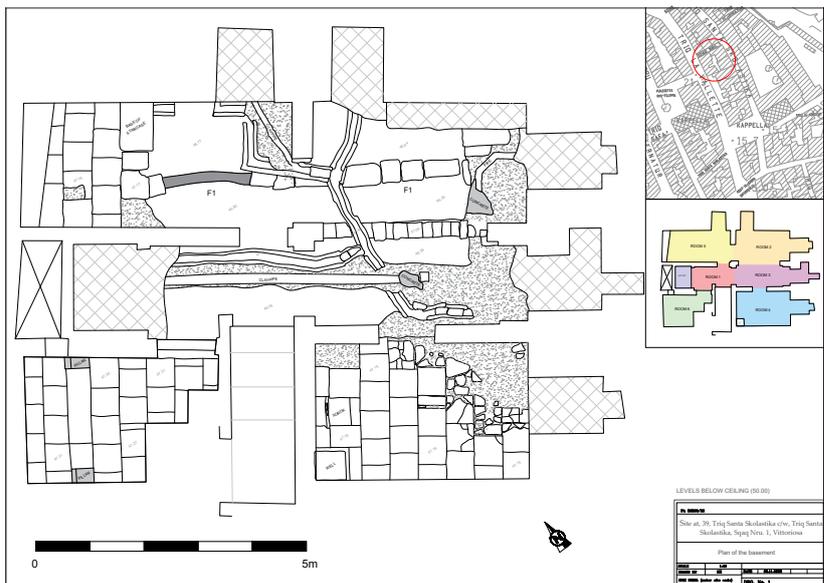
Wall composed of different sized blocks.
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

The property in question is located within the immediate vicinity of the Santa Skolastika Monastery, also within the Urban Conservation Area, and an Area of High Landscape Value. Furthermore, Birgu is designated as a Class E Area of Archaeological Importance (GH_0016). Given the above, the Superintendence imposed the development with an archaeological monitoring condition. Terms of Reference were issued and site works commenced at basement level. Breaking up of the existing tiles/ cement layer in all 6 rooms exposed a pale yellowish-brown levelling fill mixed with stone chippings. Several plastic or clay pipes were found to be present within this fill, some of which are still in use. Upon removing this fill, flagstones were exposed



View of wall and extensive culvert system.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Plan of features discovered on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

in part or in whole in Rooms 4, 5, and 6. The surface of the flagstones was found to be pickaxed and covered by a thin layer of cement. Stone culverts were found in 4 of the rooms, whilst an extensive possible water channel, partially covered with large sized stone capstones was found running across 2 rooms. A wall composed of different sized blocks of stone separating 2 rooms was also discovered. This site is very good example of urban archaeology, shedding light on the transformation of our historic centres across the early modern period.

Structural remains and archaeological deposits - Rabat, Malta (1)



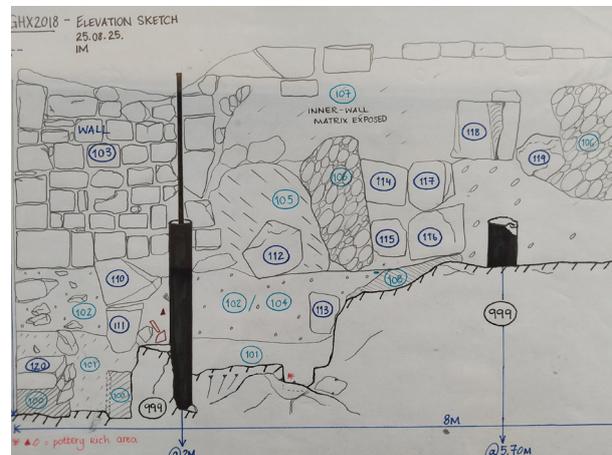
Ashlar possibly in situ discovered on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS IONA MUSCAT



Photo showing the archaeological deposits as discovered on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS IONA MUSCAT



Elevation showing the archaeological deposits as discovered on site.

DRAWING: MS IONA MUSCAT

Classical remains have been identified in a site within the Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) of Rabat. The surrounding area is characterised by a number of discoveries of structural remains and archaeological deposits pertaining to the Classical Period. Most of the site had already been investigated by 2018 whereby it was established that the site had great archaeological potential in view of the discovery of structural remains and archaeological deposits in situ. Further investigations proceeded this year to better understand the discovered features. These discoveries consisted of several deposits, one of which was particularly rich in pottery and brick. Remains of a fired clay floor, a 'stepped' feature, a short flight of stairs, and a grey layer of *cocciopesto* flooring were also discovered. Two large ashlar blocks were also found during these works, one significantly

larger than the other. The focus of this year's work is the documentation of a section over 3m in depth, containing numerous archaeological deposits, some of which are rich in material culture, and ashlar blocks which seem to make up the remains of a structure. The archaeology of this site corroborates with that of its surroundings, which formed part of the Roman urban area in Rabat.

Structural remains and archaeological deposits - Rabat, Malta (2)



General view of exploratory trenches showing exposed archaeology after detailed cleaning.

PHOTO SOURCE: MR KARL CACHIA AND MS NICOLE FAYE MICALLEF

The site in question is located within the Urban Conservation Area of Rabat and has its footprint shown as occupied on the 1968 Survey Sheet. The site is also situated within an area which is highly archaeologically sensitive, being within the: (1) Scheduled Area of Archaeological Importance of Rabat and Mdina, (2) Class A Buffer Zone of the Roman Domus, and (3) Class A SAI Buffer Zone for the Saracenic cemetery. Given the above considerations and the nature of the works being proposed, which include extensive foundation works and a reconfiguration of

the back garden area, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage requested an archaeological evaluation during the determination of the submitted development application. The relevant Terms of Reference were issued and works commenced in the back garden area. To capture as much data as possible, given the discoveries made in the adjacent sites - Saracenic burials to the Northeast and *cocciopesto* flooring and classical period remains to the East, the Superintendence directed the opening of exploratory trenches perpendicular to each other.

Excavation of topsoil commenced using a small sized excavator equipped with a toothless bucket. The depth of this deposit was found to measure 30-35cm in thickness, containing minimal quantity of material culture. Beneath the topsoil layer, a foundation cut running parallel to the Northeast boundary wall was identified. This cut was filled with a bright reddish-brown silty sand deposit with sub-angular stone inclusions. Works within the remainder of the exploratory trench exposed a homogenous dull light greyish-brown subsoil having a sandy-silty texture with charcoal inclusions. Investigation works progressed with the investigation of the subsoil.



View of foundation cut running parallel to the NE wall, stone alignment, and ashlar 'in situ'.

PHOTO SOURCE: MR KARL CACHIA AND MS NICOLE FAYE MICALLEF

The subsoil was found to be 90cm thick at the North Easternmost extent of the exploratory trench to 70cm thick at the South westernmost and South Easternmost extents of the exploratory trench. The subsoil was found to contain a small concentration of modern material culture abutting the SE third party wall, a low quantity of material culture throughout, but a significant increase in material culture (numerous amounts of pottery and fragments of *cocciopesto* flooring) within the lowermost 30cm of the deposit. Preliminary observations indicate that most of the pottery may date to the Medieval Period. Sequentially, following the complete removal of the subsoil layer, detailed cleaning ensued which revealed a number of different deposits (of particular interest a very loose greyish deposit rich in charcoal inclusions, the density of the charcoal is more concentrated in certain localised patches possibly indicating burning which occurred 'in-situ'). High concentrations of pottery, plaster fragments, stone and rubble alignments/concentrations and in-situ ashlar wall alignments were identified in various areas of the opened trenches and possibly indicate collapsed structures. These discoveries are a reminder of the intensity of archaeological features still buried in the Rabat area, in close proximity to the surface. Investigation works are still ongoing.

Structural remains and archaeological deposits - Rabat, Malta (3)



Some of cultural material discovered during the investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Structural remains discovered within one of the trenches.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

The site in subject is located in an area where numerous archaeological structures and deposits have been discovered in the past during works. In properties adjacent to the site, archaeological deposits and parts of structures of high archaeological importance have also been discovered recently. During the consultation process, the Superintendence requested an archaeological evaluation for the proposed works at the site in subject. The results so far have provided important information to help in understanding the nature of the site. During the archaeological evaluation, a series of trenches were carried out, which exposed a significant number of structural remains, mainly in the form of ashlar and rubble alignments together with cultural deposits. The structural remains discovered are of a complex nature. The trenches have been laid out across the entire site, and positive results of structural and cultural deposits have been



Lozenge shaped tiles and CBM discovered on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

obtained throughout, indicating that the site was heavily in use and occupied during the classical period. Considerable quantities of pottery, construction building material (CBM) and lozenge shaped tiles have also been discovered within the deposits, further confirming the dating of the archaeology to the classical period. The Superintendence is currently in discussions with the architect and developer of the project for the preservation of the features as discovered on site, vis-à-vis the proposed works.

Cultural deposits and rock-cut features - Rabat, Malta



Ortophoto showing discovered features on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Images of the discovered painted ware and kylix in one of the rectangular shafts.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



One of the discovered silos post investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

The site is located within the Urban Conservation Area of Rabat, in the Area of Archaeological Importance of Rabat and Mdina and abutting a footprint scheduled at Class B and identified as a Bronze Age Settlement with the following features: silos, quarrying, cart-ruts, ancient field drainage systems, a rectangular borehole containing classical remains, bell-shaped wells and a WW2 shelter.



Images of the discovered painted ware and kylix in one of the rectangular shafts.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Further features in the surrounding area contain burial deposits and Punic structural remains. The archaeological monitoring watching brief took the form of a post permit archaeological evaluation in light of the sensitivity of the site. No archaeological deposits were discovered during soil removal. Various rock-cut features have however been discovered on site, with the most interesting features being two silo pits, void of any archaeological material, and two rectangular shafts of different dimensions. One of the shafts measuring 1.5m x 0.55 m, contained sterile material in its first half; however, the remaining deposits contained some animal bone and pottery. A deposit within the feature was also found to be containing a concentration of painted ware pottery including remains of a kylix, typical of the Punic period.



The second rectangular shaft prior to the start of the investigation and removal of capstones.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Concentration of cultural material during the course of the investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Quantities, size and variation of different cultural material discovered during the investigation of the feature.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Concentration of cultural material during the course of the investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

The 2nd shaft consists of a rectangular cut measuring 4.7m in length and approximately 0.6m in width and circa 2.5m in depth. Parts of the feature were covered with capstones. The feature is connected to a smaller rectangular cut, measuring circa 0.95m by 0.35m. This shaft was initially thought to be a water gallery due to the capstones. It has been noted that the

bedrock around the edge of the shaft was cut to form a rebate to accommodate the slabs which acted like a lid. Upon the start of the investigation of the material, fine wares such as oil lamps, cylindrical shaped ceramics, small ceramic stands and small plates were being discovered in considerable quantities.



Quantities, size and variation of different cultural material discovered during the investigation of the feature.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Rectangular feature post-investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Discussions between the Superintendence and the archaeology monitors proceeded in order to devise the best archaeological methodology to investigate the feature. During further peeling away of the archaeological layers, other objects mainly juglets and small discs were also discovered. The objects were all miniature and the extremely high concentration of material culture spanned into the thousands of pottery items and shards. A small, rolled metal object was also discovered. Works on the post-excitation of the items is still at the early stages. Nonetheless, the high number of items and their miniature nature suggests that these items were votive and ritual offerings. Works on site are ongoing; however, the Superintendence is in discussions with the architect and the developer of the project to retain and valorise these discoveries.

Shaft and chamber tombs – Raħal Ġdid

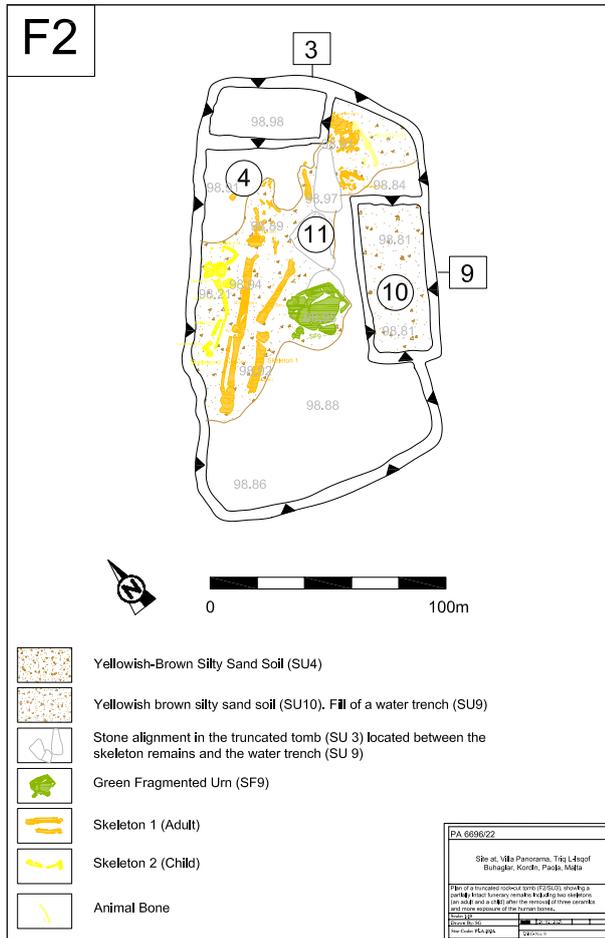
During routine archaeological monitoring of a private development in the Kordin neighbourhood of Paola, three rock-cut tombs were discovered. The site is located within the immediate vicinity of the scheduled Ġhajj Dwieli tombs. The site consisted of a 1970's building, and the tombs were found after the demolition of the building and the exposing of the bedrock. The tombs were found to have been heavily truncated in the past such that only the lower part of the chamber survives, likely due to the rapid urbanisation of the area which began in the 1950s. Within the immediate vicinity to these tombs, a number of other tombs were discovered and



Kylix discovered during the investigation of the tombs.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

excavated in the late 1940s. Only two of the tombs contained archaeological remains, one of which only consisted of approximately 20cm of the bottom edge of the rock-cut tomb chamber. Notwithstanding, within this very shallow cut, two partial articulated skeletons survived – one adult and one child, aged between 5



Plan of one of the tombs during investigation.

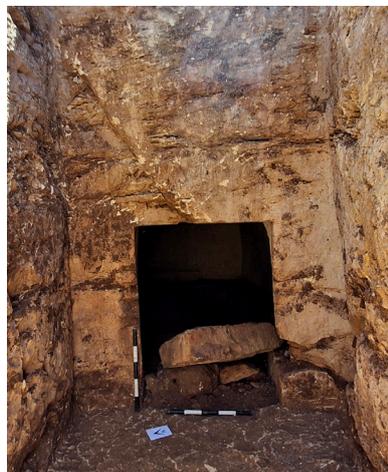


One of the chambers during investigation. PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

and 7 years. A number of ceramic vessels were also present in this chamber, including a fragmentary urn, jug and plate. Evidence of a possible food offering to the deceased was also present in the chamber, in the form of articulating animal bones exhibiting signs of butchery. The other tomb contained multiple clusters of disarticulated human bones, as well as whole vessels found in situ. Some of the notable finds included a painted kylix and beads made of glass paste. This site serves as a reminder that although a specific location has undergone intense development, the survival of intact and in situ archaeology is still possible.

Agricultural features and shaft and chamber tombs - Qrendi

During works for the extension of a farm in the limits of Qrendi, thirty-six agricultural trenches, eight postholes and two shaft and chamber tombs were discovered beneath shallow soil. There seems to be two phases of agricultural trenches in that the majority are oriented in a N-S direction whilst another two rows oriented in the opposite direction. The majority of the postholes are located adjacent to the former



Investigation of rifled tomb.



PHOTO SOURCE: MS SAMUELA BOSSINI

phase. The two shaft and chamber tombs are situated between the two different phases of the agricultural trenches, right next to each other. Both tombs have rectangular shafts and one chamber each, one located to the north and the other to the south. The first tomb investigated was found rifled and only fragments of material culture, a bead and small bones were found. The second tomb was found to have part of its ceiling collapsed. After carefully removing the debris, at least three individuals were identified however, this tomb is still to be investigated prior to the completion of construction works.

Agricultural features, rock-cut feature and shaft and chamber tombs – Qrendi/Sigġiewi



One of the tombs post-investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Roadworks were planned as part of the Sigġiewi Distribution Centre along parts of Triq Lapsi and Triq il-Mitjar ta' San Niklaw. These works involved substantial trenching work for the creation of service culverts for the laying of new Enemalta cables and resurfacing roads. During the consultation stage, SCH noted that the area contained several burials, catacombs, and scheduled sites. Since the works were set to pass through areas where rock-cut tombs were discovered in the past (NIK1910, MAR1968) and areas with other archaeological features were also

recorded (NIK1916, NKL2023), the risk of uncovering cultural heritage was high, requiring the archaeological monitoring of works.

Several discoveries were made during the course of works, namely agricultural trenches that were mostly sterile were discovered. A cylindrical shaft with footholds with a rectangular chamber cut at 2.5m depth was also identified during the stretch of works. Shaft and chamber tombs, some of which partially already truncated, and some partly outside the area of the scope of works have been discovered during works. In this area, a total of 3 shafts, 5 chambers and 1 truncated tomb have been discovered. All features have been investigated and documented as requested by the Superintendence. The deposits within the features were highly disturbed and appear to have been mostly backfill or debris from truncation during the creation of the landing strip/road. Fragments of bone and pottery objects were discovered nonetheless. Throughout the process, SCH worked closely with the archaeology



Tomb shaft leading to multiple chambers.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



One of the truncated shaft and chamber tombs during investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

monitor, developer, and architects to adjust plans. Services were re-routed to avoid tomb chambers enabling their preservation in situ.

