



THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA



E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 62

JULY 2024



**ANTOINE BORG AND HIS FATHER, GEORGE BORG,
RAISING THE MALTESE FLAG, COYOTE POINT PARK, SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA
AT THE 2024 MALTESE-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO'S
MEMBERS' APPRECIATION & ANNUAL PICNIC**

See pages 15-21.

**The Maltese Presence
in North America**
Issue No. 62 July 2024

Editor
Dan Brock

Proofreader
Mona Vella-Nicholas

Copy Editors
Mark Caruana
Maria Pia Gauci

Contributors to This Issue

CANADA

Ontario

Richard S. Cumbo
Fr. Roy Farrell
Leah Maruccia
Mary Ann Piscopo

Prince Edward Island

Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino

USA

California

Rita Borg
Evelyn and Dennis Simmons

Michigan

Lisa Buttigieg-LiGreci
Tanya Caruana

MALTA

Nigel Klemenčič-Puglisevich

EDITORIAL COMMENT

July has been another full month with special communal activities within the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco (see pages 1, 15-21); the Maltese Canadian Association (Gozo); the Maltese American Benevolent Society, Inc. of Detroit (see pages 5-8); the Malta Band Club in Mississauga; the Melita Soccer Club in Toronto; and the monthly luncheon in London, Ontario (see pages 8-10).

The luau at the Maltese American Benevolent Society in Detroit (see pages 5-8) and the members' appreciation and annual picnic held at Coyote Point in San Mateo, California (see pages 15-21) look quite inviting if the photos are any indicator.

This issue contains several items of historical interest. There is account of the *De Auxilio* painting in Bormla (Cospicua) which dates back to the 14th century (pages 13-14, 28); Fr. Fortunatus Mizzi's letter of 1916 to Archbishop Neil McNeil regarding the needs of the Maltese in Toronto (pages 24-26); the history of the Maltese Canadian Social Club Guelph Inc. for the years 1976 through 1979 and the executive committee for the same club and the same years (page 27); the notice for the aborted Maltese-Canadian Convention of 1981 (page 10); and the recent agreement by the Maltese-Canadian Museum in Toronto and Magna Żmien to collaborate in digitizing and safeguarding the precious memories of Maltese communities, both in and outside Malta.

July also saw the deaths of two notable Maltese Canadians within their respective communities in southern Ontario, namely Julius Zammit, owner of Malta's Finest Pastries in Toronto (page 23) and Tony Vella, one of the founders of The Maltese Canadian Club in London (pages 11-12).

Again, like the fans' hopes that the Toronto Maple Leafs will once again win the Stanley Cup – the last time was in 1967 when my second cousin Red Kelly was one of the players – I still haven't given up hope of being able to find the time to complete the several articles on the back burner, some going back two years.

Owing to the kindness and efforts of Evelyn and Dennis Simmons of California, all issues and the latest "Table of Contents" are posted on the web page of the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco at <http://maltese-americanscsf.org/home.aspx>. Click on to "News & Resources."

If you have ideas to share, wish to be put on the free, bcc electronic mailing lists, would like to learn the newsletter's advertising rates, etc., I may be reached at danbrock62@gmail.com.

The various Maltese organizations and associations in North America are encouraged to use this e-newsletter to promote themselves and their activities.

CONTENTS

2. Editorial Comment
3. From the Desk of Fr. Roy...
4. Activities within the Maltese Communities
5. Holding a Luau at the Maltese American Benevolent Society
8. The Swiss Chalet Was the Venue for Our Monthly Luncheon
10. Maltese-Canadian Convention 1981
11. The Passing of a Leader within London's Maltese Community
12. Catching up with Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino and Elaborating on His and Others' Efforts to See the Restoration of a Priceless Maltese Artifact
15. Members' Appreciation & Annual Picnic
21. Preserving Maltese Memories: A New Collaboration to Digitise Our Heritage
23. The Passing of the Owner of Malta's Finest Pastries
24. Memorandum of the Needs of the Maltese Community in Toronto – 1916
26. Readers' Comments
27. History of the Club
27. Executive Committees of the Maltese Canadian Social Club Guelph Inc.

MALTA

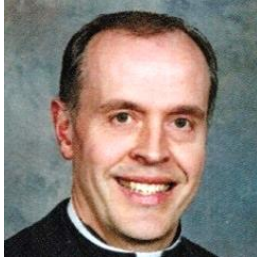
There are 11 places named Malta in the United States.

They are to be found in Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Montana, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas.

Malta, Colorado, originally called Galena, was built as a smelter town in 1875. By 1876 it had a population of 150. By 1877, other larger and closer smelters were constructed to the Leadville mines and Malta began its decline. The post office finally closed in 1950. Today, the Malta schoolhouse and its outhouse are pretty much all that remains at Malta.

**ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH,
TORONTO, CANADA**

From our Pastor's Desk...



Fr. Roy Farrell, a diocesan priest within the Archdiocese of Toronto, is pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, Toronto, the only Maltese parish outside Malta worldwide.

Parish Bulletin for July 20th-21st

Dear Parishioners,

As the warm days of summer envelop us, I reflect on how swiftly time passes. The season invites us to unwind, bask in the sun, and create cherished memories. Amidst these leisurely moments, let us not forget the spiritual nourishment that Sunday Mass provides. It remains an anchor in our lives, grounding us in faith and community.

I am delighted to share that our upcoming trip to Buffalo on August 22nd promises camaraderie and adventure. Thirty-four people have already signed up, and I encourage you to join us. Spread the word among your family and friends—this outing is an opportunity to explore, connect, and build lasting bonds.

In our commitment to community, let us also remember the ongoing ShareLife campaign. To date we have collected \$8,485.00, and have yet to meet our target of \$16,000.00. Thank you for your continued support, every contribution matters! Whether online or through the regular Sunday collection, your generosity makes a difference.

Additionally, mark your calendars for the annual cemetery Mass at Assumption Cemetery on Thursday, August 14th at 7 pm.

If you encounter new faces in our parish, extend a warm welcome. And if your loved ones contemplate joining us, encourage them to reach out to the parish office or speak directly with me.

May this summer be a season of both relaxation and spiritual growth. Your presence enriches our parish, and I look forward to sharing these moments with you. Blessings, Fr. Roy

Parish Bulletin for July 27th-28th

This weekend, we are pleased to welcome Mrs. Daphne Held as our Co-Op Mission Speaker. Daphne is a member of the COAR's (Community Oscar Arnulfo Romero's) Board of Directors. She became acquainted with COAR through her involvement with her parish's Charity and Social Justice Commission. During her visits to El Salvador with her parish, she gained an understanding of the needs and challenges faced by the COAR children. After retiring from her business career, she now dedicates her time to volunteering in various church and community programs. This has allowed her to experience firsthand the transformative power of charity and solidarity in our church's mission to help the poor and vulnerable.

COAR is a remarkable organization located in Zaragoza, El Salvador. It was founded in 1980, during El Salvador's brutal civil war, by Cleveland Diocese Mission Team priest, Fr. Ken Myers. He, along with fellow Cleveland Mission Team members Sr. Dorothy Kazel, OSU and Jean Donovan, began gathering orphans from refugee camps and bringing them back to the Mission's parish in Zaragoza.

Today, COAR is known as the "Children's Village" in El Salvador. It provides education for 1,000 day students at the school and offers foster care, workshops, and other essential services. COAR's motto is "Women and Men for God and Culture," emphasizing holistic education.

COAR is administered directly by the Archbishop of San Salvador through his Vicariate of Human Development. With over 30 employees, COAR plays a vital role in strengthening the regional economy.

One of the first orphans from COAR served as mayor of Zaragoza from 1998 until 2002.

Despite COAR'S positive impact, El Salvador remains an impoverished country, and COAR's students face significant challenges. Basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and housemothers, are crucial for protecting vulnerable children. To modernize their education and economy COAR requires updated computers and new classrooms.

For further information about COAR and how the Church's mission reaches these vulnerable children, visit its website: COAR.PEACE.MISSION or contact it directly at 216-269-1710.

ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE MALTESE COMMUNITIES

Dan Brock

CALIFORNIA

Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco

A **Father's Day Luncheon** was held on Sunday, June 16th.

The **Members' Appreciation & Annual Picnic** took place on Sunday, July 21st. (See pages 1, 15-21)

The **Santa Maria Celebration** will take place on Saturday, August 10th.

GOZO

Maltese Canadian Association (Gozo)

The Association celebrated **Canada Day** on Saturday, July 1st with a **Flag-raising Ceremony** at the Emigrants' Memorial in Mgarr, Gozo in the morning and a **Dinner** at the Country Terrace in the evening.

MICHIGAN

Maltese American Benevolent Society, Inc

A sold-out **Luau** was held on the evening of Sunday, July 14th. (See pages 5-8.)

ONTARIO

Greater Toronto Area

Lehen Malti

LEHEN MALTI (Maltese Voice)

OMNI 1 - Ontario
Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
Tuesdays 11:30 a.m.
Thursdays 8:30 a.m.

OMNI BC
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.

OMNI Alberta
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.

Melita Soccer Club, Inc.

A **bus trip** to **Casino Rama** in Orillia took place on Saturday, July 27th.

A **bus trip** to the **Fallsview Casino** in Niagara Falls, Ontario is planned for Saturday, August 24th.

St. Paul the Apostle Parish

A **Day Trip** to **Our Lady of Victory Shrine and Surrounding Area** in **Lackawanna, New York** is planned for Thursday, August 22nd.

Malta Band Club

A **Barbeque** was held on the evening of Saturday, July 13th.

A **Car Show** took place on Sunday, July 21st.

Sunday, July 28th was the date of the **Semi-Annual General Meeting**.

The **San Gaetano Dinner Dance** will be held on Saturday, August 10th.



The Malta Band Club Incorporated
proudly presents

Festa San Gaetano Dinner Dance

Doors open at 6:00 PM
5745 Coopers Avenue, Mississauga

DATE: Saturday August 10, 2024

The evening's menu will be hobz biz zejt, pasta, Cornish hen, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, coffee or tea.
The Malta Band will perform festive marches for the occasion.

Members price: \$45.00, Non-members price: \$55.00
(Please book by no later than August 3rd)

Cash Bar DJ for your dancing pleasure.

For tickets and additional information, please call Tony at (905) 450-5885, Virginia at (416) 873-6013 or the club directly at (905) 890-8507.

Another **Car Show** is to be held on Sunday, August 18th.

Malta Day will be celebrated on Saturday, August 24th.

Executive Committee for 1980-1981 Malta United Society of Windsor

- President: Albert Attard
- Vice President: Charles Carbonaro
- Secretary: Charles Caruana
- Asst. Secretary: Joseph Busuttil
- Treasurer: Saverio Cassar
- Asst. Treasurer: Emanuel Grech
- Directors: Angelo Mifsud, Saviour Bonello, Joseph Formosa
- Auditors: Mario Caruana, Carmelo Agius

HOLDING A LUAU AT THE MALTESE AMERICAN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Tanya Caruana

On Sunday, July 14th a luau was held at our club.
And what would a luau be without food?



Or people to enjoy it? This was a sold-out event!



There were plenty of opportunities to socialize.



To visit the bar.



Or to model one's Hawaiian attire.





THE SWISS CHALET WAS THE VENUE FOR OUR MONTHLY LUNCHEON

Dan Brock

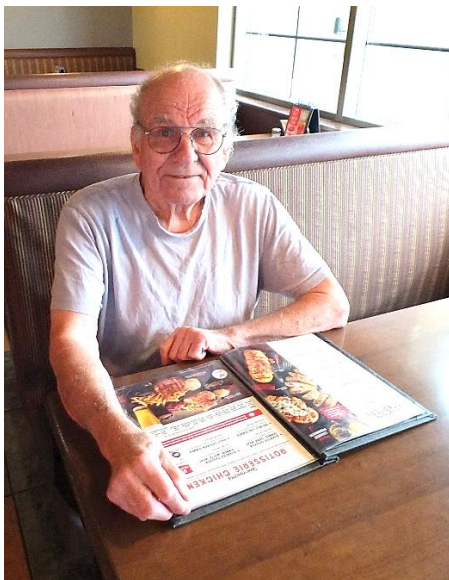
Over 45 were in attendance, at the Swiss Chalet on Wonderland Road South, in London, Ontario for our monthly afternoon luncheon, held on Tuesday, July 30th.

Most of us arrived during a heavy downpour but, by the time we were ready to leave, the sun was out and most of the parking lot showed little evidence of the rain.