Cart-ruts and catacomb, Hal Kirkop

During roadworks in Hal Kirkop in the Karwija Area, a catacomb was discovered. The find lies within an area already known for its rich late Roman funerary landscape. Earlier investigations connected to development projects in and around Hal Kirkop have documented rock-cut tombs and possible Christian catacombs. As works proceeded, a pair of cart ruts was identified adjacent to the catacomb. These roadworks were being monitored by an archaeology monitor approved by the Superintendence who immediately reported these

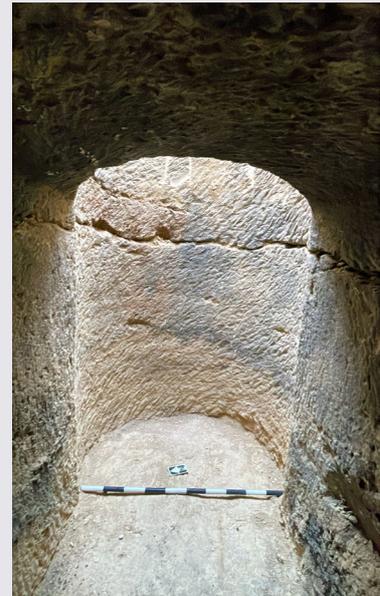


Cubiculum within the catacomb prior to investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS IVANA JERKIN ERAK



Cylindrical shaft with room at base. Photo



SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Catacomb discovered during the course of works.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS IVANA JERKIN ERAK

discoveries to the Archaeology Monitoring Team. The burial chamber is hewn in globigerina limestone and it is clear that this small catacomb had already been discovered in that it was found rifled, and part of its roof truncated. Together with the earlier discoveries, the new catacomb reinforces evidence for a sizeable rural community living in the area, using hypogea and catacombs as its principal burial area in Late Antiquity.

At present, both archaeological investigations and infrastructural works are still ongoing. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage is overseeing

the documentation and conservation of the newly exposed features, while the project design is being re-routed where necessary to safeguard the catacomb. Pending full excavation and study, the site is interpreted as an additional node within a broader cluster of late Roman and early Christian burial sites extending across Hal Kirkop and the neighbouring localities of Gudja and Żurrieq.

Catacombs and quarry - San Pawl il-Baħar

In the early 2000s, the Superintendence recorded the presence of a Classical Period Catacomb during development works in Qawra. Within this intervention the Superintendence noted that possible further burial remains were present within the adjacent site. During the



Truncated catacomb.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS CHANTAL CASSAR

consultation phase of the development application for the site in subject, this archaeological record led the Superintendence to request an archaeological evaluation, necessary to obtain information vis-a-vis any remaining features at the site in subject.

During this evaluation, two truncated catacombs were identified. These catacombs appear to have been truncated in antiquity possibly in the late Classical period. The quarry discovered is significant, with notable elements such as in-situ ashlar blocks, ashlar negative impressions and identifiable dislodging marks. To the west of the quarry features, a bell-shaped cistern and an associated channel have also been discovered.



Truncated catacomb and quarry remains.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS CHANTAL CASSAR



Cart ruts discovered adjacent to the catacomb.

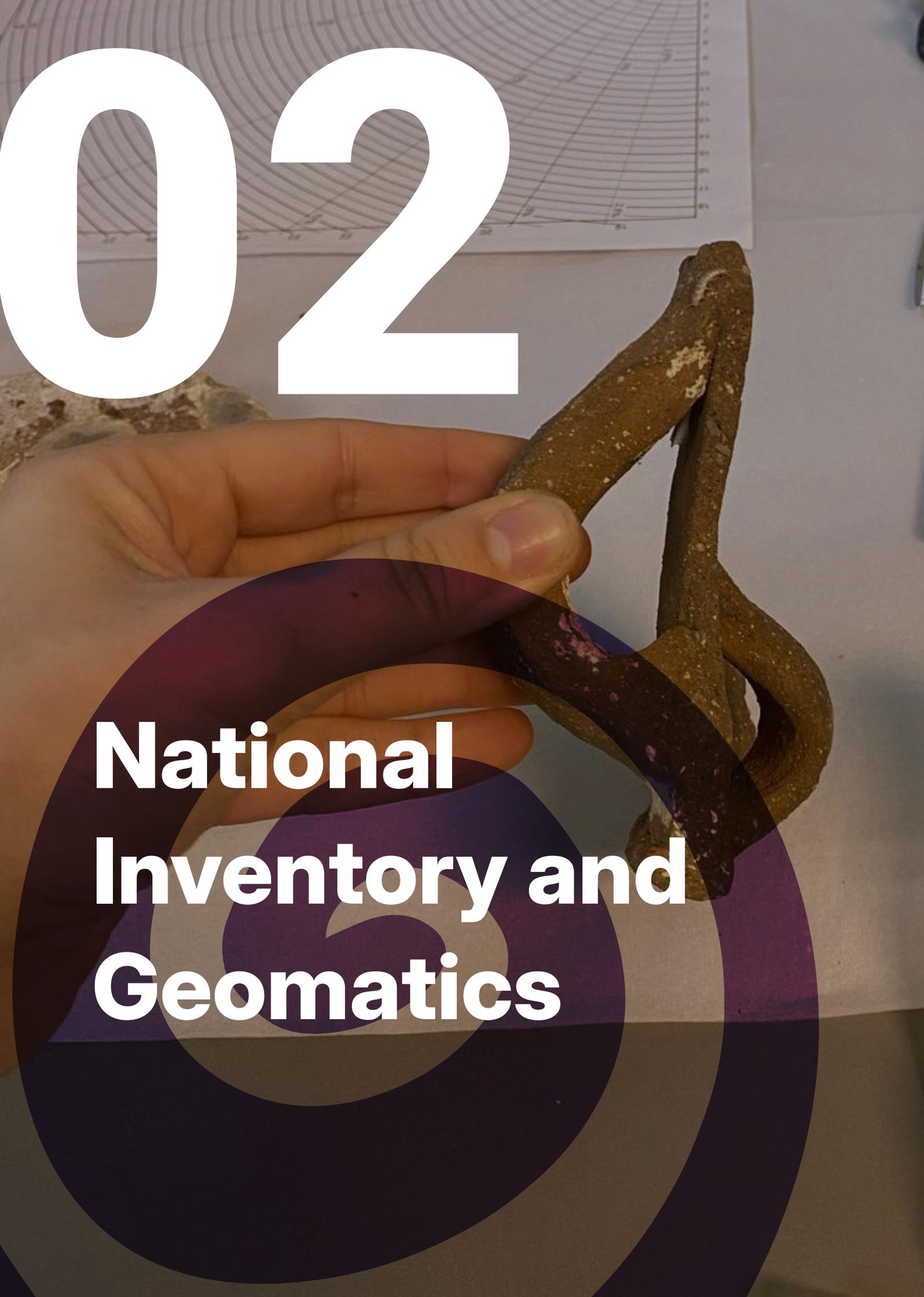
PHOTO SOURCE: MS IVANA JERKIN ERAK



Plan and orthophoto documentation of the features discovered on site.

PHOTO SOURCE: MS CHANTAL CASSAR

The Superintendence is currently in discussions with the architects and developers of this project for the preservation and valorisation of the features as discovered on site.

A hand is holding a piece of wood that has been stained with a purple dye. The wood is held against a background of a grid pattern, likely a technical drawing or map. The number '02' is prominently displayed in the upper left corner.

02

National Inventory and Geomatics

National Inventory Process

The compiling of the National Inventory for Cultural Property is an important function of the Superintendence and is in fact the entity's Electoral Manifesto Deliverable. In 2025, important progress has been marked in new additions to the Inventory. In fact a total of 302 new entries have been included in the National Inventory, consisting of 30 Modernist buildings, 49 Windmills, 14 entries within St Julian's designated Purple Flag Area (the actual amount of individual properties in St Julian's is 73, in that rows of houses were included as a single entry and Dragonara Palace included 6 individual buildings), 3 Aqueducts, 214 pill boxes with associated structures and 1 archaeological site - Latnija Cave.

In December 2024, the Tourism Zones Regeneration Agency, which falls under the Malta Tourism Authority, reached out to the Superintendence after successfully obtaining Purple Flag accreditation (an international attestation of a place of entertainment) for Paceville, St Julian's. In retaining this status, it was recommended that the Agency assesses historic buildings and cultural assets in the area, and to seek ways for its valorisation. The Agency reached out to the Superintendence on the matter, and it was agreed to collaborate on the project and as a means for such valorisation and protection, the Superintendence includes historic buildings in the area within the National Inventory. This was achieved by the end of the 2nd quarter of 2025.

The identification and inclusion of properties in the National Inventory is a continuous process which the Superintendence approaches in a thematic manner. This requires extensive desktop research, archival work and site inspections. Throughout 2025, the Superintendence has carried out extensive work in this regard as preparatory work for the inclusion of more property in the National Inventory in the coming years.

The Superintendence has also continued to work on the movables aspect of National Inventory by continuing to work on a pilot project commenced in 2022 which involves the inventorying of movable objects in its depository. In 2025, 94 items have been inventoried and in total, 1602 objects have been processed. Concurrently, the Superintendence is looking at acquiring a Collections Management System so as to manage this collection and make it publicly accessible through its website.

Geomatics

The Geomatics Team was established in 2024 to provide a more structured set-up to SCH's GIS requirements. One of the first tasks was the formulation of a management plan to identify requirements and establish priorities. In 2025, in line with the approved management plan, the team began the execution of projects focused on the continued generation of data relative to the main functions of the Superintendence so as to provide live statistics for monitoring and improvement of operations. During 2025, existing data sets continued to be updated, whilst new data sets were also created.



A shot of one of the internal statistics dashboards recording site visits carried out by several teams within the SCH.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The data sets were updated with unique entries as follows:

- ▶ National Inventory for Immovable Cultural Heritage: 336 sites.
- ▶ New Archaeological Discoveries: 402 individual features.
- ▶ New Monitoring Cases: 423 cases.
- ▶ Inspections:
 - Built Heritage Monitoring Team – 1171 inspections logged.
 - Archaeological Monitoring Team – 115 inspections logged.
 - Heritage Planning Consultations – 67 inspections logged.
 - Underwater Team – 9 inspections logged.

Dashboards were created for internal use by each team within the Superintendence, used for collection and tracking of statistics related to spatial data. These also serve to ensure consistency in the quality and accuracy of the data being generated.



Main page listing all the internal statistics dashboards available for SCH officers.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Work also started on the collection and digitisation of spatial data relating to the years before GIS was in use, in order to make sure that all records are as up to date so as to provide accurate statistics to carry out analysis. In addition to the recording of new spatial data, focus was also placed on data cleansing. This consists of making sure that all data transferred onto

GIS systems in the last two years is constantly checked for accuracy and that it conforms to best practice in terms of management of spatial data. This was done through collaboration between members of different teams within the entity to ensure a holistic development of the data.

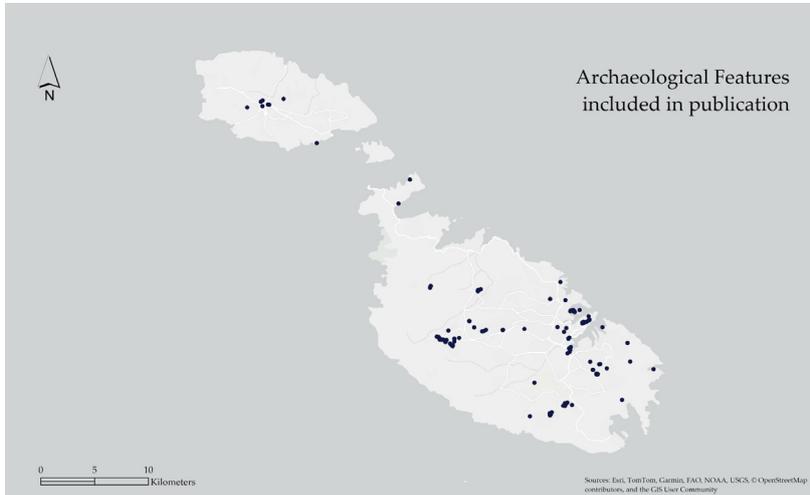
The Geomatics Team also collaborated closely with the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team to fulfil several requests by students and independent researchers for spatial data sets pertaining to individual research projects. Collaboration with several teams within the entity also took place for projects which required GIS input, such as the BCT Hubs Training School and the SCH 20th Anniversary Publication. In the case of the latter, the Geomatics team prepared 88 individual layout plans which were used in the publication to indicate site location. SCH also contributed to the preparation of documentation consisting of detailed maps for the nomination of the Harbour Fortifications of Malta as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



A map of the Grand Harbour area fortifications, forming part of the proposal to UNESCO for their inscription as a World Heritage Site

SOURCE: BASEMAP: SINTEGRAM DATA/SERVICE, (2018), DEVELOPING SPATIAL DATA INTEGRATION FOR THE MALTESE ISLANDS, PLANNING AUTHORITY

The SCH also had an opportunity to showcase the importance of the spatial data being compiled at the Public Service Expo in May 2025, with a whole day dedicated to highlighting the entity's public-facing GIS interface available on the SCH website. Part of the activity also was didactically oriented, encouraging the public to use and create GIS data, towards the use of geospatial software.



A map of the Maltese Islands indicating the location of the archaeological sites included in the 20th Anniversary Publication.

The GIS interface also underwent significant updates in both quality and quantity of available data. In addition to the above-mentioned data cleansing, two new datasets were also made available. One of them was acquired through collaboration with NGO Battlefront Malta, showing the position of several British-era defensive architectural features. The majority of these sites were also added to the National Inventory as part of the continuous effort to document

the various types of cultural heritage sites on our islands. The second set of data uploaded onto the public GIS interface shows the location of underwater wrecks and their respective buffer zones which are listed as 'Declared Archaeological Zones at Sea' in the Notice to Mariners, adding to the already vast archaeological data recorded on the interface.

The SCH continued to benefit from the MITA-ESRI Enterprise Agreement, receiving specialised GIS training for four officers and making several online training courses available to all staff. New GIS workstations were also set up internally to continue promoting the use of spatial data software in the management of cultural heritage. Cooperation and networking with other local entities continued through ESRI Community Meetings and the Malta Geospatial Summit organised by ESRI in October. Furthermore, the Superintendence has prepared a capacity review for the coming years to identify its GIS licensing and software requirements since the MITA-ESRI Agreement expired in December 2025. The requirements were essential for the negotiation for the new Enterprise Agreement which has now been agreed upon. The Superintendence has also continued to attend meetings of the Malta Geospatial Committee, of which it is a member. The Committee is tasked with the formulation of geospatial policy at a national level, data sharing on the National Spatial Data Infrastructure launched last year and is currently working on Phase 2 of the Infrastructure.

03



Movable Heritage Control

Movement of Goods

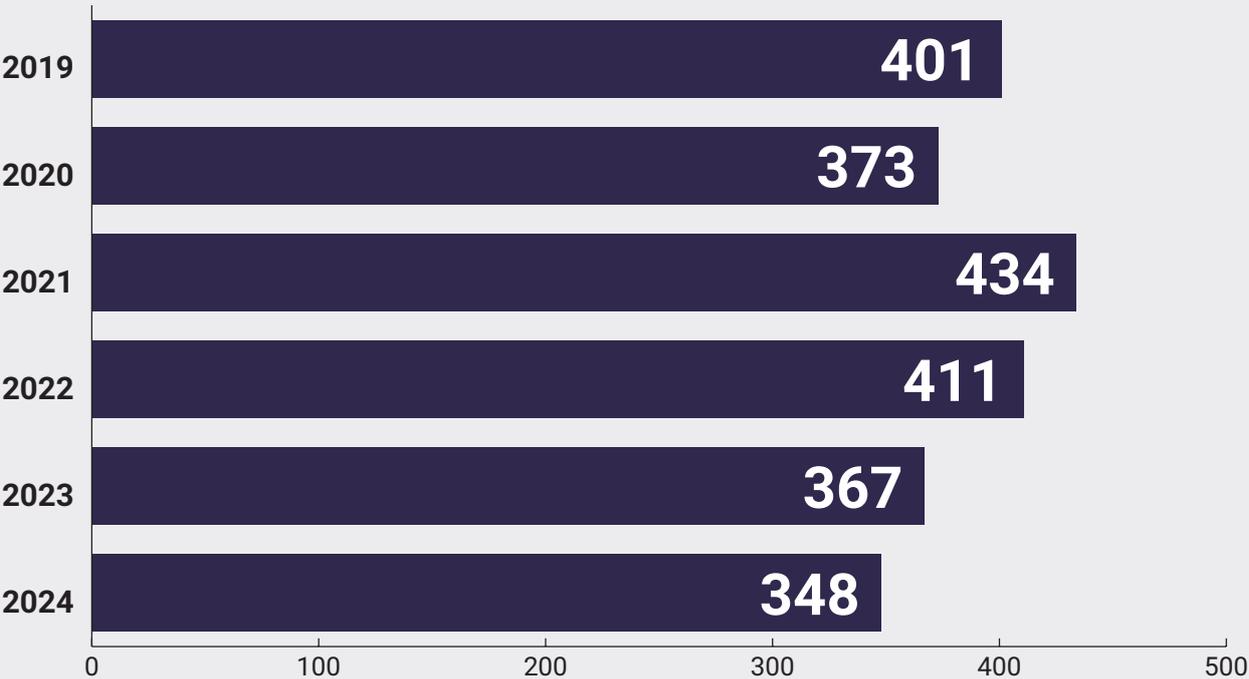
The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage regulates the import and export of cultural goods between Malta and EU Member States, as well as to and from non-EU countries. Relevant cases are referred to the Superintendence by the Malta Customs Department, shipping and courier companies, and MaltaPost. In 2025, a formal agreement was established with Malta Customs to provide weekly quantitative lists of consignments declared under Chapter 97 (Works of Art, Collectors’ Pieces and Antiques). This arrangement enhanced the Superintendence’s capacity to monitor imports not directly flagged by Customs and informed ongoing discussions with Malta Customs and the Malta Commerce Department towards the formalisation of import and export procedures. These responsibilities are primarily undertaken by three officers assigned to movable heritage, with additional support provided as required. To strengthen operational efficiency, secondary officers were trained in the relevant procedures.