Again, we had a great meal and very enjoyable company.



Marisa Zammit, Tony & Lynda Galea, and Connie Zammit



Jim McDonald



Charles & Rose Micallef and Miranda & Deo Catania



Charles Vella, Connie Hislop, Paula Peckham, Janet Peckham, and Janice Vella



Joe and Bernadette Gall, Marlene Mifsud, and Monica and Mannie Micallef



Sr. Kathleen O'Keefe, CSJ, Sr. Dorothy Howley, CSJ Melrose Paquet and Sr. Mary Jo Fox. CSJ



Ron & Miriam McLean, Tessie Spiteri, and Rose Mizzi



Lu Mifsud, Marlene Mifsud, Frank Mifsud, and Vincent Mifsud



Tony & Doris Schembri and Tessie & Joe Mallia



**Tony & Doris Schembri, Tessie Mallia,
Ken & Miriam McLean, Tessie Spiteri,
Rose Mizzi, and Mary Testa**



**Mike Ditchfield, Helen Ditchfield,
Carol Hilton and Terry Rogers**



Loretta Brock, Gena & Ted Gryn, and Dan Brock

MALTESE-CANADIAN CONVENTION 1981

Editor's note: This notice appeared in the Maltese Forum, vol. 6, no. 3 (Autumn 1980). Unfortunately, apathy caused the cancellation of this event. See also pages 11-12 below.

The intention of the Maltese-Canadian Club of Guelph Inc., is organizing the first convention, in order to create a council that would represent all the Maltese in Canada and in the United States of America.

The convention is slated for Friday, June 28, 1981, at 5:00 p.m. and will close on June 28, 1981, at 12 noon.

A detailed agenda for the conference will be specified in a future bulletin, and various leisure activities will be available during the programme.

Participants may join in functions such as soccer tournaments, tea parties and Malta Band Club programmes, or they may make use of tennis courts and a swimming pool.

Facilities for the functions are available at the University of Guelph at reasonable prices. A fee of \$75.00 per person will include:

1. Accommodation for two nights (double occupancy).
2. Friday evening's get acquainted Wine and Cheese Party.
3. Saturday's breakfast, lunch, conference, banquet, dance and all other functions.
4. Sunday's Mass and served breakfast.
5. Parking during the Convention weekend.

Daily rates are available for those who do not wish to stay in residence.

The registration for attending on Saturday, the official opening day is a registration fee of \$20.00 per person to be paid by December 31st, 1980. The balance is to be paid not later than March 31st, 1981.

Negotiations for Government grants are in progress. If approved, they would help to alleviate transportation costs and other expenses.

Participation by every Maltese immigrant and Canadians of Maltese descent is a vital element for the project's success.

The M.C.S.C. of Guelph guarantees that all registration fees will be refunded in full if the number of registrations does not justify holding this programme.

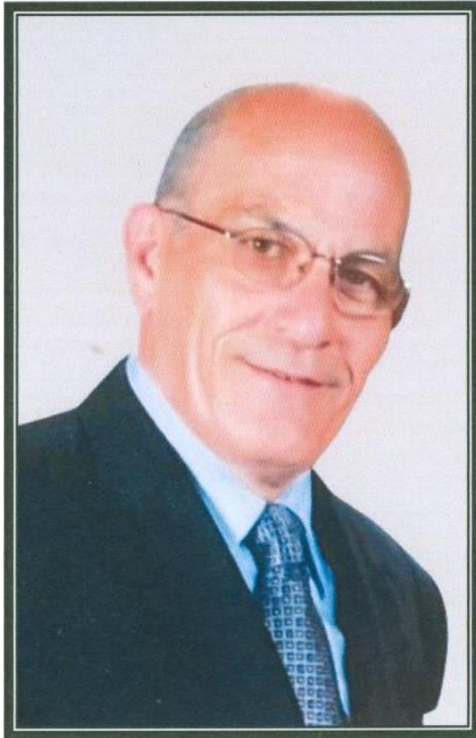
Further information about the Convention may be obtained by writing or phoning:

CONVENTION 1981
C/O Vic Cassar
60 Montford Drive
Guelph, Ontario, N1E 6G1
Tel.: 1-519-821-3945

THE PASSING OF A LEADER WITHIN LONDON'S MALTESE COMMUNITY

Dan Brock

Tony Vella died here in London on the evening of Saturday, July 27, 2024, surrounded by his loving family. For several years he had been courageously struggling with health issues.



Anthony Joseph Vella was born in Paola, Malta, to Giuseppe and Maria (Mizzi) Vella on January 3, 1945.

In the summer of 1955, he immigrated to London, Ontario with his mother and three of his siblings. His father and an older sister, Mary, had left Malta in the spring of 1954. Tragically, Tony's parents died in 1957 and 1958 respectively. Consequently, Tony and some of his siblings were raised by their maternal grandmother, Rafaela Mizzi, who had accompanied them to Canada.

Tony was a longtime avid fan of both Elvis Presley and the Toronto Maple Leafs. He was also a devoted husband to his wife, Censa, and a father to James, Jessie, and the late Joe. His vehicular license plate reflected his love of both the Leafs and his sons.



Photo courtesy of Leah Maruccia

Tony was a founding member of The Maltese Canadian Club of London and it was as a member of its executive that I first came to know him and the leadership role he played within that Club.

Over the decades of the Club's existence, he served on almost every position on the executive. Tony loved cooking, and he was frequently to be seen in the kitchen preparing meals for various club functions. He often saw to every detail in preparing for banquets. From him I learned to properly set a banquet table. At times my placement of the cutlery was not up to his standards and he might move a utensil but a few millimetres.

One of the many qualities I admired in Tony was the role he played in keeping the Maltese community in London together through events at the Club, picnics, and the annual Memorial Mass.

With the dissolution of our club in December 2018, I was determined to see that the Maltese community continued to come together, apart from funerals, for various functions such as luncheons, yearly picnics, and annual Memorial Masses. While others stepped up to organize these, my role was as sort of a clearing house via emails and telephone calls.

Another way in which Tony influenced me was in his deep desire that the various Maltese communities, at least those encircling the Lower Great Lakes, might come together as one from time to time.

In early September 1945, 14 Maltese organizations from the United States and Canada came together for the first (and only) Convention of the Grand Council of Maltese Associations of North America.

In 1980, the executive of the Maltese-Canadian Social Club Guelph Inc. was putting plans in place to hold a convention in June 1981 at the University of Guelph. This was to consist of the various Maltese groups in Canada and in the United States. At first, the response was “very supportive and encouraging” but, by the end of 1980, owing to general apathy beyond Guelph, this convention was cancelled.

Despite this, Tony Vella held out hope that one day the various Maltese organizations throughout Canada and the United States could somehow come together to interact with one another.

For more than eight years, I had been the editor of our local club’s newsletter. As our club was preparing to disband, I envisioned “editing a free, electronic newsletter which would serve the Maltese communities of all North America.”

The birth of *The Maltese Presence in North America* was in part inspired by Tony’s vision for the Maltese communities in Canada and the United States and, hopefully, is in some way helping to promote that vision.

The Funeral Mass for Tony Vella was held at St. Justin’s Church in London on Wednesday, July 31st. Interment took place at St. Peter’s Cemetery.

May his good works such as devotion to his family and to his faith in God continue to inspire us.

Thank you, Tony! It has been a privilege to have known you and to have been inspired by you.



**CATCHING UP WITH
DR. GODFREY BALDACCHINO AND
ELABORATING ON HIS AND OTHERS’
EFFORTS TO SEE THE RESTORATION OF
A PRICELESS MALTESE ARTIFACT**

Dan Brock

In issue 54 (December 2023) of this newsletter, I mentioned my meeting with Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino while in Malta last autumn.

While a professor of sociology at the University of Malta he is currently spending the summer at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), in Charlottetown, Canada.

Godfrey and his wife Anna moved to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI) with their 11-year-old son Luke in July 2003. While at UPEI, he served as Canada Research Chair and then as UNESCO Co-Chair in Island Studies. While officially retired from UPEI, he continues to teach there as a summer sessional professor in island tourism and island studies.

Godfrey has done much to bolster the scientific study of islands around the world, a passionate pursuit that he continues to peddle with even more energy and pride, having been appointed Malta’s Ambassador-at-Large for Islands and Small States in February 2021.



Anna, meanwhile, has continued her studies after reading for a Bachelor in Child and Family Studies at UPEI. She completed her doctorate in 2019 and is a specialist in early childhood education. Her co-authored book on the emergent curriculum is forthcoming with Routledge, publishers of professional and academic books.

The impact of Godfrey’s forays in island studies on UPEI, PEI and Atlantic Canada has been considerable.

Over 100 students have now graduated with a Master of Arts in island studies at UPEI; the Institute of Island Studies continues to advance scholarship and promote relevant policy initiatives that speak to small island issues.

UPEI is the world's only university that offers a minor in island studies to its students; and various publications, published in the region, attest to a rich literature: from *A Taste of Islands* (a cookbook bestseller, co-edited with Anna) to two books on the importance of place in island and rural development - *Remote Control* and *Place Peripheral* - published by Memorial University Press in St John's Newfoundland. Godfrey has also set up the flagship journal in the area, *Island Studies Journal*, and served as the president of the International Small Islands Studies Association (2014-22): www.isisa.org

A 2024 study acknowledges Godfrey as "the most prominent author in both dimensions of this study, suggesting that his contributions are highly recognized both at the European and global levels in the field of island studies". Within North America, he has delivered guest lectures and ran seminars or conferences in New York City, at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor campus, MI), Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ), and Maui Community College HI; as well as the Canadian Universities of York (ON); Cape Breton, Mount Allison and Dalhousie (NS); Memorial (NL); and the University of New Brunswick.

Meanwhile, a global presence and reach does not diminish his interest and concern for things local in Malta. Godfrey hails from the old, double-fortified harbour city of Bormla (Cospicua). As noted on his Facebook page, he, together with two colleagues, *Dr. Ing. Paul R. Micallef and Dr John Vella*, have launched a campaign to restore a medieval icon of Our Lady, dedicated to preserving a significant piece of medieval history connected to the Marian devotion in that city centuries before it became a parish.

They are planning to raise €3,600 and are looking for 36 donations of €100 euros each to restore this medieval icon of immense cultural and historical value, titled *De Auxilio* (Our Lady of Help) and known popularly as Our Lady of Navigators.

A professional restoration process is essential to ensure that future generations can enjoy this artefact and that it remains an important educational piece for historians and art enthusiasts. This campaign will run for six months, or until they gather the necessary funds to cover the costs associated with professional restoration services, materials, and maintenance.

This initiative enjoys the blessing and support of Archpriest Fr. Anton Cassar, Parish Priest of Bormla.

What follows is some very interesting artistic background relating to this icon as taken from the ReCoop report (2024).



The painting depicts the Virgin Mary dressed in red with arms wide open, holding a blue cloak embellished with a gilt floral pattern. She strikes a benevolent pose, extending her cloak to shelter and bless those gathered around her.

Beneath the cloak, surrounding her, are portrayed several figures, depicted in various poses of prayer and reverence, representing various characters from different roles in society. She is standing on the crescent moon reminiscent of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception. Very particular is the use of gold leaf in the manufacturing and embellishment of specific features in the painting. The (as yet unknown) artist, maybe influenced by the icon painting technique, used the gold leaf to depict the halo with the 10 stars around the Virgin's head, the floral pattern on the blue cloak and its perimeter, and for the belt around Her waist.

The artwork was once the main altar painting of the Del Soccorso church in Bormla and is now housed in the sacristy of the Parish Church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It reflects a common theme in Christian iconography known as the *Madonna della Misericordia* or "Our Lady of Mercy," where Mary is portrayed as a protective mother sheltering her devotees. Written sources and oral tradition also refer to it as *Our Lady 'Auxilium Christianorum'* (Help of Christians), and known popularly as the '*Madonna tal-Bahrin*' (Our Lady of Seamen).

The following fascinating historical background of the icon is gleaned from John Vella, "The Rock-cut Church of Bormla: Origins and Developments," *Journal of Maltese History*, vol. 5, no. 1, (2016) pages 49-74.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/18112>

The painting known locally as *il-Madonna tal-Baħrin* depicts Our Lady of Help (*De Auxilio*). It is a Sienese or Byzantine work of art attributed to the 13th or very early 14th century, which posed a departure from the two-dimensional paintings of Byzantine icons. Only two such paintings survive in Malta. Besides that of the Blessed Virgin in Bormla, another is that representing St. Paul sitting in a chair in a flowery robe, venerated in the Mdina Cathedral Church.