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

Following established practice, the Superintendence also reviews the export and movement of “personal items” to ensure they do not include cultural heritage objects. In 2020, the Superintendence introduced processing fees for applications related to the permanent export of non-cultural personal effects, with a standard fee of €35 and a fee of €65 for express service.

In the course of 2025, the Superintendence reviewed 301 cases of export and movement, in which cases, the exporter had declared that no items of cultural heritage value were being exported. The number of cases marked a slight decrease on the previous year, 47 cases less than in 2024 (348), and 66 cases less than in 2023 (367), 110 cases less than in 2022 (411).

Figure 1: Movement of personal items (non-cultural goods) between 2019 and 2025



Export/Movement of collector's items from National Territory, outside the scope of the Cultural Heritage Act

2024 saw to the introduction of a new procedure for handling items of collector's significance proposed for export. This aimed to ensure that such items were not processed as non-cultural personal effects and that certification for cultural goods was issued only based on their merit. Five (5) cases containing over 70 items of this nature were registered in 2025.

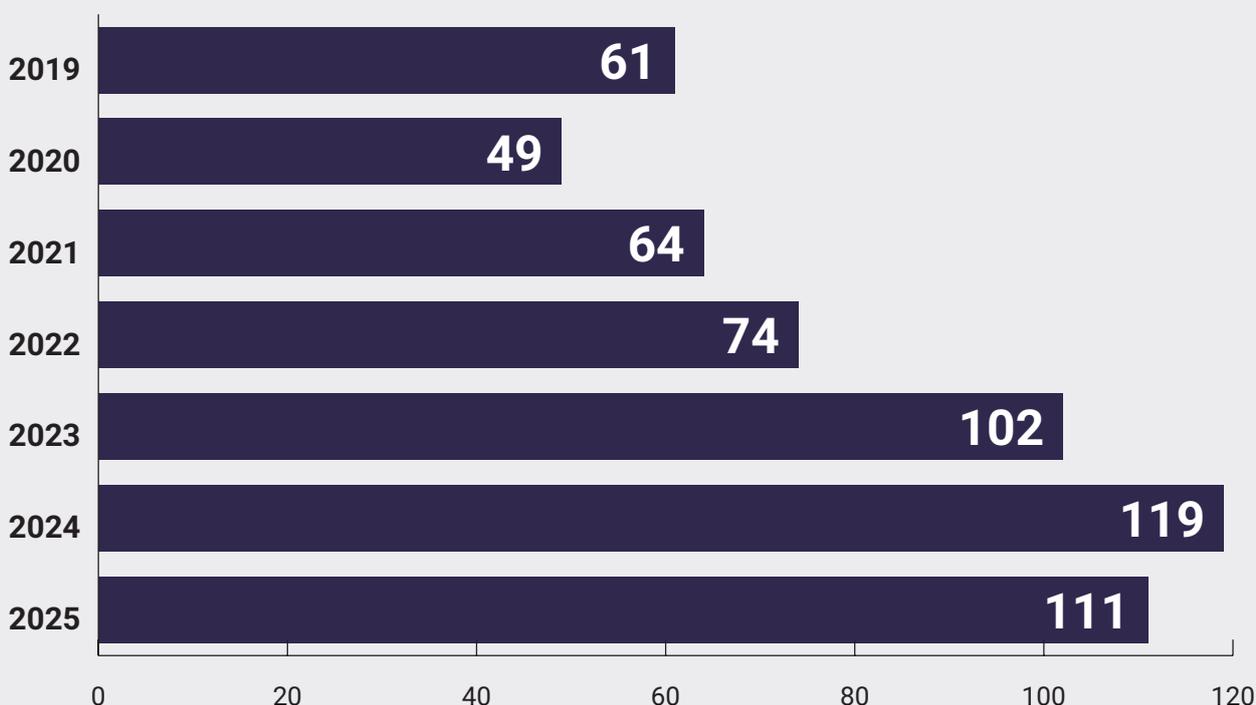
Cultural Heritage Items leaving the National Territory

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

April 2023 saw to 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. The 15% ad valorem fee is not applicable if a request for export or re-export is refused.

In the course of 2025, the Superintendence issued a total of **111** permits for the export/ movement of cultural items. Of these **111** permits, **26** cases were for the export of cultural heritage items (over **130** cultural heritage items, which included collections of silverware, prints, furniture, paintings and military armour) and **85** cases were for the export of contemporary or decorative art (over **267** modern cultural items). The majority of cases were assessed without the need for physical inspection, owing to the availability of sufficient documentation provided to the Superintendence.

Figure 2: Permits for Permanent Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2019 and 2025

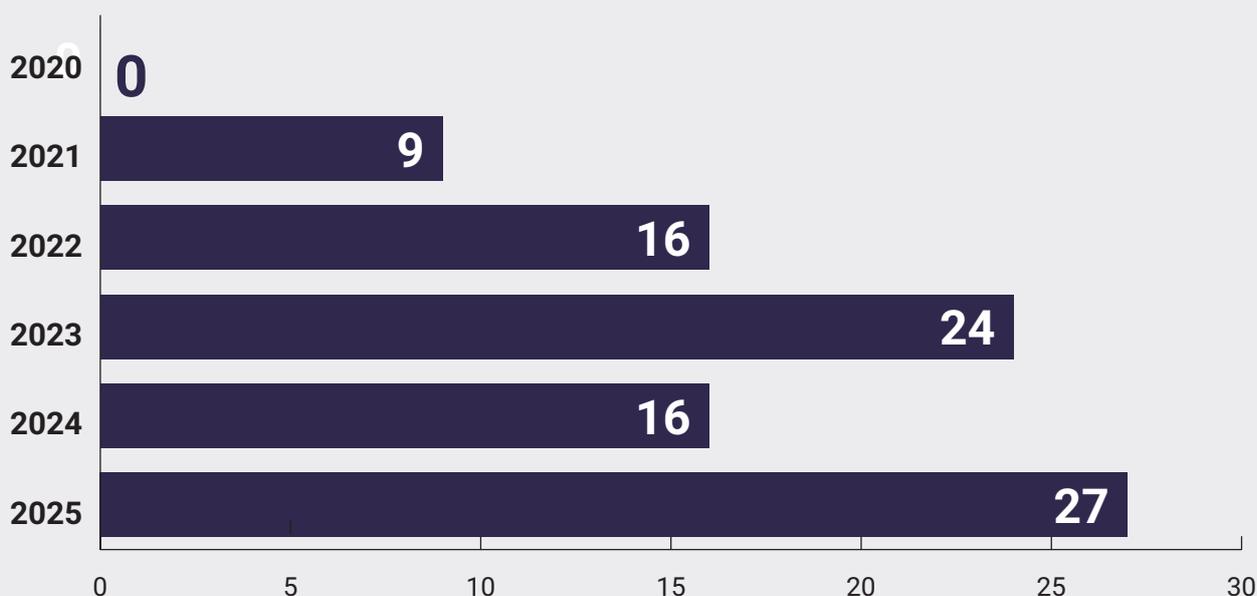


The 111 permissions granted in 2025 marked a slight decrease over permissions as issued in 2024 (**119**), an increase from 2023 (**102**), as well as those in 2022 (**74** cases), A total of **€385** in administrative charges was collected for the export of cultural goods over 50 years old, followed by the total sum of **€68,375.08** *ad valorem* fees for cases which were granted a permit for permanent export. All associated fees were waived for the permanent export of items of cultural significance intended for destructive scientific analysis forming part of academically robust research projects as approved by the Superintendence.

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 **27** permits involving the temporary movement/ export of various cultural heritage items were issued in 2025, marking an increase from the **16** permits issued in 2024, the **27** permits issued in 2023, and the **16** permits issued in 2022.

Figure 3: Permits for Temporary Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2020 and 2025



Inspection and Certification of Cultural Items Imported from Outside the European Union

As of 28 June 2025, importers are required to use the Import of Cultural Goods (ICG) centralised portal exclusively for cultural goods that fall within the scope and thresholds defined by EU Regulation 2019/880.

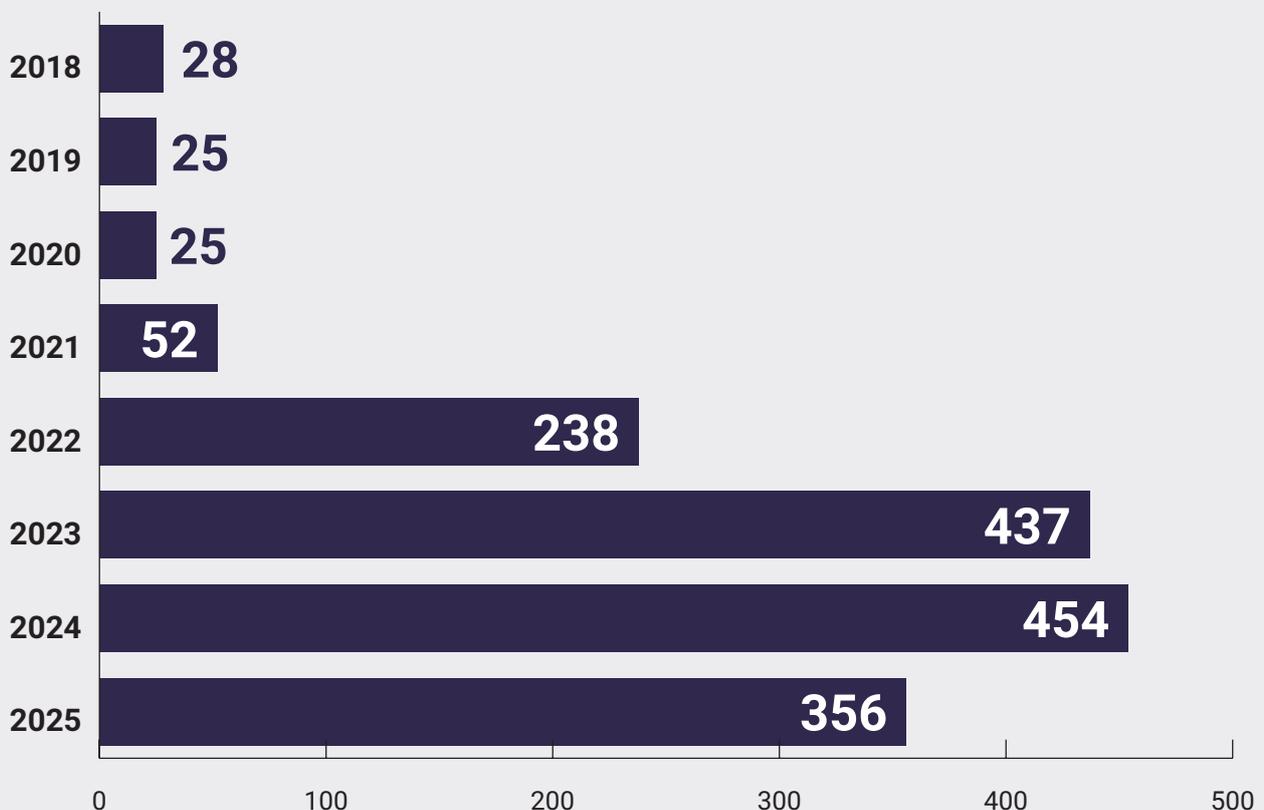
Cultural goods imported from outside the European Union that do not meet these thresholds and are referred by Malta Customs for clearance are subject to inspection in line with statutory requirements. This procedure is initiated by the importer as part of the Customs clearance process. A 5% *ad valorem* fee is applied in accordance with Subsidiary Legislation 35.03 and related Legal Notices, calculated on the value of the goods as declared and accepted by the Superintendence. The fee may be waived where the import is

undertaken for educational, restoration, or public exhibition purposes.

In 2025, inspections covered a wide variety of objects, including antique furniture, numismatic material, silverware, ceramics, etchings, military antiques and memorabilia, paintings, archaeological artefacts, and glassware.

In 2025, the Superintendence inspected and certified the import of **356** referred cases involving cultural items, comprising over 800 individual objects. This represents a decrease to the **454** consignments inspected in 2024 and 437 in 2023, and a significant increase from the **238** referred consignments in 2022. An additional 196 cases were referred by Malta Customs to the Superintendence for vetting and deemed to be of no cultural value.

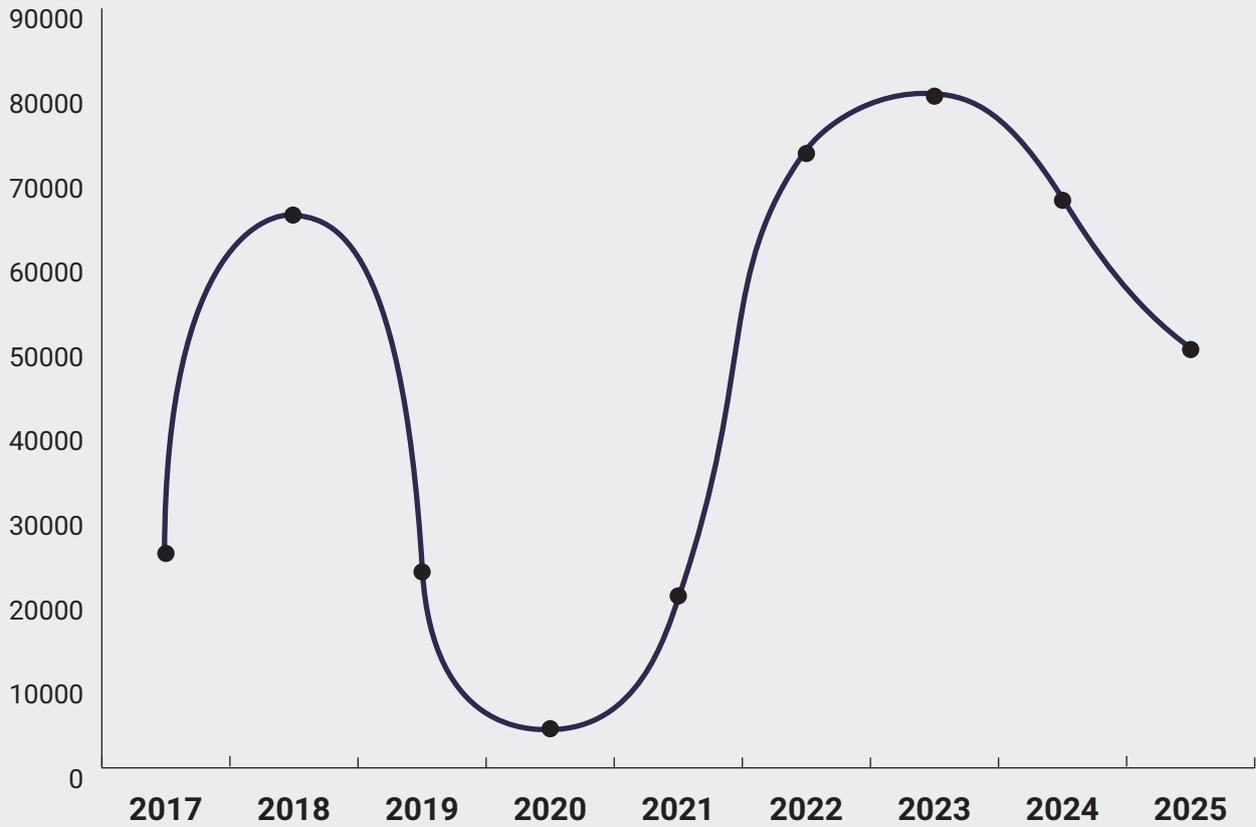
Figure 4: Certifications issued for imported cultural goods between 2018 and 2025



Cases registered in 2025 included more than 43 lots of contemporary cultural goods, and over 302 lots of cultural items exceeding 50 years in age. These inspections of imported items generated a revenue of **€49,576.90**. This marks a decrease compared to the **€67,938.80** generated in 2024, the **€79,600.90** generated from inspecting imported cultural goods in 2023, and the **€72,809** generated in 2022.

Unpredictable revenue patterns arise from year-to-year differences in the nature of imported cultural heritage goods and their associated market values.

The Customs Department may release cultural goods imported from outside the EU without prior approval from the Superintendence. In 2025, several such cases involved items initially registered with the Superintendence but subsequently cleared directly by Customs.

Figure 5: Revenue generated from certification inspections between 2017 and 2025

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

In 2025, the Superintendence continued to attend Expert Group meetings and Project Groups organised by TAXUD, 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 introduction of an EU-wide registration system in June 2025. Physical testing for the implementation of the ICG Portal related to the import of cultural goods was followed throughout.

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 made available to the respective authorities must be sufficient for the assigned officials to identify the concerned item.

The Movables' Team continued to represent the SCH during workshops and meetings featuring further discussion on organised crime and counterterrorism, and also addressing the issue of illicit trade in cultural goods.

2025 also saw the coordinated research and due-diligence processes with the OSCE Heritage Crime Task Force, the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA), Spanish authorities, the London Metropolitan Police, and the Italian Carabinieri. The majority of these cases remain under discussion with the local police and international agencies, resulting from monitoring initiatives led by the Superintendence.

Monitoring of restoration works on movable cultural property

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a number of registration notifications for the restoration of works of art. Most of these cases pertained to projects undertaken by the Notarial and National Archives, and Church property for which clearance and restoration monitoring were carried out by the Catholic Cultural Heritage Commission.

Following the introduction of a revised registration procedure in late 2022, the number of notices received decreased, prompting the need for further revisions to ensure that restoration projects on movable cultural property by warranted conservators are properly communicated to the Superintendence. As required by law, all warranted conservators must notify the Superintendence of their intent to begin restoration work before undertaking such projects. This requirement applies to both movable Church property and privately owned movable property.

Auctions monitoring

Throughout 2025, the Superintendence recorded and monitored 26 auctions held locally to oversee the local market and promote the lawful provenance of items in circulation. Together with the monitoring of additional online platforms, this activity provides further insight for the Superintendence and informs forthcoming processes which may eventually be implemented within the sector.



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SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

04

Heritage Advice on Building Development



Development Consultations: Land-use and Development Applications

Introduction

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, through its Heritage Planning Consultation Unit (HPCU), continues to serve 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 submitted to the Planning Authority, as well as on applications for minor amendments, summary planning processes, development notification orders, dangerous structures, regularisation, and planning control. These consultations ensure that potential impacts on cultural heritage are carefully considered.

Additionally, the Superintendence provides input on roadworks permit applications submitted to Transport Malta and reviews Heritage Impact Assessments and cultural heritage survey reports prepared as part of Environmental Impact Assessments, in collaboration with the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA). Furthermore, in these last years, the Superintendence has increasingly provided input and support to infrastructural projects carried out by Infrastructure Malta and Projects Green that do not require planning permission.

A detailed classification of development applications by type and quantity is provided in Table 5.

Overview of development application trends

In 2025, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a total of 11,759 consultation requests from the Planning Authority concerning development planning applications (PA applications). These included 6,182 first consultations (including Summary applications), 2,927 re-consultations (including direct consultations from the Planning Commission), 1,062 minor amendment consultations, and 1,149 requests by the Planning Authority requiring applicants to seek clearance letters, or other formal feedback from the Superintendence prior to decision-making or the issuance of permits. This total excludes other types of development applications, such as Development Notification Orders, Planning Control Applications, Dangerous Structures, Regularisations, and others. Overall, the number of planning consultations recorded in 2025 reflect a marginal decrease compared to the 12,009 consultations registered in 2024.

Of the 6,182 first consultations received during the year, 1,592 (26%) were addressed at the filtering stage. The reduction in filtering activity is primarily attributable to an internal decision not to filter applications located within Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs), in order to evaluate whether this approach improves assessment efficiency by reducing duplication of effort. Overall, development application volumes remained broadly stable when compared to the previous year, with a slight overall decline. Notable increases were, however, recorded in consultations related to Dangerous Structures. Coupled with the consistently high number of re-consultations, this trend reflects strong and improved collaboration between the Planning Authority and the Superintendence in the assessment of cases with potential impacts on cultural heritage. The continuation of this cooperative momentum is both evident and highly encouraging.

Overview of other application trends

Beyond development planning applications, the Superintendence also assessed the majority of roadworks permit applications (RWP1s) submitted to Transport Malta. The number of such applications increased from 2,500 in 2024 to 2,594 in 2025.

Additionally, the Superintendence assessed 51 projects involving cultural heritage assets from Government entities including Infrastructure Malta, Public Works Department, Project Green and the Restoration and Preservation Directorate that did not need planning permission.

Heritage Planning Consultation Data

All official planning consultation is carried out via EApps. 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.

Table 5: Number of different types of development-related consultation requests received in 2025

Type of consultation received	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Planning Applications (PAs)					
Planning Directorate Consultation (Inclusive of Summary Applications)	6,662	6,376	6,213	6,496	6,181
Screening Consultation (Major Projects)	69	62	44	59	49
Planning Directorate Re-Consultation	2,662	2,548	3,167	3,216	2,927
Minor Amendment Consultation	686	866	927	1,084	1,062
Clearance Letters				1,112	1,149
Other types of Planning Applications					
DNO - Development Notification Order	96	122	229	80	74
DS - Dangerous Structures	9	32	42	63	99
PC - Planning Control	46	35	41	22	7
Consultation in Impact Assessments					
EIA – Environment Impact Assessment	22	9	6	3	4

Type of consultation received	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SEA – Strategic Environment Assessment	-	-	1	-	-
Heritage Impact Assessments (UNESCO World Heritage Sites)	-	-	2	2 concluded, 4 ongoing	1 concluded, 1 ongoing, 6 awaiting UNESCO/ ICOMOS decision
Consultation through Transport Malta electronic online system and through e-mail					
RWP - Road Work Permit	1,759	2,399	2,633	2,500	2,594
Consultation for infrastructural projects not requiring development permission					
Article 70 cases (IM & PWD), maintenance of chapels, statues and niches (RPF), greening projects in heritage sensitive areas (Project Green)	-	-	-	-	51

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 best practice projects or landmark cases that the Superintendence engaged with during the past year.

PA 07742/23 – Triq Giorgio Mitrovich, Pembroke

Located in Pembroke, originally established as a British military garrison in the late 19th century, the subject property is a Grade 1 scheduled monument. It forms part of a larger complex of historic military barracks recognised for their architectural, historical, and contextual significance. The application sought to convert the existing building into a residential school. During the consultation process, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage raised concerns regarding the proposed



Vernacular building in Ghasri

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

construction of two external staircases, noting that they would significantly alter the external envelope of a Grade 1 building. Following extensive engagement between the Superintendence and the project team, the external fire escapes were omitted. A more sensitive internal solution was developed instead, which successfully provides the necessary safety requirements while safeguarding the building's historic facade. This revised approach received final approval.

PA 01179/24 – Triq ta' Għammar, L-Għasri

Located within the Għasri Urban Conservation Area (UCA), the property is documented in the 1968 Survey Sheet. Occupying a sensitive liminal position at the edge of the development zone, the site serves as a vital interface between Għasri's traditional urban fabric and the rural landscape leading toward the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary. This prominent location accords the building's significant visual and landscape value.

A physical inspection by the Superintendence confirmed the property's vernacular integrity, noting its characteristic thick masonry walls, arched ceilings, and the organic volumetric articulation typical of Maltese rural architecture. While the SCH initially expressed concerns that the proposed massing might detract from the building's traditional profile, the project was successfully re-dimensioned in line with their recommendations.

The final proposal focuses on the retention of historic fabric, with new interventions – such as the introduction of apertures – designed to improve internal permeability and spatial connectivity. Consequently, the Planning Authority granted approval following the positive recommendation by the Superintendence. This project serves as an exemplary model of sensitive adaptive reuse of a vernacular and traditional building that safeguards its heritage while ensuring its continued viability.

PA 05615/24 – Triq l-Ifran c/w Triq l-Arcisqof, Il-Belt Valletta

This application concerned a property located within Valletta's Urban Conservation Area. While the building had undergone significant mid-20th-century alterations, including the addition of upper floors and several changes of use, the lower levels were confirmed to retain considerable historical and architectural value. The Superintendence engaged extensively with the proposal, ensuring the retention of surviving historic fabric, including double-thickness masonry walls and a garigor. The internal layout was adjusted to preserve existing floor heights, and the façade was



Palazzo in Valletta

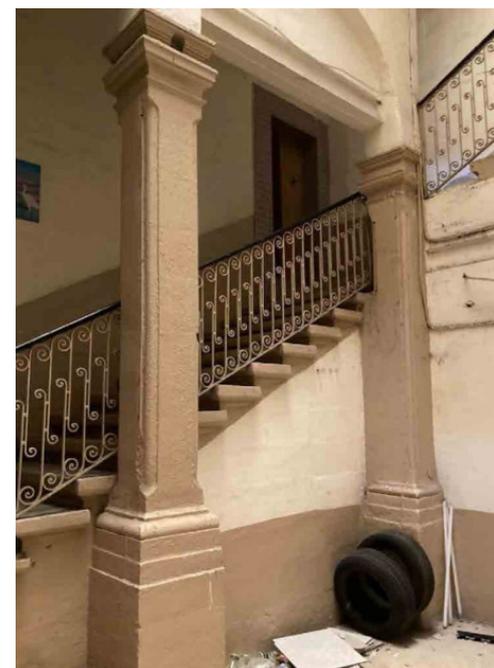


PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

retained as close as possible to its original configuration. Despite these amendments, the inclusion of a rooftop swimming pool remained a key concern as it is deemed incompatible with the Outstanding Universal Value of Valletta. The Planning Authority approved the proposal notwithstanding the Superintendence's objection to the rooftop pool on the basis that it provides an amenity to the new use, and subject to restoration monitoring conditions which fall under the remit of the Superintendence. With the exception of the issue of the rooftop pool, the proposal is a good example of rehabilitative reuse of a historic building that is sensitive to its heritage value.

PA 05692/24 – Triq il-Kbira, Sqaq Nru 1, Il-Qrendi

Located within the Qrendi's Urban Conservation Area (UCA), the site is historically documented on the 1911 Ordnance Survey. The initial proposal, which sought the demolition of double-skinned walls, a quatrefoil window, and a traditional stone staircase, was deemed unacceptable by the Superintendence from a cultural heritage perspective. Consequently, a revised project was submitted that prioritises the retention of all primary heritage assets and spatial configurations. By leveraging more recent, non-historic modifications within the building to accommodate contemporary comforts, the proposal achieved a positive recommendation from the Superintendence and was subsequently approved by the Planning Authority.

PA 06706/24 – Triq il-Kbira, Haż-Żebbuġ, Malta

Located within Haż-Żebbuġ Urban Conservation Area (UCA), the site's historical presence is documented in the 1911 Ordnance Survey. A collaborative process between the Superintendence, the applicant, and the architect resulted in several design modifications that respect more effectively the property's character and align with the surrounding roof structures, thereby harmonising with the streetscape silhouette. The Planning Authority approved the application following a positive recommendation from the Superintendence. To safeguard the site's heritage, the project is subject to restoration monitoring, the use of traditional timber apertures, and the systematic numbering and reinstatement of traditional stone slabs (*xorok*).

PA 06989/24 – Triq San Ġorġ c/w Triq Hlantun, Hal Safi

Occupying a prominent corner directly adjacent to Hal Safi Urban Conservation Area (UCA), this property is situated within a sensitive buffer zone protected for its recorded archaeological potential. While the elevations of the building have been modified over time, they retain significant architectural legibility. Notably, the corner façade features the Niche of Saint John the Evangelist, a 1925 landmark listed in the National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands.

The initial proposal for total demolition was withdrawn following objections from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The revised project now



Terraced House with corner niche in Safi

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

integrates the original façade, with new volumes designed in a terraced, stepped-back configuration. This approach ensures the new additions remain subordinate to the heritage fabric rather than competing with it visually. The Planning Authority approved the application following a positive recommendation from the Superintendence. To ensure the protection of the site's heritage, works are subject to strict monitoring and the use of non-invasive techniques, such as Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), to identify and safeguard any underlying archaeological remains.

PA 07756/24 – Triq Żakkarija, Il-Belt Valletta

This property retains a degree of historical and architectural value, enhanced by its location within the Urban Conservation Area. The application proposed internal alterations and an increase in volume, requiring significant engagement from the Superintendence to address all aspects of the development. With regards to the internal works, the Superintendence ensured the preservation of the surviving timber beams and most of the original fabric. The proposed roof-level extension initially included excessive volumes and a large swimming pool, which is considered incompatible with the Outstanding Universal Value of Valletta as World Heritage. The Superintendence successfully achieved a substantial reduction in volumes, the removal of the pool and significant party walls, safeguarding Valletta's roofscape and preventing overdevelopment of the area.

PA 08269/24 – Triq Atocia, Il-Ħamrun



Junior Ranks Mess, Pembroke

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Situated on Triq Atocia within Ħamrun' Urban Conservation Area (UCA), the property is a Grade 1 scheduled palazzo dating back to the period of the Knights of St. John. The property boasts significant architectural features, including masonry arches, a barrel vault, double-skinned walls, and traditional timber beams. However, following years of abandonment and fire damage, the building is currently in a poor state of preservation.

The proposed redevelopment involves converting the palazzo into a guesthouse. This comprehensive project includes

the demolition of non-historic accretions, the restoration of the façade, and the reconstruction of unsound structural elements. To accommodate its new use, the plan also features minor internal alterations and a rear-yard extension.

Following the submission of revised drawings and detailed restoration methodologies that addressed initial concerns raised by the Superintendence, the Planning Authority approved the application. The project is a good example of rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, successfully safeguarding the building’s heritage while ensuring its future viability.

PA 08683/24 – Triq Dun Ġuzepp Farrugia, Triq Arnhem, Pembroke

This application requested permission to construct an extension to an approved gym within the Grade 1 scheduled monument Junior Ranks Club in Pembroke. This heritage building, which in the past also served as the popular Raffles Discothèque, is an integral element of the historic British garrison town of Pembroke.

A review of historical plans confirmed that the space of the proposed extension was originally envisaged to be built but was never realised. Following further assessment and consultation with the Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, the Superintendence concluded that the proposed addition – designed in lightweight, reversible materials and intended to reflect the existing architectural volumes – was deemed acceptable.

The Planning Authority approved the application following the positive recommendation of the Superintendence. The proposal represents a good example of sensitive and appropriate interventions on scheduled historic buildings, ensuring their continued functional use while safeguarding their heritage value.



Palazzo Atocia, Hamrun

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 00721/24 – Triq Birbixkilla, Hal Tarxien



Vernacular internal architecture, Tarxien.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Vernacular building in Tarxien

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The property is a vernacular structure of notable antiquity, recorded on the 1908 Ordnance Sheet and

protected as a Grade 2 scheduled building (GN/199/96). Located within the Urban Conservation Area of Ғal Tarxien, it features thick masonry walls, a mill room, arches, *kileb*, *xorok*, and a bell-shaped well. The initial proposal aimed to convert the building into a residence, involving internal and external alterations, pool excavation, and extensions at first floor and roof levels. Following a site inspection by officers of the Superintendence, this office collaborated closely with the architect to revise the scheme. The final proposal safeguards the building’s historical significance, retains all significant internal spaces, and allows sensitive contemporary residential use through a respectful and well-integrated extension.

PA 00785/24 – Telgħet Gwardamangia, Pietà

The property is Villa Gwardamangia, a palatial 18th century residence with a large formal garden, scheduled for its very high architectural and historical value. A site well known to the public as the home to the newlywed Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip. The application was submitted by Heritage Malta for the change of use to museum and ancillary interventions. The property is already undergoing extensive restoration and is being monitored by the Superintendence. The Superintendence (together with CHAC) reviewed the proposed conversion to a museum. Superintendence officers inspected the property, liaising closely with the applicant and architects, ensuring that interventions were limited and reversible, and also that the legibility and values of the property were not prejudiced in any way. Following approval of the permit, the Superintendence and Heritage Malta deem the process to have been very successful, preserving the historical property, while ensuring its accessibility and enjoyment by the wider general public, amply justifying the investment of public funds.

PA 01751/25 – Triq San Benedittu, Ғal Kirkop

Situated adjacent to the Urban Conservation Area (UCA), this pre-1968 building forms part of a cohesive cluster of similar structures. The initial proposal sought the internal demolition of the property while retaining the majority of its façade and adding two receded (setback) floors. However, the Superintendence identified that the original design would have compromised the building’s integrity by removing the frontispiece and introducing a garage opening that disrupted the façade’s rhythmic composition. Through close collaboration with the architect, a balanced solution was reached: the frontispiece was preserved, the garage opening was omitted, and the articulation of the new upper levels was refined to minimise their visual impact on the neighbouring UCA.



Villa Guardamangia, Pietà

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 02640/25 – Triq il-Merkanti c/w Triq Santa Luċija, Il-Belt Valletta

This application involved the conversion of a property into a cafeteria, including the introduction of new signage. The main challenge concerned the two existing signs that are scheduled at Grade 2, requiring their preservation and careful integration into the proposal. Following discussions with the architect and a site inspection, the Superintendent advised that the signs were to be restored in situ by a warranted conservator, while the new shop signs be installed above them. This solution respected the historic fabric while allowing adaptive reuse. The case exemplifies the ongoing challenge of balancing the reuse of traditional properties with the protection and preservation of Malta's cultural heritage.