The *De Auxilio* painting is similar to most paintings found in Siena, on the Italian peninsula, dating back to 1308 and attributed to Simone Martini (1284-1344), such as the *Madonna della Misericordia*. Martini, an apprentice and helper of Giotto di Bondone, and an artist himself who worked in the old Vatican church, was the first Renaissance artist to depart from the old two-dimensional Byzantine style. Another artist who adopted the same techniques was Lippo Memmi (1291-1356). The son of Memmo di Filippuccio, Memmi studied with Guido da Siena, acted as an assistant with Giotto at Assisi, and was also a follower of Martini, his brother-in-law.

This Sienese or Byzantine-style painting pre-dates the *Del Soccorso* church (the precursor of the Bormla Parish Church), built by the Palermitan Capitan Rocco, by about half a century. It is, therefore, assumed that the *De Auxilio* (*Madonna tal-Baħrin*) painting was originally venerated at the rock-cut Byzantine Nativity church after it had been enlarged.

The devotion to Our Lady of Help or of Assistance (of Christians) had been popular among Byzantine Christians since the 4th century AD. *Βοηθεια* (the Help) and this devotion increased in the 11th century and during the Crusades. The title *Madonna tal-Baħrin* could have been adopted by the Sevillians who frequented the Bormla port and its rock-cut church during the 13th and early 14th century. Indeed, it can be compared to a later work that is found in Seville, the *Madonna dei Naviganti* (1531-1536) by Alejo Fernandez.

Parish church records and publications do not provide details about the painting's origins; but it is well-documented that the *De Auxilio* painting came to the newly-built parish church of Sancta Maria Concezione del Soccorso from the ancient Byzantine church in 1636. Although the Bormla communities were declared a parish in late 1586, the old Latin church built around 1307-1320 by Captain Rocco had since the Great Siege of 1565 been deprived of its original triptych of the *Madonna del Soccorso* (*Madonna tal-Marżabba*) which had been taken to Mdina for safety from Ottoman attacks.

Moreover, the church suffered damages and needed to be repaired and rebuilt to accommodate the community. This led to the old Byzantine church serving as the parish church from 1586 till 1636, after which it ended up in private hands, changed the titular from that of the Nativity (Theotokos) to St. Helen, and then ceased activity for good in 1668.

From its transfer to the newly-built parish church, the *De Auxilio* painting would have served as the first titular painting in the absence of the *Del Soccorso* triptych. Over time, it was moved to the old sacristy at Bormla Parish Church.

It is hoped that this restoration initiative of the *De Auxilio* painting will kindle and raise awareness of such a unique historical and artistic heritage.

By contributing to this campaign, donors are helping to safeguard a piece of Bormla's and indeed Malta's shared heritage.

Note: All donors will have their name documented and eventually published in a suitable publication. A signed certificate will also be issued to each donor.

Coordinators, Fund Raising Campaign

Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino (tal-Impedut) - +356 79005314 – gbaldacchino60@gmail.com.

Dr. Ing. Paul R. Micallef (tan-Noni tal-Banka tal-Lottu) - +356 79422560 – paulmicallef25160@gmail.com.

Dr John Vella (tal-Bejlikka) - +356 99273276 – vellajohn163@gmail.com.

An enlargement of this icon appears on page 28 of this newsletter.

MEMBERS' APPRECIATION & ANNUAL PICNIC

Rita Borg

This year's Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco Members' Appreciation & Annual Picnic was held on Sunday, July 21st. A new venue, Coyote Point Park in San Mateo was the location.



We had perfect weather and about 200 guests attended.

This was a picnic and there were hamburgers, wieners, watermelons, etc.





There were plenty of picnic tables.







There were activities for children of all ages.



A 50/50 draw followed the picnic.



This was followed by the opportunity to play bingo.





And, of course, one could just sit back and relax in the shade or in the sun.



Maltese-themed baseball caps could be purchased.



Thank you to all the volunteers. Looking forward to next year's picnic at the same park.



PRESERVING MALTESE MEMORIES: A NEW COLLABORATION TO DIGITISE OUR HERITAGE

Nigel Klemenčič-Puglisevich, MA
(Curator of Roman Archaeology,
Heritage Malta)

nigel.puglisevich@gov.mt

The Maltese-Canadian Museum in Toronto and Magna Żmien, a Malta-based foundation, have joined forces to digitise and safeguard the precious memories of Maltese communities, both in and outside Malta. This collaboration promises to keep our collective heritage alive for future generations to appreciate, interpret, learn from, and so much more. This initiative is supported by the Arts Council Malta International Cultural Exchanges Fund and has also received letters of support from former Prime Minister of Malta Dr. Alfred Sant, Bhutla Karpoche, Ontario MPP for Parkdale—High Park (New Democratic Party) and the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario.

Getting Started

On 31 August 2023, Richard Cumbo, the curator of the Maltese-Canadian Museum, along with team members Nigel Klemenčič-Puglisevich and Kealey Kennedy, met with Andrew Pace (MŻ Co-Founder and Archivist) from Magna Żmien to officially discuss initiating a collaboration. On 6 July this year, they gathered once again at the Elephant Shoe restaurant in Valletta to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) along with other eager members of the team, including Andrew Alamango (MŻ Co-Founder and Artistic Director), Margerita Pulè (Co-Founder), Kris Polidano (MŻ Communications Manager and Researcher), and Francesca Zammit. This agreement sets the stage for a project that will digitise historic photographs, films, and audio recordings from Maltese communities in Malta and Canada.

What is Magna Żmien?

Magna Żmien (meaning "Time Machine" in Maltese) began in 2018 with a mission to rescue Maltese memories from old, deteriorating formats and convert them into digital files.

They offer a free digitisation service to the public, ensuring that these invaluable pieces of history are not lost. Their archive holds over 14,000 items, documenting everyday life in Malta through the 20th century, including home movies, images of social and religious events, audio messages, and traditional music.



(l. to r.) Maltese-Canadian Museum Curator Richard Cumbo, Magna Żmien's Dr. Andrew Pace and Andrew Alamango

The Importance of Digitising Memories

Why is digitising these memories so important? Many of us have boxes of old photos, reels of film, and tapes that hold precious memories of our families and communities. These formats degrade over time and can be lost forever. By digitising them, we not only preserve these memories but also make them accessible to future generations.