Detail of original lettering, Valletta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 06613/25 – Tas-Salib, l/o Rabat, Malta

The site, a vacant plot situated within a Category 2 settlement, is located in an area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) on the limits of Rabat. Known as Tas-Salib/lx-Xagħra tal-Qallelija, the region is characterised by exceptional archaeological sensitivity, with a high concentration of recorded cart ruts and significant historical remains in the vicinity. The initial proposal (PA/07298/23) sought the construction of a residence featuring a full basement. To inform the planning process, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) mandated a comprehensive archaeological evaluation. This investigation uncovered extensive stretches of cart ruts, which are continuous with the features identified in the adjacent plot. Through sustained engagement during the application process, the Superintendence secured the preservation of these cart ruts, ensuring they remain accessible for monitoring and study. The SCH's guidance was pivotal in the strategic placement of foundations to maintain the legibility of the archaeological remains while mitigating physical impact. Additionally, safeguards were implemented to ensure the architectural reversibility of the proposed construction. In conclusion, the Superintendence's oversight has led to the discovery of previously undocumented features, significantly enriching the cultural record of the area. These findings have been successfully integrated into a development proposal that respects the unique archaeological context of the Maltese landscape.

Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (CHAC)

The Superintendence refers complex development-related cases to the Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (CHAC) for detailed discussion. The CHAC is an internal committee within the Superintendence and provides recommendations on development-related matters, as well as on requests for the scheduling or de-scheduling of cultural heritage assets.

During 2025, the CHAC convened on 22 occasions and issued 61 recommendations relating to development applications and scheduling or de-scheduling proposals. The cases referred to the CHAC primarily involved

projects with a significant potential impact on cultural heritage, including major developments, proposals affecting scheduled buildings, demolition works, extensive alterations or additions, developments with adverse visual impacts, and applications impacting 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 His Excellency, 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 subjected to a Heritage Impact Assessment or 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)

In 2025, the Superintendence lodged a direct appeal to the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (EPRT) in a particular case challenging a decision of the Planning Authority. The Tribunal's decision was delivered in favour of the Superintendence.

In addition, in its role as a statutory consultee within the planning process, the Superintendence is routinely notified of appeals lodged with the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal. In accordance with Article 21 of Chapter 551, the Superintendence has the right to participate as an interested entity in third-party appeals and exercised this right in 40 new cases during 2025. The Tribunal also requested the attendance of officers of the Superintendence as witness in several cases.

The Superintendence notes with satisfaction that its strategic approach to strengthening its presence before the EPRT is yielding tangible and positive results. Tribunal decisions are increasingly recognising and giving greater weight to cultural heritage considerations in the planning and management of Malta's townscapes and rural landscapes.

Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB)

The Superintendence collaborates closely with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) through joint inspections and participation in sessions of the Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB) to address cases in which Access-for-All requirements may have implications for cultural heritage buildings and features. This initiative delivers highly positive results, with the majority of cases resolved through the identification of design solutions that are acceptable to both the CRPD/TORB and the Superintendence. The success of this collaborative approach provides a strong foundation for continued and enhanced cooperation between the two entities.



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SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



05

Built Heritage Monitoring

Introduction

The Built Heritage Monitoring Unit (BHMU) 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. The main functions of the BHMU are:

Assessment of Planning Applications

The BHMU supports the Heritage Planning Consultations Unit (HPCU) by evaluating development planning applications that may impact built heritage. Restoration and Works Method Statements (RMSs/WMSs) submitted for projects involving the restoration of heritage buildings, new construction, alterations, or changes of use affecting historically significant assets are carefully reviewed. This ensures that proposed developments preserve the architectural and cultural integrity of heritage sites. Where required, the BHMU recommends modifications, guidelines, or tailored conditions to safeguard historical value. It also advises on the imposition of appropriate bank guarantees on a case-by-case basis to uphold conservation standards.

For these last six years, the BHMU has taken an active role in monitoring sites participating in the Planning Authority's 'Irrestawra Darek' grant scheme. This initiative goes beyond façade restoration, supporting owners in conserving vernacular dwellings, townhouses, scheduled monuments, and other historic structures. The Planning Authority also collaborates closely with the SCH when issuing approved documents for Dangerous Structure (D/S) and Development Notification Order (DNO) applications, most of which are assessed by the BHMU on behalf of the Superintendence.

Monitoring Restoration Projects

From the planning stage to the issuing of restoration permits, the SCH plays a key role in achieving successful restoration outcomes. The BHMU monitors both façade restoration and internal and external structural works on heritage buildings, ensuring adherence to approved Restoration and Works Method Statements, and to the principles and guidelines established by the Superintendence.

The unit oversees the use of appropriate materials, techniques, and interventions to

maintain authenticity and integrity, paying attention also to critical structural elements such as ceilings and load-bearing walls. Officials ensure that restoration efforts are thoroughly documented and evaluated for their long-term impact on the historical value of the site. Through its work, the Built Heritage Monitoring



Cottonera Lines, Notre Dame Bastion.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Chapel of San Niklaw, Marsaskala.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Unit safeguards historical integrity and contributes to the enrichment of the community's cultural landscape for future generations.



Santa Margerita Lines, Bormla.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Madonna tal-Aħrax, Mellieħa.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Managing Daily Requests for Development and Interventions

The BHMU also provides ongoing expert guidance to the public, contractors, and architects, advising on effective restoration and conservation practices. It manages daily requests concerning developments or interventions that may affect heritage sites, ranging from minor alterations to major construction works impacting the built fabric. The unit ensures that all proposals comply with conservation standards, issuing permits or guidelines as necessary to manage or mitigate potential impacts.

Review of Restoration Method Statements/Works Method Statements

In 2025, the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit (BHMU) assessed 2,130 Restoration and Work Method Statements (RMSs and WMSs), an increase of 12% compared to the 1,382 statements reviewed in 2024. Additionally, the BHMU conducted 1,980 inspections to oversee restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings, including major projects.

The Superintendence processed 463 cases involving recommendations to the Planning Authority regarding the release or withholding of restoration compliance bank guarantees and 'Irrestawra Darek' grants. While this represents a decrease compared to the previous year, the volume remains significantly above the six-year average. This sustained activity reflects a continued public interest in the development of heritage assets and underscores the Superintendence's commitment to enforcing best practices in the rehabilitation and restoration of culturally significant structures.

Table 6: Statistics covering 2020 - 2025 in relation to built heritage restoration

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Review of Restoration and Works Method Statement (RMSs + WMSs)	1601	1327	1205	1382	1900	2130
2 Built heritage monitoring site inspections	2102	1819	2350	2653	2491	1980
3 Release of Bank Guarantee and 'Irrestawra Darek' Grants	226	384	243	180	638	463

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 vandalism, 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 with the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority, or request police action.

The BHMU handled 20 cases in support of the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority and carried out a further 8 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 cases where the remedial measures are still ongoing. Several emergencies and infringements were avoided by early detection by the Superintendence's vigilance, pre-empting damage.

Instructions issued by the Superintendence for the repair of a privately owned scheduled WWII pillbox in Marsascala were complied with voluntarily, precluding the need for a formal Conservation and Protection Order despite the structure's precarious state. Beyond this, the Superintendence maintained an active role in heritage enforcement by supporting the Lands Authority in the successful eviction of squatters from Fort Bingemma and Fort Bengħajsa – both significant scheduled monuments – over the past year. The Superintendence also collaborated with the Lands Authority to remove temporarily the original fortified gate of Della Grazie Battery in Xgħajra so that it can eventually be restored and placed back.

Major Restoration Monitoring



Gozo Aqueduct.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

A primary focus for the SCH Built Heritage Monitoring Unit is the rigorous supervision of major projects within the Cottonera region, specifically the Santa Margherita and Cottonera Lines in Bormla. As the entity mandated to execute critical works on historic bastion walls, the RPD operates under the systematic monitoring of the SCH's Built Heritage Monitoring Unit. Frequent joint site inspections and technical meetings involving architects, officers, and specialised contractors are essential to maintaining the highest preservation standards. These efforts are particularly vital given the decay caused by environmental exposure, Grand Harbour industrial pollution, and the natural degradation of local Franka (*globigerina*) limestone.

One of the SCH's most complex challenges is balancing the preservation of original historical fabric with the need for technically sound structural repairs. This includes a sensitive approach to Second World War damage, which is often treated as a significant layer of the building's history. A salient example is the counterscarp of the St Helen's Gate ditch, where WWII bomb craters were intentionally preserved as archaeological evidence of the conflict. Through the close collaboration of RPD architects and SCH monitors, the glacis retaining wall was successfully reinforced to meet structural requirements without compromising these historical markers.

The following restoration cases are a selection that were monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit during 2025.

The majority of significant restoration initiatives are managed through strategic partnerships between the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) and various governmental and non-governmental organisations. Key collaborators include the Restoration and Preservation Directorate (RPD), the Ministry for Gozo, Din l-Art Ħelwa, and Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, as well as Infrastructure Malta, Project Green, and the Public Works Department. A core responsibility of the SCH is the oversight of extensive fortification lines and coastal defence systems, including various shoreline towers and batteries.



Vendome Tower, Marsaxlokk.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Table 7: Selection of major restoration cases monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit in 2025

Site	Locality
Central View Cottage (The Butler's House)	Attard
Mount Carmel Hospital	Attard
Villa Bologna	Attard
Traditional palazzo garden wall	Balzan
Santa Liena Bastion, including counterscarps – St Margherita Lines	Bormla
Notre Dame Bastion, St Clement's curtain walls with tenaille, St Clement's Bastion and St Nicholas Bastion – Cottonera Lines	Bormla
Windmill at San Ġwann T'Għuxa	Bormla
Torri ta' Santa Marija	Għajnsielem (Kemmuna)
Lintorn Barracks	Floriana
Emergency stabilisation works at Villa Bighi Promenade	Kalkara
Villa Portelli	Kalkara
Coastal revetment wall at ex-Bighi Hospital (Rinella Bay)	Kalkara
Gozo Aqueduct	Kerċem
Casa Depiro	Hal Lija
Torri Vendome	Marsaxlokk
Niche of Christ the Redeemer	Marsaxlokk
Niche of St Innocent	Mqabba
Salib tad-Dejma	Mqabba
St Luke's Hospital	Pieta
Socjetà Filarmonika Lourdes	Qrendi
Statue of Saint Roque	Qrendi

Site	Locality
Statue of St Matthew	Qrendi
Statue of Saint Anne	Qrendi
Statues in Vjal Santu Wistin	Rabat, Malta
Ministry of Gozo (St John and St Anthony Hospital)	Rabat, Għawdex
Romeo Romano Gardens	Santa Venera
Jesuits' Church	Valletta
Demajo House	Valletta
Dun Karm Psaila House	Haż-Żebbuġ
Kappella San Niklaw	Żejtun
Parish Church of St Catherine	Żejtun
Two-storey high vernacular rural structure	Żejtun
Various niches around Malta and Gozo	



Dejma Cross, Mqabba.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Soċjetà Filarmonika Madonna ta' Lourdes, Qrendi.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Best Practice Cases (Restoration Monitoring)

The Superintendence would like to highlight the following examples of best practice restoration which were carried out under the monitoring of the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit.

Field room, Vjal il-25 ta' Novembru, Iż-Żejtun

The Superintendence oversaw the restoration of a rural structure in Żejtun, identified as a traditional għorfa tar-raba – a vernacular field room used for storage and shelter. This specific structure featured an internal mezzanine (raff), likely utilised for produce storage. Prior to intervention, the roof was partially collapsed, though most original fabric remained in situ. The masonry was generally sound, showing only mild deterioration such as biological discoloration and the presence of a failing cementitious render. Following a minimal intervention approach, the project began with the approval of trial patches by the Superintendence. Works included the removal of metal inserts and the careful hand-stripping of old renders. The façade



Vernacular field structure, Żejtun.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



The Jesuits' Church Dome from the inside (left) and externally (right) after restoration.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

was cleaned using non-abrasive methods to preserve the natural patina of the stone, while paint was removed from the road-facing elevation. Structural repairs involved repointing and localised plastic repair where necessary. The roof was meticulously reconstructed using original masonry elements supported by new timber beams, installed in their original positions and dimensions. This project serves as an exemplary model for the sensitive restoration and reuse of Malta's rural vernacular heritage.

Jesuits' Church, Il-Belt Valletta

The restoration of the highly significant Buonamici dome of the Jesuit's Church in Valletta was a key intervention within a broader conservation programme for the whole church. The works addressed structural deterioration and weathering through careful consolidation of masonry, compatible repointing, and improved waterproofing measures through the application of a new layer of traditional *deffun* mortar. The intervention respected the dome's architectural and historical importance, ensuring its long-term stability while preserving the integrity of this exceptional Baroque feature. Its interior has been carefully

cleaned and treated with appropriate pigments to highlight the beauty of its mannerist decoration within the monumental drum and dome. Works were undertaken by the Restoration and Preservation Department and monitored by the SCH.

Renovation of Lintorn Barracks, Floriana



Detail of reconstructed parapet at Lintorn Barracks, Floriana

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Lintorn Barracks in Floriana, Malta, were constructed in the early 19th century during the British period to accommodate British military personnel stationed on the island and are named after Sir John Lintorn Arabin Simmons. Restoration works included structural repairs, cleaning and conservation of stone façades, replacement of deteriorated building elements, and the removal of inappropriate

later alterations. Particular attention was given to preserving the architectural character of the barracks while improving services and internal layouts. The intervention enabled the adaptive reuse of the complex for government and administrative purposes, ensuring the long-term preservation and continued use of this historically significant site.

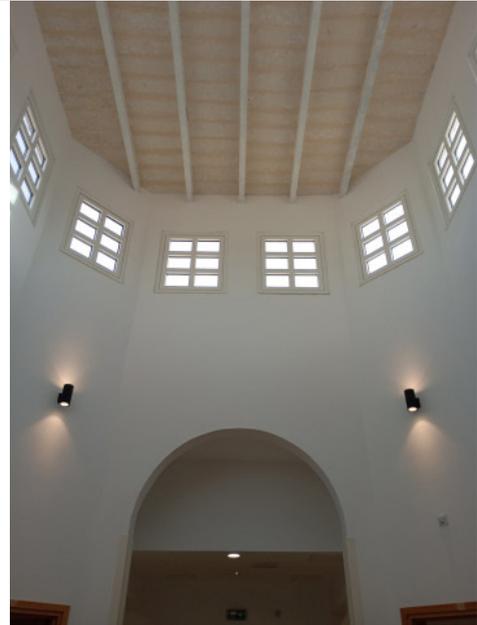
Madonna tal-Aħrax statue and pedestal, Il-Mellieħa

The restoration and strategic relocation of the Madonna tal-Aħrax statue in Mellieħa were necessitated by advanced material deterioration and significant fissures in the adjacent rock formation. To ensure the monument's long-term stability, the statue and its pedestal were meticulously dismantled and repositioned inland, closer to the chapel. During the intervention, investigations revealed that the existing trapezoidal concrete pedestal was an incongruent, non-original addition. Upon its removal, authentic remnants of the original pedestal were discovered beneath. These historic elements were documented and stabilised in situ. Irreparably damaged sections were replicated in new *Franka* stone, with the forms guided by a comparative study of historical photographic records. Surviving original segments were conserved using plastic repair to restore cohesion while respecting the historic fabric. Stratigraphic analysis further revealed several historical decorative layers, including white lime, stone-coloured washes, and hues of blue and red. As evidence suggested the stone-coloured wash was likely the original finish, a breathable, stone-based pigment was applied to the completed monument. The project was executed by the Restoration and Preservation Department (RPD).

Mount Carmel Hospital, Attard

Mount Carmel Hospital was constructed between 1853 and 1861 in a neoclassical style to accommodate patients from Villa Franconi in Floriana, which had become overcrowded by the mid-19th century. The project

entails the restoration of the male ward in Block 1, carried out under the supervision of the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit. The restoration works primarily focused on repointing, the careful light cleaning of the stone surfaces carried out sensitively to preserve the original patina, and the consolidation of friable areas. The interventions have revitalised the ward while deliberately retaining evidence of wartime damage, such as shrapnel holes. These historic marks have been preserved to maintain visual and historical continuity between the past and the present.



Block 1 at Mount Carmel Hospital external (left) and internal (right) after restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Parish Church of St Catherine, Iż-Żejtun

The restoration of Żejtun Parish Church was a complex, carefully coordinated conservation project carried out over several years and implemented in successive phases, by the Restoration & Preservation Department and monitored by SCH. Each phase addressed different elevations and architectural elements in line with established conservation principles. The final phase focused on the restoration of the rear façade, which had been affected by prolonged weathering, soiling and material deterioration. Works on the rear façade centred on the removal of materials incompatible with the original limestone fabric, including cement-based mortars. Gentle cleaning, followed by the removal of dirt and biological growth, was undertaken while safeguarding the integrity of the



Rear façade of the Parish Church of St Catherine, Żejtun after restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

historic stone. Open mortar joints were replastered using breathable, lime-based mortars compatible with the original masonry blockwork. Particular attention was also given to the conservation of architectural and artistic elements such as carved reliefs, cornices, sculptural features, and decorative stonework that define the church's Baroque character. Damaged stone was consolidated, plastic-repaired, or selectively replaced using traditional techniques. The project additionally included the restoration of apertures, ensuring structural stability and visual coherence, and contributing to the overall preservation of the church's architectural, artistic, and cultural significance.