This project is vital for the Maltese community because it preserves the stories of average people—our grandparents, neighbours, and friends—that often get overlooked in traditional histories. Magna Żmien aims to save these everyday lives and significant moments from being forgotten.

The Collaboration

The collaboration will establish a permanent digitisation studio at the Maltese-Canadian Museum in Toronto. This studio will be equipped with the necessary technology to convert old photos, slides, negatives, films, and audio tapes into digital formats. Magna Żmien will provide support and training to ensure everything is done to the highest standards.

A few members of the Maltese-Canadian Museum team leading the collaboration: (l. to r.) Niġel Klemenčič-Puglisevich,



Kealey Kennedy, and Richard Cumbo

This project is about people—about you. We want to encourage the Maltese-Canadian community to bring forward their collections. Maybe you have a box of photos from your parents' wedding, tapes of family gatherings, or films of past festas. These items are treasures, and by digitising them, we can keep these memories alive and share them with the world.

Getting Involved

We need your help to make this project a success. If you have old photographs, films, or recordings, consider bringing them to the Maltese-Canadian Museum. Our team will digitise them and return the originals to you. It's a simple process, but it makes a world of difference in preserving our shared heritage.

This collaboration is not just about preserving the past; it's about connecting us all through our shared history. Imagine future generations being able to see, hear, and experience the Malta we know and love through your memories. By participating, you're ensuring that the rich tapestry of Maltese life is kept vibrant and accessible.



The Micallef Family, after moving to the Toronto Junction from Rabat, Malta in 1923. From the collection of the Maltese-Canadian Museum.

This partnership between the Maltese-Canadian Museum and Magna Żmien is an opportunity to celebrate and preserve our heritage. Let's come together to safeguard the stories, sounds, and images that define us. Your memories are important, and by digitising them, we ensure they remain a vital part of our community for years to come.

For more information about the project and how to contribute, visit the [Maltese-Canadian Museum's Facebook page](#) and [Magna Żmien's website](#), or contact the Maltese-Canadian Museum's curator Richard Cumbo at richardcumbo01@gmail.com.



THE PASSING OF THE OWNER OF MALTA'S FINEST PASTRIES

Dan Brock

Malta's Finest Pastries had a booth at this year's Imnarja MaltaFest held at Toronto's Runnymede Park on Saturday, June 22nd.



The restaurant itself is at 4138 Dundas Street West, in Toronto. Its owner, Julius Zammit, "grew his business from the ground up."



Julius passed away on July 13th of this year, "after a long and courageous battle with kidney disease and cancer."

He is survived by his daughters, Julia, Lisa, and Liliana; his partner Asuncion; and his grandchildren, Emma, Sofia, Julian, and Carlos.

Julius was born on July 17, 1953, to Carmelo and Josephine Zammit and had eight siblings: Joseph, Maryanne, Emanuel, Anthony, Paul, George, Mario, and Josephine.

He was unwaveringly committed to his family and friends and generous to his church, the people in his community, and anyone who needed a helping hand.

**MEMORANDUM ON THE NEEDS OF THE
MALTESE COMMUNITY IN TORONTO – 1916***

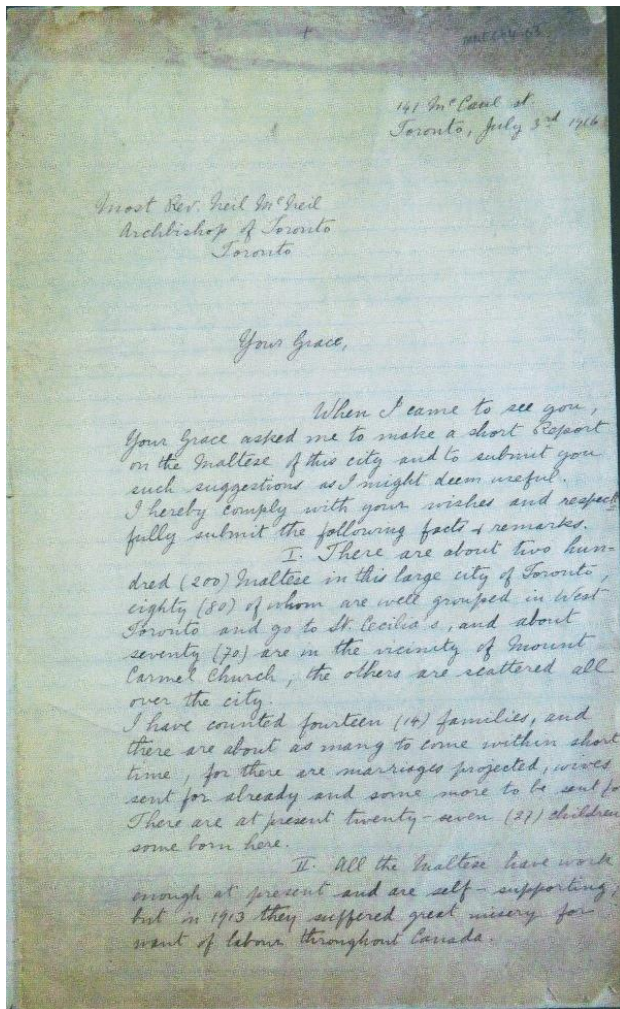
141 M^cCaul st.
Toronto, July 3rd 1916

Editor's note: This 1916 letter by Father Fortunatus Mizzi to the then Archbishop of Toronto is to be found in the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, Archbishop Neil McNeil fonds, MN En04.03. It was originally published with permission on pages 9-10 in the July/August 2017 issue of The Maltese Canadian Club of London Newsletter.

The letter echoes the words of the late Father Lawrence E. Attard of Sliema, Malta, that "the Maltese living in Toronto felt that their religion was not only a valid bond which held them together but it also served as a bridge to help them foster communication with their Canadian coreligionists." (Fr. Lawrence E. Attard, The Great Exodus (1919-1939), 1989, page, 74.)

In reading Father Fortunatus' memorandum, one cannot help but be proud of these Maltese forebearers to Canada.

While the original text has been retained, the punctuation has been changed to conform to present-day standards.