Restoration work on a Sliema Townhouse

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage has overseen the meticulous restoration and regeneration of an elegant turn-of-the-century townhouse in the heart of Sliema. Located within the Urban Conservation Area (UCA), the project successfully adapted a dilapidated historic structure for contemporary living. Key internal works included the restoration and reinstatement of traditional *xorok* (stone slabs) ceilings, while a sympathetic contemporary extension was added, designed to harmonise with the building's original fabric. The intervention culminated in the full restoration of the façade. This process involved the removal of incompatible modern renders



Restored townhouse and detailing of original column discovered during restoration in Sliema.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

that had been damaging the underlying stonework, followed by specialised stone repair, cleaning, and the restoration of traditional timber apertures. Notably, the removal of these detrimental layers uncovered hidden sculptural details, including decorative motifs and neoclassical fluted columns flanking the main portal. The façade was finished with a breathable natural lime mortar, stabilising the stone while recapturing the authentic aesthetic of a traditional village-core townhouse.

San Ġwann t'Ġhuxa Windmill, Bormla

Complementing the ongoing restoration of the Santa Margherita and Cottonera Lines, the Windmill of San Ġwann t'Ġhuxa in Bormla is currently undergoing extensive structural consolidation and restoration. Commissioned in 1674 by Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner, this historic structure reached a critical state of deterioration, nearing classification as a 'dangerous structure'. Led by the Restoration and Preservation Directorate (RPD) in collaboration with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the project addresses severe masonry erosion and missing structural elements. The methodology includes the

replacement of heavily weathered blocks with new *globigerina* limestone of identical dimensions, alongside the reinstatement of traditional apertures, jambs, and corner pilasters to restore the windmill's original aesthetic. Notably, the SCH has approved remedial designs to aesthetically refine later garage openings – modern additions considered alien to the 17th-century design. Current works include precision cleaning, the removal of defective mortar, repointing, and plastic repairs. While the project remains in progress, the restored façades already demonstrate a high-calibre rehabilitation of this landmark.

St Mary's Tower, Ġhajnsielem, Kemmuna



Santa Marija Tower at end of restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The completion of the restoration of Saint Mary's Tower (Torri ta' Santa Marija) in Comino represents a significant achievement in the preservation of Malta's coastal fortifications. Despite the logistical complexities inherent in an offshore site – where all materials and equipment required maritime transport – the project was executed to the rigorous standards of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Initiated by Din l-Art Helwa, with the support of the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), the project was overseen by the SCH's built heritage monitors. This collaborative effort ensured that every intervention, led by the responsible architect, adhered to the highest conservation benchmarks. The technical scope included comprehensive dry and wet cleaning of the façades, the delicate restoration of the Wignacourt coat of arms, and the systematic removal of failing mortar. By prioritising plastic repairs and targeted masonry replacement,

the project successfully stabilised the Tower's fabric while respecting its original patina. Furthermore, the intervention corrected inappropriate past maintenance, securing the structural and aesthetic integrity of this iconic landmark for future generations.

Statues in Vjal Santu Wistin, Rabat, Malta

The Superintendence assessed and monitored the restoration of the four statues along the Rabat Heritage Trail (which include Santu Wistin, Madonna taċ-Ċintura, San Anton Abbati, and San Nikola minn Tolentino), all originally designed by the sculptor Vincenzo Zammit and completed in 1838, with two replaced by the sculptor Marco Montebello in the 20th century due to heavy deterioration). The works covered the treatment of both sculptures and pedestals: general cleaning and careful removal of the old paint were carried out before assessing the state of conservation of the stone; the restorer then proceeded with maintenance works of repainting of the sculpture and treatment of the



Statue of Santu Wistin.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

metal inserts (halo and name tag). Further restoration works were carried out on the pedestal with removal of the old pointing and re-pointing, use of plastic repair to fill weathered stone blocks and, where structurally justifiable, stone replacement with new *franka* stone. The works, which were financed by the Planning Authority, were the result of the collaboration between the architect in charge, the Superintendence, the Rabat Local Council and the professional restorers involved.

Traditional palazzo garden wall in Hal Balzan

The project involved the careful dismantling and reconstruction of an extensive, high, double-leaf garden wall located within the Urban Conservation Area of Hal Balzan. The wall was carefully dismantled in accordance with conservation principles. The leaf facing the internal garden was systematically dismantled, with sound *globigerina* limestone blocks numbered and retained for reinstatement, while the deteriorated leaf facing the third-party property was reconstructed using new *globigerina* limestone matching the original stones in size and height. The wall was subsequently reconstructed in strict accordance with its original course alignment and overall proportions, thereby safeguarding its historic and visual integrity. All works were executed under the supervision of the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit. Following reconstruction, restoration works were undertaken. These included the sensitive light cleaning of the stone surfaces to preserve the existing patina, and the re-pointing of the entire length of the wall using compatible materials and traditional techniques.



Traditional palazzo garden wall after restoration (left) and architectural detailing (right)

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

06

Guardianship of Museums and Sites



Guardianship Deeds of Heritage Buildings and Archaeological Sites

As SCH is the Government Authority responsible for protecting Malta's cultural heritage, it can enter into legal agreement with local not for profit organisations to ensure the protection of archaeological sites, historic buildings, monuments and cultural landscapes. These could include for example historic fortifications, chapels, towers, ruins, or archaeological remains on private land.

Guardianship deeds are formal legal documents used when a site is historically or culturally important; may need professional care or protection; and may be at risk from neglect, development or damage. Those who enter into the binding agreement are given and take on the responsibility to safeguard, maintain and manage the site, without actually being given ownership of the site.

The guardian must protect the site from damage or alteration, maintain it according to heritage standards set by the SCH, allow for controlled public access, discuss possible restoration or changes that may be required with SCH, and allow for inspections by the SCH.

Many sites that are under guardianship are also 'scheduled' which means the site is legally protected by law. A guardianship deed however adds an extra layer of protection and management with a binding contract.

As of December 2025, there were 19 guardianship deeds registered with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage for a 10-year period which will be eligible for renewal as noted in the table below:

Table 8: List of signed guardianship deeds and their renewal date

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Renewal Period
Kappella ta' San Mikiel is-Sanċir	Rabat, Malta	Din l-Art Helwa	2034
Santa Marija Battery	Għajnsielem (Comino)	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Santa Marija Tower	Għajnsielem (Comino)	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Għallis Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
It-Torri l-Aħmar	Mellieħa	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Torri Mamo	Marsaskala	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Torri ta' Wigancourt	San Pawl il-Baħar	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Msida Bastion Cemetery	Floriana	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Qalet Marku Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Dwejra Tower	San Lawrenz	Din l-Art Helwa	2033

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Renewal Period
Church of Our Lady of Victory	Il-Belt Valletta	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
It-Torri ta' Xutu	Qrendi	Din l-Art Helwa	2033
Couvre Port Barracks and underlying WWII Air Shelter	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2035
Madliena Tower and adjacent structures	Pembroke	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026
Tower at Triq il-Wiesgħa	Xgħajra	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026
Pillboxes AB1, R15 and RAO	Naxxar, Mellieħa, Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026
Notre Dame Gate	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026
St Thomas Tower	Marsaskala	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026
Fort Rinella	Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2026

The request made by Din L-Art Helwa to register a guardianship deed for the Australian Bungalow, as noted in the 2024 SCH Annual Report was reviewed and instead registered under an Environmental Guardianship Deed.



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

07



Policy, EU &

International Affairs

24-26 September 2025
Valletta, Malta

EUROPEAN
HERITAGE
HEADS
FORUM
19TH ANNUAL MEETING

EUROPEAN
HERITAGE
HEADS
FORUM



SOVSINCENTENZA
TAJ PATRIMONIJA KULTURNEJE
KONFERENCIJE O KULTURNI NEKRETNOSTI



Advice to Government, Entities and International Bodies

Policy Advice

Within its role as regulator for cultural heritage, the Superintendence provided feedback to several Governmental entities as well as international bodies on policies, strategies, and other documents. The Superintendence ensured that cultural heritage matters were at the forefront of these policies, and to ensure an aligned vision to national and EU strategies. In total, SCH was consulted on 83 cases that can be grouped into the categories noted below.

The Superintendence was consulted on 8 environmental reports, draft policies and strategies, namely the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy', the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol National Report, and other recommendations. In doing so, the Superintendence ensured that the safeguarding of cultural heritage was incorporated within these measures and procedures. The related documents or policies are as follows:

- ▶ Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy - Draft Report.
- ▶ Manual for the Permit Granting Process for Projects of Common Interest.
- ▶ ICZM Protocol National Report 2022-2023 Consultations.
- ▶ Public Consultation on Environmental Permitting (Procedure for Applications and their Determination) Regulations.
- ▶ Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy - Draft Policy Update.
- ▶ Climate Match 'Climate Adaptation in Policy and Planning with integrated governance and knowledge for a climate-resilient future in Malta' CAPPING Interview 2024-2026.
- ▶ Questionnaire for the Members of The Expert Group on Submarine Cable Infrastructures Under Recommendation (EU) 2024/779.
- ▶ State of Environment Report.

The Superintendence was also consulted on matters related to the import, export, and movement of cultural heritage on five different occurrences:

- ▶ Questionnaire from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media regarding Information on national legislation relating to the export of cultural property and its protection - NV 16/2024.
- ▶ EU Customs Reform Package.
- ▶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Action Plan against Trafficking in Cultural Goods.
- ▶ CU 2024/83 UNODC Questionnaire on Criminal Justice Responses to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences.
- ▶ MT Reply on the Law Enforcement Working Party (Police and Customs)'s discussion paper on the 'Fight against trafficking in cultural goods: Cooperation of law enforcement authorities (police and customs)' (14771/24).

The Superintendence was also involved in draft policies, working groups or reports that related to cultural heritage in general:

- ▶ The Social Development and Identity Working Committee.

- ▶ Horizon Europe Co-fund Partnership on Resilient Cultural Heritage.
- ▶ Existing indicators on CH related to COP28 Decision 2/CMA5, paragraphs 9 and 10.
- ▶ Revised draft note on the handling of the external dimension of protection of cultural heritage within the RELEX Working Party.
- ▶ MED9 'CULTURAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives' Concept Paper.
- ▶ Consultation on the ARCHE Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.
- ▶ WP on Enhancing Cooperation with Civil Society in the Context of Protection of Cultural Heritage.

Finally, the Superintendence also contributed to general national and international policies or strategy which are not directly linked to cultural heritage:

- ▶ National AI Strategy and Vision Alignment.
- ▶ Education Strategy 2024-2030.
- ▶ Preparatory Process for the Summit of the Future.
- ▶ OECD Public Integrity Indicators (PII) Initiative.
- ▶ OECD Green Public Procurement.
- ▶ Stakeholder Consultation on the EU Framework Programme for R & I 2028-2034.
- ▶ Voluntary National Review SDG Goals Questionnaire.
- ▶ CDCPP - Draft Convention on the co-production of series.
- ▶ Pact for the Future Declaration on Future Generations, and the Global Digital Compact - DDL 09/12/2024.
- ▶ Work Programme 2025 for Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society (Cluster 2 of the Horizon Europe structure).
- ▶ Malta-UAE Joint Commission-Draft of Agreed Minutes.
- ▶ National Transport Masterplan 2030.

International Cooperation

The Superintendence has collaborated with several international bodies within the cultural heritage sphere to ensure that the promotion of sound policies, standards and practices in the cultural heritage sphere were considered and adhered to within the local sector, as the regulatory body tasked with advising the Minister with regards to the co-operation with other governments and international organisations within the field of the protection of the cultural heritage. Several meetings and conferences were attended by SCH staff to achieve this in 2025, fostering co-operation and partnerships with several international and EU-level bodies. The Superintendence has attended various conferences, meetings and workshops organised by:

- ▶ the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage, and Landscape within the Council of Europe;
- ▶ the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Heritage Crime Task Force; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;
- ▶ the World Heritage Centre;
- ▶ the International Council on Monuments and Sites;
- ▶ the International Union for Conservation of Nature;
- ▶ the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property;
- ▶ the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation;
- ▶ the European Heritage Heads Forum;
- ▶ and the European Archaeological Council.

European Heads of Heritage Forum – 19th Annual Meeting, Malta



European Heads of Heritage Forum 19th Annual Meeting, Valletta, Malta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage welcomed 48 Heritage Heads and their delegates from 25 European countries to Malta for the 19th European Heritage Heads Forum, held from the 24th to the 26th September at the Mediterranean Conference Centre (MCC) in Valletta. To mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised) (Valletta, 1992)- also known as the Valletta Convention - since it came into force, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage chose this convention as the central theme for the 2025 European Heritage Heads Forum (EHHF), as it remains a cornerstone of archaeological policy and heritage management in Europe. This anniversary provided an opportunity to assess the Convention's impact, ongoing relevance, and future in a rapidly evolving world. Mr Nigel Vella, CEO of the MCC welcomed the delegates to the meticulously restored Ospitalieri Hall within the Sacra Infermeria, where most of the meetings were held. Honourable Minister Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Culture, Lands, and Local Government, aptly addressed the importance of the convention within his opening remarks and explained how conservation and restoration of heritage sites are at forefront of the Maltese Government's policy. Through a video address, the EU Commissioner for Youth, Intergenerational Solidarity and Culture, Mr

Glenn Micallef reaffirmed the European Union's commitment towards achieving a balance between the protection of cultural sites and sustainable development.

Ratified by 46 States, the Convention has significantly influenced the legal, disciplinary, and administrative frameworks of archaeology. It has promoted preventive archaeology, international cooperation, and stronger integration of heritage into planning and development. Most importantly, the Convention has helped shift archaeology from a specialist pursuit to a shared public responsibility, enhancing access, education, and community engagement.

The Forum also provided an invaluable opportunity to reflect together on the challenges being faced in the 21st century: from the pressures of urban development to the impacts of climate change; to the threats of illicit trafficking. None of these challenges can be met in isolation. The strength of this Forum lies precisely in this community it represents, that is a network of trust and expertise where national perspectives enrich our shared European vision.

The Valletta Convention reaffirmed our shared responsibility to protect archaeological heritage, not simply as remnants of the past, but as sources of knowledge and identity. More than 30 years later, the principles

enshrined in the Valletta Convention remain vital as ever and continue to guide us and remind us that our heritage is not a luxury, but a foundation for sustainable development and cultural resilience.

Projects

BCThubs Project

Currently in its third year, progress has been achieved within the project Blue Cultural Technology Excellence Hubs in EU Widening Member States (BCThubs), a Horizon Europe project awarded in 2023 through the European Union's Horizon 2021-2027 Research and Innovation Programme under the HORIZON-WIDERA2022-ACCESS-04-01 (Excellence Hubs). Several of the technological innovations highlighted within the project's initial brief have achieved maturation, with field testing slated for the year 2025.

As a Work Package Leader, the Superintendence 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 products in area of sustainable Blue Economy and Culture.

Throughout 2025, Superintendence continued engaging several stakeholders within the public, NGO, research, and SME spheres. This campaign, which was developed in 2023, has proven useful as a substantial amount of the identified stakeholders within the BCThubs project have now endorsed the project. Efforts towards the establishment of both the legal entity and the physical Hub continued at a successful rate as well.

The BCThubs project was awarded second prize for the Public Service Sustainability Award at the inaugural 'Sustainable Development Action Awards' held on 10th October 2025. The award recognises this project as a leader in sustainable innovation and practices aimed at increasing economic, social, and environmental sustainability, highlighting the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage's continued commitment to advancing research and innovation for a sustainable future.

The BCT Excellence Hub Training Workshop and Secondment

The SCH, along with the Maltese partners AquaBioTech, Divers Alert Network Europe and the Institute of Tourism Studies, hosted a two-week workshop in Qala, Gozo aimed at early-career professionals within the sphere of marine biology, underwater cultural heritage and the Blue Economy.

Held between the 30th June to 11th July, this workshop was hosted at the ITS campus in Gozo, the future physical BCT Hub in Malta. Attendees were provided with an introductory overview of several topics related to diving, the marine world and underwater cultural heritage. Specialists from the SCH were engaged to provide this syllabus, with focus on the use of geospatial data in marine and maritime activities, the legislative and practical framework of underwater cultural heritage in Malta, and practical exercises on archaeological recording methods.

Blue Futures Lab

The Malta Hub also launched 'Blue Futures Lab', an entrepreneurial mentoring programme aimed at fostering the entrepreneurial vision of professionals within the Blue Economy and the Blue Culture Economy. An online information event was held on 5th December, where potential candidates were provided with the necessary information to move on to the next phase.

The 'Blue Futures Lab' aims to transform innovative ideas related to Blue Culture into investment-ready business plans, with a special focus on innovation applied to various core challenges namely:

- ▶ Sustainable Tourism.
- ▶ Monitoring practices to mitigate threats to underwater cultural heritage.
- ▶ Diving Practices.
- ▶ Training and Skills Development in the Blue Economy and Blue Culture Economy.

Further engagement with this activity will be conducted in 2026, with an application, evaluation and selection phase. The envisioned activities will include:

- ▶ **Kick-off Event.** An introductory online session where the Mentors present the programme structure and expectations and address any questions from the participants.
- ▶ **Mentoring Sessions.** A series of online sessions focused on business development and entrepreneurial skills. Participants will develop essential skills in market validation, competition analysis, business models, financial analysis, pitching, valuation, and strategic partnerships. In parallel, participants will have access to online B2B Mentoring Sessions, receiving personalized, one-on-one feedback to refine their strategy, address challenges, and enhance their venture's viability.
- ▶ **Dry-Run Session.** A preparatory online session for refining presentations and pitching skills with expert feedback.
- ▶ **2-day Hybrid Bootcamp Sessions.** This will be the final stage of the programme. The first day involves informal pitching and feedback from Mentors and external experts. The second day features the Final Pitch & Evaluation, where teams officially present their business ideas to a jury panel and a live audience.
- ▶ **Certification & Awards.**

Qala

The valorisation and study of an underwater archaeological site in Malta is also a key part of the BCThubs project's goals. The site identified for this task is in Qala and comprises of 4 marble column fragments strewn along the seabed. To fulfil this task, two staff members were provided with scuba training, and the required equipment was purchased which included a DSLR camera with underwater housing and an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV). The Underwater Cultural Heritage Team within the Superintendence set out to identify, document, and digitally preserve the site. The resultant work included the creation of a 3D model of the site and further study of the surrounding area to ensure its preservation. With the data collection, an interactive Augmented Reality (AR) experience was created to offer an incredible and engaging opportunity for those who cannot visit the site underwater. Such AR applications overlay the archaeological and historical images or reconstructions onto existing environments, immersing viewers into the site and offer a visual representation of how objects may have appeared in the past. Additionally, a comparative analysis will be done with other similar columns found at sites north of Malta, off the coast of Italy, to further understand the way in which the columns may have been deposited.

Art4Sea

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage continued its engagement with the Art4Sea project in 2025. Following the recommendations of the SCH, a suitable location for the placement of the underwater sculpture in Gozo was selected. In 2025, the physical artworks were integrated into the marine, natural and architectural landscapes of Ustica, Alonissos and Gozo, creating an open-air museum across these three islands, all connected within the mission to promote healthy oceans. The culmination of the project ended with a Grand Event in Ustica, held from the 10th to 12th September, where all artworks were celebrated. Representatives from the SCH attended the Grand Event, bridging Gozo to its Sicilian counterpart.

Additional Projects

In December 2025, SCH was awarded €50,000 by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) based on the submission of a proposal, to complete a study on the impact of AI on safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The study will take place over a 2-year period in collaboration with other entities in the cultural heritage sector. The results of this study along with recommendations to implement measures will be made public by 2028. The aim will be to assess how AI can support monitoring, protection and restoration processes and make recommendations to ensure the future resilience of cultural heritage.



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



08

**Underwater
Cultural
Heritage**

Introduction

As an archipelago, the history of Malta is intrinsically linked with the sea and maritime activity. This rich history is reflected in the underwater archaeological record, and it is vital to protect it for economic, academic, and environmental reasons. Ancient wrecks offer unique learning opportunities for archaeologists seeking to understand seafaring societies of the past while modern wrecks, like those from WWI & II, serve as important reminders of Malta's more recent history and identity. They can further represent war graves, important habitats for marine life, and dive sites of global repute. Beyond wrecks, Malta's underwater heritage also includes other types of sites like submerged landscapes, structures, harbour deposits, aircraft, and submarines if they have been partially or totally under water, periodically or continuously, for at least 50 years. It is the role of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to regulate activities associated with these sites and fulfil the duties of the State to ensure their protection and accessibility.



BCThubs project was awarded at the Sustainable Development Action Awards.

PHOTO SOURCE: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

One of the functions of the Superintendence is to advise and coordinate with the Planning Authority and other pertinent bodies to ensure that cultural heritage is properly safeguarded from the threats posed by development. This applies to sites underwater, as it does for those on land. Within SCH, it is the role of the Underwater Heritage Team to mitigate the impact of activities like dredging, the construction of breakwaters, the installation of moorings, or the laying of sub-sea cables. There are several methods through which this is achieved. These primarily include issuing Terms of Reference (TORs), imposing monitoring requirements, maintaining a database of known sites, spatial planning using GIS, and inspections.

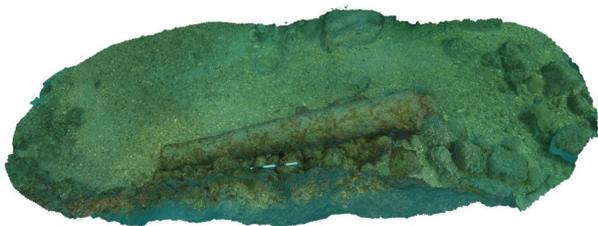
Inspections

Inspections are carried out both on land and underwater and target specific sites where, for example, development is either planned or ongoing, members of the public have reported finds, an unforeseen impact has occurred, or where the monitoring and documentation of already known sites is required. In this way, inspections serve and inform multiple SCH functions beyond only development-related mitigation. More broadly, they are a tool for the Superintendence to exercise the surveillance of cultural property underwater and to conduct research in the field to ensure objects or aspects of cultural heritage can be identified, cared for, and appreciated.



SCH diver documenting a find in-situ during an underwater site assessment.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

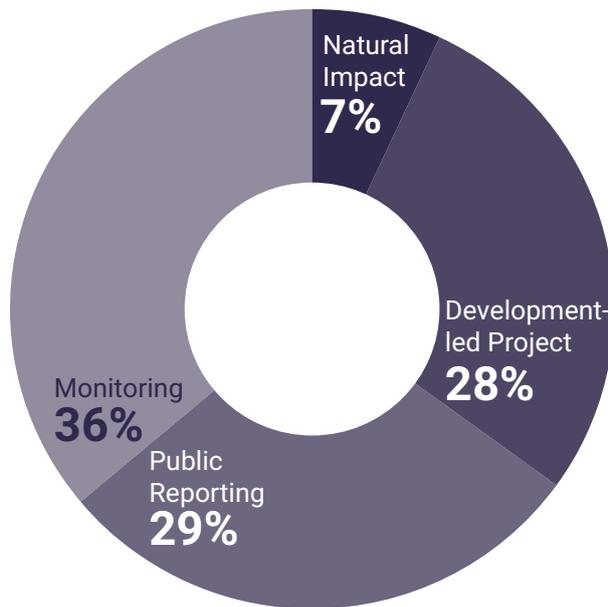


Photogrammetric model of a cannon produced in 2025 following a report made by the public.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Dive inspections are typically scheduled on a bi-weekly basis, and sites are selected from a list based on their level of priority and, in cases when weather is a factor, their location and accessibility. Fifteen dive inspections were carried out in 2025. These included pre-disturbance assessment dives (prior to the upgrading of quays and slipways, dredging, etc.), post-storm dives, the in-situ documentation of newly discovered finds, and the updating of documentation and assessment of previously recorded sites. Reports are generated following the completion of each inspection dive.

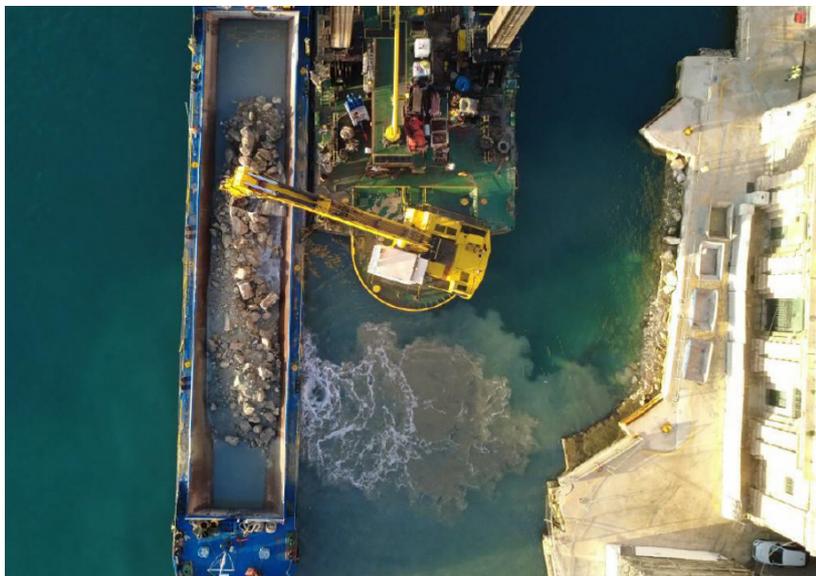
Breakdown of Inspection Dives by Type



A breakdown of the different dive inspections in 2025.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Monitoring



An aerial view of dredging works.

PHOTO SOURCE: QP

Due to the large scale of works taking place along Malta’s coastline and just offshore, monitoring of coastal and underwater national projects is often extensive to ensure that archaeologically or historically sensitive areas are protected. The underwater heritage unit is involved in consultations when dredging, sub-sea cables, underwater/coastal construction or demolition, etc. is proposed.

In 2025, significant dredging works at Lascaris (PA01602/20) and the Freeport (PA01189/23) continued.

The Superintendence had previously issued Terms of Reference for how the archaeological monitoring of these projects should proceed. For both cases, these TORs mandated the on-site presence of an archaeological monitor and the collection and sieving of a percentage of sediment dredged from the seafloor. In the case of Lascaris, this resulted in the recovery of over 1000 individual artefacts. These objects include coins, tobacco pipes, ink bottles, military buttons, etc. which date predominantly from the 18th to 20th century. Photos of some of these finds, courtesy of QP, are included here. These finds are correlated with the customs house

built in 1776 and represent the material evidence for activities carried out in this part of the Grand Harbour. Although sieving is still being carried out and no comprehensive study of the finds has yet taken place, the resulting collection is already yielding interesting results.



Pipe bowl with a ship design.

PHOTO SOURCE: QP



Cap badge of the Gordon Highlanders, British Army.

PHOTO SOURCE: QP



Ink bottle with the mark of the Stephens Ink Brand.

PHOTO SOURCE: QP

Excavations



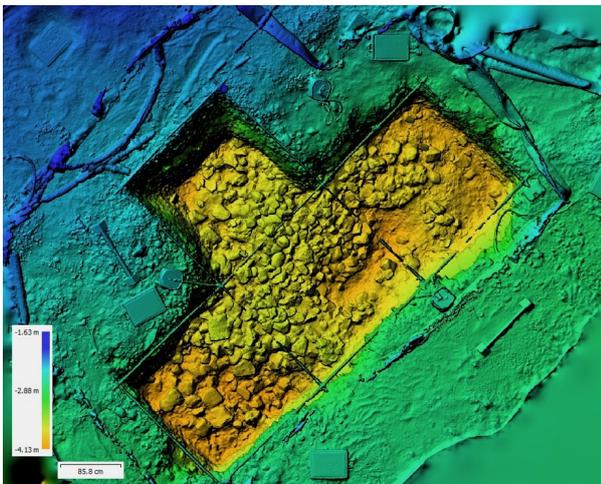
Divers documenting excavation progress and archaeological finds.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

use excavation trenches as proxies to understand changes in burial depth and composition across the project area. With support from Heritage Malta and the University of Malta, four trenches were excavated to depths just beyond what would be dredged (-4.65m MSL). Ancient pottery, glass, faunal remains, and fishing

In some development cases, inspections and monitoring may reveal the necessity for more extensive investigations. This was the case for the proposed dredging in Marsaskala (PA06646/25). From previous underwater archaeological investigations in 1993 and 2021, it is known that the area is archaeologically sensitive and contains a substantial deposit of material from the 4th to 6th centuries. The goal of the excavation carried out in 2025 was to determine what impact the proposed dredging would have on this deposit and how it could be mitigated. As a site assessment and not a full and comprehensive data recovery, the goal was not to excavate the site in its entirety but rather to

weights were documented and recovered. It was also determined that this cultural layer appears across the site at a relatively consistent depth (typically around -4.1m MSL). These findings indicated that the proposed dredging would have a significant and irreversible impact on the site. To mitigate this impact, the Superintendence proposed that dredging be limited to a depth of -3.3m MSL. This proposal was ultimately implemented by Infrastructure Malta and is reflected in the updated plans. From an underwater heritage perspective, this is an ideal outcome as it ensures that the site remains protected under an adequate sediment buffer.



Photogrammetric model of the cultural layer and rock feature in Trench B in Marsaskala.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH.

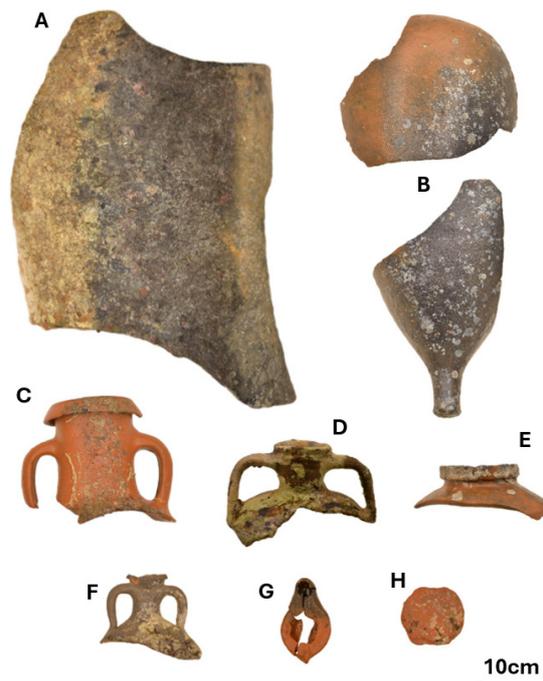
Post-Excavation and Conservation of Underwater Artefacts

The process of desalination is crucial for the long-term stability of artefacts recovered from underwater contexts. As part of this process, material is kept in water that is cycled at regular intervals to ensure that salts are adequately drawn out. Using distilled or deionized water for the last several cycles ensures the efficacy of this method and drastically reduces the potential for spalling or cracking when artefacts are finally allowed to dry fully for the first time. This process is generally considered complete once readings of the water consistently remain below $100\mu\text{S}$. Apart from the material recently recovered from the Marsaskala excavation (some crates currently reading more than $3999\mu\text{S}$), most finds from the other eight sites currently undergoing desalination are nearing completion (with values typically around $300\mu\text{S}$). Once fully desalinated, these finds will be re-



A typological overview of different net weights and sinkers recovered from the site in Marsaskala. Examples "A", "B", and "C" are all made of clay and were recovered from Trench B. The middle row - examples "D", "E", and "F" - are made of stone and were all recovered from Trench D. The bottom two are both made of lead with example "G" originating from Trench A and "H" from Trench D. These finds represent a range of materials, shapes, and weights. They were found across the project area and attest to the ancient fishing practices that took place there.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH.



A selection of diagnostic finds recovered from the site in Marsaskala. The richness and diversity of the finds attest to the archaeological importance of the site and the benefits of preserving parts of it that remain buried and undisturbed. The finds pictured here include amphora body sherds, bases, necks, and handles of various typologies (examples "A", "B", "C", "D", and "E"). Other finds include part of a flask ("F"), an oil lamp ("G"), and an amphora stopper ("H").

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH.

photographed, undergo cleaning and further conservation, and continue to inform post-excavation work being carried out for other corresponding sites.

GIS Platform for Underwater Site Consultations

SCH's GIS platform serves a vital role in the regulation of underwater cultural heritage. At the end of 2025, there were 181 points marking known sites (ex.: harbour deposits, pottery scatters, structural remains, architectural/stone fragments, cannons, wrecks, etc.), 25 points marking declared archaeological zones at sea and their associated buffers, and 10 polygons designating areas where remote sensing surveys have been carried out (to which the raw survey data is also linked). This underwater spatial data has been compiled from a variety of projects, entities, and sources. In addition to the record keeping and activities of the Superintendence, the most significant contributors to this dataset are the University of Malta's Department of Classics and Archaeology, the Malta Shipwreck Survey Project, Heritage Malta, and reports made by the public (typically sport divers and underwater clean-ups). Of the many applications for this data, it is particularly important in development-related cases where proposed plans can quickly be overlaid and cross-referenced with the locations of known sites to inform mitigation strategies.

Underwater Cultural Heritage National Inventory

In 2025, there was a continued effort to inventory the collection of unprovenanced finds housed at the SCH stores. Many of the artefacts that make up this collection were recovered from looters through police action. As a result, they have very little accompanying information as they were initially lifted from the seabed unscientifically and illegally. Nonetheless, these artefacts represent a valuable resource. The primary goal in producing the inventory is to make this resource more available to researchers and to the public.

Some of the artefacts from this collection that have already been added to the inventory are serving this purpose on display at the Salina Salt Museum. The display showcases a variety of finds while emphasising the damage caused by looting and the best practices/reporting protocol that should be adhered to instead. As more of the collection is added to the inventory, they may be employed in similar ways. Typically, the working day of 3-4 staff members is assigned to this task every other week.

Permits

The Underwater Heritage Unit at SCH receives requests for research, monitoring, and survey purposes from public and private entities and, as the regulatory body, permits are issued accordingly. In 2025, 8 permits were issued with conditions, as required by the Cultural Heritage Act. Entities in receipt of such permits are required to share data, research reports, and object inventories with SCH within a specified period of time assigned in the permits for future reference. An application must be completed by those requesting a permit which outlines the purpose of the research, survey or data collection. Should there be a requirement to export and test samples of material collected during research or surveys, approval is also obtained from the SCH Movable Department ensuring temporary and permanent export of cultural material is documented.

The permits issued include a focus on surveying areas around the Maltese Islands in relation to supporting future research, detection, and identification of cultural heritage; monitoring of existing and known sites to

assess evidence of deterioration, damage due to climate change, wave action, and potential looting or other illegal activities; bathymetric surveys that may inadvertently encounter cultural heritage, and deployment of remote sensing technology.

Reporting of Discoveries or Illegal Activity



The discovery of a snagged historic anchor which was formally reported to the Superintendence.