Most Rev. Neil McNeil
Archbishop of Toronto
Toronto

Your Grace,

When I came to see you, Your Grace asked me to make a short Report on the Maltese of this city and to submit you such suggestions as I might deem useful. I hereby comply with your wishes and respectfully submit the following facts & remarks.

I. There are about two hundred (200) Maltese in this large city of Toronto, eighty (80) of whom are well grouped in West Toronto and go to St. Cecilia's, and about seventy (70) are in the vicinity of Mount Carmel Church. The others are scattered all over the city.

I have counted fourteen (14) families, and there are about as many to come within [a] short time, for there are marriages projected, wives sent for already and some more to be sent for. There are at present twenty-seven (27) children, some born here.

II. All the Maltese have work enough at present and are self-supporting, but in 1913 they suffered great misery for want of labour throughout Canada.

Amongst them are architects, electricians, carpenters, stone-cutters, builders and labourers. Some women are lured for sewing.

They live very economically, but they help their families and parents in Malta lavishly, for they undoubtedly send home 25 and 30 dollars, and even more, every month.

III. They are Catholics at heart. In Malta, they used to hear Mass nearly every morning and receive Holy Communion pretty often. They never went to bed without reciting five decades of the Rosary. But now they feel a change has come over them and they are the first to regret being unable to practise their Religion so well as they did in their fatherland. Yet, the reports I have had regarding them, both as Catholics and as labourers, are excellent.

I myself was edified by the fact that some of them went to confession with the aid of an interpreter. They are also very generous to the Church: they never missed Mass merely in order to avoid to pay their dues. And I was glad to hear that one man, Mr. Azzopardi, collected three hundred dollars from among the Maltese for the diocesan Seminary.

It shows therefore that they are really well disposed. How pleased were they to meet a priest of their language! It was “as if they met their fathers & mothers”, to use their own expression.

I practically heard the confessions of them all, about 150, if to that number be added 27, the number of the children under the age of reason. The balance of 200 is very little.

IV. Nevertheless, for justice' sake, I must acknowledge some symptoms of relaxation. It is true that all those that confessed went regularly to Mass, and never missed it except for a good reason. But the reception of the Sacraments is neglected.

One-third of the Maltese population did not approach the sacraments for three years, and more than one-third for fourteen months, since Fr Tabone, S.J. came [Father Anthony Tabone, a native of Gozo, had visited the Maltese in Toronto, in February 1914, while temporarily stationed in Guelph, Ontario], the remainder made frequent Communion.

There is one case of a marriage of a Maltese man and Protestant woman before a Protestant minister, another of mixed marriage before a Catholic priest, a third one of the Protestant party becoming Catholic in order to be married to a Maltese man, and lastly one case of bigamy. All this shows what the influence of bad surroundings can achieve.

It cannot be said that the Maltese are not well instructed in their Religion, for they receive a thorough one in Malta; nor that they do not appreciate the value of the Sacraments, for they do not say, like the Italians, “What's the use of receiving Communion if I am to fall again”; on the contrary I heard them telling me, “We would like to receive often, for at least we then diminish our sins.” So, the atmosphere is mostly to be blamed.

V. The immigrants of every nationality whatever find themselves here in a very miserable state. They are packed in houses, sleeping four or even more in the same room, in the midst of disorder [and] want of cleanliness. Some are youngsters, others are married men, but their wives are way in the old country. Not much reflection is needed to be convinced of the disorders which must result there from: playing for money, fighting, drinking, bad conversations, and evil deeds, and, last but not least, separation from one's wife.

Up to now, thanks [be to] God, the Maltese have not fallen into all these excesses; but is it humanly possible to expect that they will resist for a long period of years all the temptations and occasions of sin which actually surround them, whilst there is scarcely anything to check their passions?

It is impossible! and in making this statement, I am taking into account the character of the Maltese. They will certainly lose their good habits and good disposition, if they keep away from the Sacraments for some length of time.

VI. What's the remedy ?

Since Your Grace, “*mater proprie*” [properly our mother], asked me to present to Your Lordship whatever suggestions I might think proper, I must state there is, to my humble opinion, very great need of a Maltese priest.

The Maltese emigrants do not know enough English or enough Italian to confess their sins in either of those languages, and still less to follow a sermon.

Supposing that they could pick up enough English in five years, that long period of time must make them become tepid and indifferent in Religion.

VII. I understand that it is quite easy to say that a priest is needed and not as easy to provide one. How to get him? How to procure him a living?

No priest would dare to come from Malta without knowing beforehand what awaits him.

And I feel sure that the Bishop of Malta will not send a priest unless he is asked for by Your Grace himself, and unless he knows authoritatively what sort of mission and what provisions are going to be given to the priest.

Now, it is a fact that the two hundred (200) Maltese, of whom fifteen (15) are women and twenty-seven (27) children, are not able to support a pastor and pay the expenses of the Church.

What I am sure of is that they are willing to raise six hundred dollars (\$600.00) a year. I had a meeting last Sunday when we discussed this subject, and they all feel willing and able to do their share.

Evidently, that sum is far from being sufficient for the Church, but quite substantial for the support of the Pastor.

VIII. Hence, in order to give the benefit of a Maltese priest, I can only suggest the three following expedients:-

(1st) A Maltese priest to be curate (not rector) of a parish already existing.

(2nd) A Maltese priest chaplain to a Community of Sisters, [or]

(3rd) A Maltese priest, knowing English fluently, rector of a mixed parish, English and Maltese.

The first expedient might not work very well, for the priest might not be left sufficiently free to attend to Maltese at any time he finds it convenient

The second expedient is, in a way, better than the first one, but what about the celebration of Mass on Sunday and where would he preach to the Maltese?

In regard to the third expedient, would the English people like to form a parish along with the Maltese? As to the Maltese, they certainly would; for, once they have decided to stay in this country, they would rather become Canadians altogether. The Maltese priest, knowing English perfectly well, would teach catechism in English to the children, who would promptly become real Canadians

But owing to the present circumstances, I think that of these three solutions, the second one should be temporarily preferred, till the third one is reached.

May I please Your Grace to excuse my poor language, for, however deficient it may be, I feel confident that it furnishes to you an opportunity of promoting God's glory. And I rejoice that the Church's interests are altogether safe in your hands.

Asking of Your Grace a special blessing, whilst I kiss your episcopal ring

I remain

Your Grace's grateful & humble servant,
Fr Fortunatus

Of Valletta

O.M.Cap.



READERS' COMMENTS

Thanks again for sharing the June issue with us.

Stephanie Schembri, Archives Assistant,
National Archives of Malta, Head Office

Thank you once again for the latest newsletter and the amazing Table of Contents! What a labour of love.

Prof. Adrian Grima, Fakultà tal-Arti, L-Università ta' Malta

Needless to say, I am always delighted to read the fruits of your labor, "The Maltese Presence in North America." Although, there is one issue that is of somewhat a concern to me personally. As I read with interest your newsletter, what is apparent, as an 82-year-old, the son of a Maltese immigrant, who alone at the age of 17, embarked on a two-week Atlantic Ocean crossing to what was often referred to as "The New Country", is the absence of contributions from the northeastern segment of the U.S.

As a child, I have fond memories of a beehive of activities that had always taken place in and around Astoria Queens, NYC, at the time, the Mecca of the Maltese immigrant population in the Northeast. Our parents attended various social activities, cheered on the Malta United Soccer Team, and memories of an occasional visit to the Maltese Club where my father would purchase pastizzi by the dozen for our family and others. Over time, these families, for the most part, began a movement to Detroit, MI, where employment in the automotive industry was readily available.

My concern is the almost evaporation of Maltese and their descendants in the Northeast, and the lack of their contributions of activities and family histories to your Newsletter.

Chuck Vassallo

Editor's Note: An excellent observation Chuck. I encourage the Maltese organizations and individuals in the northeastern part of the United States to keep me abreast of what is happening in their community and share accounts of their families immigrating to America. Let the general readership know that there are still active Maltese American communities and families in this part of the United States.

Many thanks Dan for another great newsletter.

I loved seeing the old car enthusiasts, presenting their treasured toys to be admired.

George Stagno Navarra, Malta

Wow Dan, you are such an inspiration to many, and what an awesome legacy you are blessing your children with. Many thanks for all you have done and continue to do.

Mariza Borg, NWS, Australia



HISTORY OF THE CLUB

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the booklet commemorating the first four years of the Maltese Canadian Social Club Guelph Inc. Some editorial changes have been made to the text.

On May 31st, 1976, the Charter Dance was held at Steelworkers Hall in Guelph with Mayor Norm Jary and Maltese Commissioner, Mr. L. Pisani to officially inaugurate the Club by unveiling the emblem of the Club. The emblem was made by Mr. Frank Fenech and consisted of a shield divided in two parts, one red with a Maltese Cross, the other part white with a Red Maple Leaf, with the inscription in black on a gold background, "Maltese Canadian Social Club". For this occasion, we had a busload of Maltese from various clubs in Toronto. They presented the Club with a plaque. Letters of congratulations were received from the first President of Malta, Mr. Anthony Mamo and the Prime Minister, Mr. Dom Mintoff.

So, the Club was on its way. Since that time the club members have enjoyed numerous social activities. They won the second prize the first time they participated in the Toronto Maltese Carnival Parade held in July 1976. A bus trip was taken to Toronto Centre Island. Malta Night was held in September and a Children's Christmas Party was held in December. To ring out the old year and welcome in the new year the Club held its first New Year's Eve Party, which was sold out and enjoyed by all who came.

The new executive was elected at a general meeting held in April 1977. The committee and their helpers worked hard, the same as the first committee. They organized social dances, the First Anniversary Dance, a picnic, and Malta Night. They enrolled in the Multicultural Organization, took part in their Fashion Parade, bazaar for showing crafts, movies and slides of Malta. For the first time the Maltese flag was raised in front of the Guelph City Hall. They entered the Miss Malta Contest held by the Maltese Canadian Society of Toronto and won first and second runner-up honours. They organized a Halloween Dance in November, and for the first time in 1977, they entered the Santa Claus Parade in Guelph and won fourth prize. To finish the year, they held a Christmas Party for the kids and a New Year's Eve Dance, which was again sold out.

The new executive was elected at a general meeting in April 1978. This committee started with organizing our Second Annual Anniversary Dance. They participated in the Carnival held in Toronto for the second time, and entered Canada Week, held by the Multicultural Organization.

For this occasion, the Malta Band Club, the London Folk Dancers, and the Grand Harbour were invited to take part and make our day a big success. The annual picnic took place on July 15th and this was held as a *fiera* [fair] as in Malta.

The general meeting for the 1979-80 year was held at the Lawn Bowling Club in April 1979, with the new executive being elected. This has been a big year for the Club. They started by organizing the Third Anniversary Dance. We have travelled to Toronto for many occasions such as the Malta Band Club Anniversary Dance, a trip to the Metro Zoo, and the Carnival in July. We participated for the second time in the Multicultural Festival. The annual picnic held in July was again a success and for the first time there was a beach outing to Earl Rowe Park in Alliston. In the fall we held our Annual Malta Night, a Halloween Dance and again participated in the Santa Claus Parade.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF THE MALTESE CANADIAN SOCIAL CLUB GUELPH INC.

1976

President	Frank Fenech
Vice President	John Pavia
Secretary	Vic Cassar
Treasurer	Tony Mifsud
Directors	Anne Azzoparde, Henry Mallia Huck O'Connell, Joe Pavia, Jr. Agnes Zahra

1977

President	Frank Fenech
Vice President	John Pavia
Secretary	Vic Cassar
Treasurer	Paul Huck
Directors	Debbie Azzoparde, Mark Cachia, Martin Caruana, Phillip Gatt, Henry Mallia, Huck O'Connell, Marthese Pavia

1978

President	Tony Camilleri
Vice President	Joe Pavia, Jr.
Secretary	Vic Cassar
Treasurer	Mario Pavia
Directors	David Borg, John Borg, Jr. Wally Borg, Mark Cachia Frank Fenech

1979

President	Tony Camilleri
Vice President	Joe Pavia, Jr.
Secretary	Mark Cachia
Treasurer	Mario Pavia
Directors	Vic Cassar, Jerry Muscat John Pavia

**THE CENTURIES-OLD *MADONNA TAL-BAHRIN* PAINTING
IN THE OLD SACRISTRY
AT THE PARISH CHURCH IN BORMLA
CRIES OUT FOR SOME TENDER LOVING CARE**



See pages 12-14 to learn more about this significant piece of Malta's heritage and how you can help in its restoration.