PHOTO SOURCE: MR DAVID AGIUS

A new section of the SCH website was launched this year to make it easier for members of the public to report discoveries. The REPORT A DISCOVERY tab leads to an online form where the following sections can be filled out: location/coordinates, depth in metres, type of seabed (ex.: sand/rock/*Posidonia oceanica*, etc.), and description/comments. Within the same form, users can also upload relevant files (ex.: photos, videos, drawings, etc.). As this is still a new feature, it is often discussed during outreach activities to raise awareness and promote its use.

In 2025, there were 9 formal reports of new underwater discoveries submitted to the Superintendence. This number

reflects only accidental discoveries made by the public and does not include new discoveries made during permitted underwater archaeological surveys or investigations. In addition to these 9 public reports, there were other new discoveries that were not reported directly to the Superintendence but were followed up on after being posted online or communicated indirectly.



5cm

An Islamic amphorettia from the 11th/12th century reported by Žibel.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

New discoveries, beyond the 9 formal reports, have also been made because of underwater clean-up efforts. The Superintendence works with these clean-up teams to ensure that underwater heritage encountered inadvertently is documented and left in-situ.



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TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

09



**Other SCH
Responsibilities**

The Superintendent serves as an *ex-officio* member on the *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi* (BWR), the National Council for Cultural Heritage (NCCH), the National Archives Council and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Board.

Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi

The *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi*, established in terms of Article 35 of the Cultural Heritage Act, is responsible for reviewing applications for the issuance of warrants to practice as a Conservator-Restorer and related practicing certificates in Malta. This includes assessing applicants' academic qualifications and practical training, as well as evaluating applications from experienced professionals. The Board also considers applications for Temporary Warrants and registers individuals with Heritage Skills.

National Council for Cultural Heritage

The National Council for Cultural Heritage, previously known as the Committee of Guarantee, was established under Article 12 of the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). Its primary role is to ensure and promote collaboration among various entities with direct or indirect responsibilities for the protection and management of cultural heritage.

National Archives Council

Established by Article 14 of the National Archives Act (2005), the Council is responsible for promoting the National Archives and other record-keeping entities. It ensures and facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders who have direct or indirect responsibilities for the protection and management of the archives sector. The Council also advises the Minister on matters related to the management of archives in Malta and draws attention to any urgent actions necessary for the better management of archives and records.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Board

Intangible cultural heritage includes practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills, as well as associated objects and cultural spaces, recognized by communities and individuals as part of their cultural heritage. Malta encourages the identification of these elements and has established a National Inventory to preserve traditions, activities, and practices of national importance. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Board, appointed by the Minister for Culture, evaluates submissions and authorises their inclusion in the Inventory. Malta currently lists 12 elements in its National Inventory and has nominated 3 to UNESCO: *Il-Ftira* (added to UNESCO's Representative List in 2020), *L-Ghana*, and *il-Festa Maltija*.

European Archaeology Council

As a member of the European Archaeology Council, the Superintendence attended the Annual meeting held between the 27th and 29th of March at the Museum of Gdańsk in Poland. The theme was 'Life after life of archaeological archives – accessibility and re-use of archaeological collections in heritage management'. During the meeting, common challenges and best practices were discussed, with a number of case studies being presented.

Register for Heritage Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

As of 2025, thirty NGOs have been officially listed in the SCH Register for Heritage NGOs as shown in the table below.

The establishment of a Register for Heritage NGOs is part of SCH's legal mandate through the Cultural Heritage Act (Cap. 445). This is updated regularly, as a function of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and there are significant benefits for NGOs to be listed. For example, Donations (National Heritage) Rules S.L. 123.96 refer to the SCH Register for Heritage NGOs, giving exclusivity to those listed. This means that a private company giving a donation to an enrolled NGO will be eligible to receive a deduction on their income tax for the year in which the donation was made. This acts as an incentive for private companies to place donations with enrolled NGOs as opposed to other NGOs not on the SCH Register.

In addition, the National Council for Cultural Heritage, is required to meet with NGOs working in the field of cultural heritage every four months. The Council is composed of key stakeholders working in the field of cultural heritage and acts as an advisor to the Minister responsible for Culture. They will be making use of this official register to implement their legal obligation giving NGOs enrolled on this register an opportunity at the discretion of the Council to discuss and voice their opinion on issues pertinent to the field of cultural heritage. This opportunity provides a platform to increase the visibility of NGOs and bring forward issues affecting their specific niches, directly with the Council.

The Superintendence also intends to work on proposals to improve existing incentives and to introduce new ones that prioritise NGOs enrolled on this register when directing resources towards the preservation, protection, management and presentation of the cultural heritage.

To be eligible to form part of the register, an NGO must be a voluntary organisation which has been duly provided with a certificate of enrolment by the Commission of Voluntary Organisations under the Voluntary Organisations Act. In addition, a main objective of the NGO must be the promotion of cultural heritage which could include the conservation, restoration, management, presentation and, or study of cultural property.

NGO Name	HNR Number	VO Number
Assoċjazzjoni Wirt il-Kalkara	HNR009	VO/ 1440
Din l-Art Helewa	HNR0018	VO/0008
Fondazzjoni Belt Victoria	HNR0004	VO/0762

NGO Name	HNR Number	VO Number
Fondazzjoni għall-Patrimonju Kulturali tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta	HNR0017	VO/1288
Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malta	HNR0024	VO/1762
Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	HNT0011	VO/0117
Fratellanza Madonna tal-Karmnu, Valletta	HNR0005	VO/2058
Friends of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church	HNR0027	VO/2299
Friends of Villa Frere	HNR0013	VO/0847
Gabriela Caruana Foundation	HNR0028	VO/1236
Magna Żmien Foundation	HNR0033	VO/1505
Malta Association of Professional Conservators-Restorers	HNR0020	VO/0825
Malta Aviation Foundation Museum	HNR0031	VO/0148
Malta Historic Fencing Association	HNR0016	VO/1340
Malta Traditional Boats Association	HNR0015	VO/2174
Marsaxlokk Heritage	HNR0019	VO/1629
Notarial Archives Foundation	HNR0033	VO/1505
SKALI Gudja	HNR0025	VO/2123
Soċjetà Dun Filippu Borgia	HNR0022	VO/0187
Soċjetà Mużikali San Ġużepp Ħal Kirkop A.D. 1886	HNR0029	VO/0237
Soċjetà Storiko-Kulturali Vittoriosa	HNR0026	VO/0272
The Malta Map Society	HNR0032	VO/0545
The Malta Numismatic Society	HNR0014	VO/1896
The Ramblers' Association of Malta	HNR0030	VO/0024
The Russian Nobility Assembly, Delegation of Malta	HNR0007	VO/1589
Wikimedia Community Malta	HNR0023	VO/1211

NGO Name	HNR Number	VO Number
Wirt Ghawdex	HNR0010	VO/0027
Wirt iż-Żejtun	HNR0002	VO/0517
XirCammini	HNR0034	VO/1646

European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) on restoration and conservation

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage continued participating in the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) for restoration and conservation under the aegis of the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) in 2022. The Superintendence is collaborating with the University of Malta (UoM), Restoration Directorate, 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.

European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS)

The core role of the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS) is to provide integrated access to cutting-edge scientific tools, facilities, data and expertise that help researchers study, document, conserve, interpret and manage cultural heritage (for more information, please access <https://www.e-rihs.eu/>). On the 28th March 2025, E-RIHS reached a milestone in its official establishment as a European Research Consortium (ERIC). Malta is a full member and a Founding Member of E-RIHS ERIC, and is formally represented by two representatives, one from the Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government, and one from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. In November 2025, the two local representatives attended the first General Assembly of E-RIHS ERIC at the Consortium's headquarters in Florence, Italy. At a national level, E-RIHS operates through the National Nodes, which in Malta comprise members from nine entities, including the Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government, the University of Malta, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta, the Restoration and Preservation Department, the Malta Libraries, the National Archives, St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation and the Archdiocese of Malta (more information on the Maltese National Node can be found at <https://www.e-rihs.eu/national-nodes/malta/>). Meetings are held regularly between these entities to promote collaborative research and training activities. The National Node is currently organising its second Training School to be held in 2026, after the first successful training event held in 2024. To encourage research, E-RIHS ERIC launched a Catalogue of Services, whereby researchers can apply for use of scientific instrumentation, guided by experts in the field. Calls are announced twice a year, and the National Node is working towards establishing multidisciplinary, collaborative research which brings together researchers from the different entities.



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

10

**Public
Relations and
Outreach**

European Archaeology Days

The Superintendence, in its role as National Co-ordinator for European Heritage Days, continued to promote this event by working with a number of local partners. In 2025, EAD was celebrated between 13th and 15th June, with the following events taking place:

1. A jointly organised tour and on-site lecture by the SCH, the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta, and the Max Planck Institute of the Latnija Cave.
2. 'Out of Sight – Out of Mind', a public talk on the challenges of deep-sea archaeological sites open to the public, organised by the Malta Classics Association.
3. Guided tours of the National Museum of Archaeology, Korin III and the Tarxien Prehistoric Sites by Heritage Malta
4. An open-day and snorkelling event at the Salina Excavation Site, organised by the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta and Heritage Malta.

These events made archaeology more accessible and inviting to the public, making EAD in 2025 a success.

European Heritage Days

The Superintendence, in its role as National Co-ordinator for European Heritage Days, promoted this event by working with a number of local partners. The Superintendence participated in meetings held for National Coordinators in March and October of this year.

European Heritage Days (EHD) 2025 took place between the 3rd and 12th October, celebrating this year's theme: Built Limestone and Beyond: 7,000 Years of Architectural History. The 2025 theme celebrates the diverse range of buildings and structures that shape our surroundings—spanning various styles, functions, and historical periods. Architecture provides a compelling lens through which to explore our shared identity and past.

This year's EHD also coincided with Malta's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. As a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Union, EHD remains the most celebrated participatory cultural event across Europe. A special address by the Minister for Culture was delivered on social media to launch the year's programme. Twenty events by 15 local entities, NGOs, museums and public entities were held during this period.

Public Service EXPO

In line with its commitment to innovation and accessibility, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage had a stand once again at the Public Service EXPO Village which ran from 21st to 25th May. 'Youths and the Future' was the central theme of this event, which was further elevated with the inclusion of technology. The EXPO provided an optimal platform to showcase modern tools and interactive experiences that make cultural heritage more accessible and engaging for younger audiences.

The SCH delivered a diverse range of interactive and educational activities during the EXPO, namely live artefact handling or archaeological material, 3D scanning demonstrations, an interactive GIS-based scavenger hunt, pottery profiling using a 3D laser scanner, and conservation of artefacts for the visitors to see.

Several archaeological artefacts were also on display throughout the EXPO, showcasing the importance of scientific and data-driven archaeological excavation. The exhibits included a set of four oil lamps from various time periods exhibited on one side, while the other set was dedicated to notable discoveries. The four oil lamps constituted part of a 'guessing game' wherein visitors were invited to guess and ponder the dating and types of these oil lamps. The other section showcased some of the most notable discoveries, namely a Roman period stone game board, and a pig-shaped ceramic artefact which caught the attention of many.

These activities provided hands-on experiences and innovative demonstrations that highlight the important role of the SCH, cultural preservation and accessibility.

Educational Outreach

Throughout the year, the Superintendence mentored 4 university students, 2 MCAST students, 4 summer student workers, and a student volunteer, by engaging them in post-excavation processes and in development-led excavation interventions. Students learned key concepts and gained practical knowledge in conducting rescue interventions and were guided through good laboratory practice in the cleaning, treatment and handling/storage of ceramics, human and faunal remains. The team continued to focus on guiding and training students, who in the process, not only help the team during excavations and post-excavation processes but also gain practical experience in the field and laboratory.

Careers EXPO

The Superintendence was also actively engaged in school activities. In January, a presentation on Cultural Heritage Careers was given by a member of the team and another SCH officer to sixth form students at Ġ.F. Abela Junior College, during the Careers Expo organised by the College.



Photo showing children from the St Paul's Missionary College actively participating in the exercise.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

St Paul's Missionary College and St Theresa Middle School

In March, the Superintendence hosted 48, Grade 6 students from St Paul's Missionary College. The students were introduced to the work carried out by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, and archaeology as a discipline. The concept of stratigraphy was introduced, and this was then practiced in the laboratory, through a hands-on activity, which saw students excavate deposits, record finds, and handle archaeological material.



Photo showing an SCH officer showcasing archaeological pottery and human bone remains to students at the St Theresa Middle School.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Blue Door Education

In October, the Superintendence hosted a laboratory visit for Blue Door Education, a registered NGO based in Malta that offers free literacy, language and life-skills classes for adult refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Two groups of adult students from Blue Door Education visited the laboratory at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, where cultural material recovered from development-led excavations was exhibited, and a presentation was given showcasing the rich archaeological repertoire of the Maltese Islands. Furthermore, 2 members of the team gave lectures at the Department of Classics and Archaeology and at the Department of Chemistry, at the University of Malta, on recent discoveries in prehistory, and on biomolecular applications to the study of ceramics, respectively.

A modified version of the activity was repeated in October, when the team was hosted at the St Theresa Middle School. Over 100, Grade 7 students attended the event, whereby over 5 sessions, the students were introduced to excavation principles, archaeology as a profession, and the functions of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

Skolasajf

In July, the Superintendence hosted 12 children attending Skola Sajf at the SCH offices. The activity prepared for these children was targeted at gaining a better appreciation of the Phoenician/Punic Culture found on the Maltese Islands. Students were introduced to the duties of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, and they learned more about the archaeology and material culture dating to the Phoenician/Punic period found on the Maltese Islands. A hands-on activity was organised during this event, during which students wrote their names in Phoenician on clay tablets.



Photo taken during the demonstration of archaeological material culture recovered from development-led archaeology during the Blue Door Education laboratory visit.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Inhouse Workshops

Three workshops were held at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage for Registered Archaeology Monitors. These were aimed at continued personal development in the field of development-led archaeology. The first workshop was held in February and was dedicated to a series of 11 presentations given by Registered Archaeology Monitors, which focused on challenges faced by Archaeology Monitors on site, as well as updates on more recent development-led investigations. In May, another

workshop was held, which targeted best practice in the recovery, handling, delivery and storage of archaeological artefacts. Members of the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team delivered a lecture series on first-aid treatment of archaeological finds during excavations and post-excavation treatment of finds, highlighting cleaning of artefacts and inking. Another lecture focussed on the treatment of human remains, and how to identify, handle and store these important remains. Handling and storage of archaeological finds in preparation for scientific testing was covered, as well as best practice in the inventory, bagging and labelling of material culture. A Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Officer specialised in Geomatics provided a brief overview on how to use the Superintendence's Geographic Information System (GIS) interface. This was followed by a hands-on practical in cleaning and inking of the artefacts, and basic identification, sorting and identification of ceramics ranging from prehistory to the modern era.

The final workshop for this year was hosted in November with the theme chosen being Prehistory in Malta – finds and contexts. A series of lectures by Superintendence of Cultural Heritage officers, as well as guest lecturers from Heritage Malta and the University of Malta, was followed by a hands-on activity aimed at obtaining a better understanding of Maltese prehistoric pottery, handling and treatment.

Underwater Cultural Heritage Workshops

Outreaching activities are vital for the promotion of cultural heritage and the dissemination of information pertaining to its regulation. In the past year, the underwater team has represented the Superintendence at several outreaching events aimed at diverse audiences. These included the Festa Melħ at the Salina Nature Reserve, a presentation for the Calypso dive club, participation in clean-ups organised by Žibel, presentations and workshops during a two week long training camp on underwater cultural heritage through the BCThubs project, a workshop with the AFM (OIC EOD, IEDD & DIVERS PLATOON), and presentations at conferences such as the University Maritime Platform conference.



Presenting at the University Maritime Platform Conference.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Public Relations

One member of the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team, specialised in human osteoarchaeology was interviewed on the Calypso Radio Show, Fuq Fomm Kulhadd. During this programme, dental health was discussed, and the interview aired discussed what the study of teeth from archaeological contexts can tell us about past populations.

Throughout 2025, the SCH continued its commitment to engaging the public through various educational initiatives which engendered a new appreciation for cultural heritage, and remains committed to making public heritage accessible to all.

Various SCH staff contributed significantly to public outreach through a number of interviews related to the ever-popular *Malta u lil Hinn Minnha*, to which the SCH is a regular contributor.

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A professional development seminar is taking place in a grand, ornate hall. The room features large, colorful tapestries on the walls and a high ceiling. A large audience of people is seated in the foreground, facing a presentation screen. A presenter is visible at the front of the room, standing near the screen. The overall atmosphere is formal and educational.

Professional Development

In June 2025, three team members from the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team attended an important international conference titled, “Island Legacies: Prehistoric, Insular Ecosystems, Societies, and Climate Change in the Mediterranean”, which was held at the University Campus in Valletta. A podium presentation was given by one of the team members, titled “Moving away from the major Temple Period funerary complexes: updates from the latest discoveries in Malta and Gozo”, which was well received. The team had the opportunity to network with conference attendees, and as a result, a number of collaborations and funding opportunities emerged.

Furthermore, a member of the Research, Archaeology and Conservation Team, who also acts as the Health and Safety Representative at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, attended a preparatory course on Health and Safety in December 2025, to ensure continued development and compliance with Health and Safety regulations for the entity.

Members of staff also received further training in different areas including well-being and mental health care.



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