



GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

Newsletter 2001

Foreword by Chairman
Joe Desoisa

The success enjoyed by the Gibraltar Heritage Trust's 2001 Calendar made a fitting end to what has been a fairly productive year, during the course of which we welcomed Pepe Ballantine, recently elected as Vice-Chairman of the Trust.

The beginning of the year witnessed the inauguration of the magnificently restored Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour in the City Hall. This was the culmination of many months of research and planning by members of the Board of Trustees. We shall forever be thankful to the happy chance that put us in touch with Senor Fernandez-Trujillo and his son Pablo whose skill and artistry enabled us to save a particularly attractive fragment of Gibraltar's heritage from the brink of extinction.

The Heritage Trust and the Friends jointly initiated the project and we are especially grateful to the Government of Gibraltar without whose financial assistance the task could never have been accomplished. Particular thanks are due to the Gibraltar Tourist Board through whose generosity the Trust was able to enliven the entrance to the City Hall and the approach to the Council Chamber with a new chandelier and a pair of lanterns.

The year also saw the fulfilment of another project, which has been a long time in gestation. This was the placing of a plaque near O'Hara's Battery marking the height of the Rock. It was most appropriate that the tablet should be dedicated to the memory of General Sir William Jackson who, during his life, constantly championed Gibraltar, its People and its Heritage. The unveiling of the plaque was timed to coincide with the annual visit by a party of the Friends Society to Gibraltar and was carried out by the Trust's new Patron, Mr Durie. We are most grateful to His Excellency and to Mrs Durie for their presence on this moving occasion particularly

since the notice that the Trust afforded them was so short.

The restoration and replanting of the Garrison Library Gardens was another venture accomplished by the Trust in co-operation with the Friends. Dare we hope that the ownership and responsibility for this stately Georgian building shall soon be transferred to the people of Gibraltar?

These Gardens were also the venue for this year's Heritage Awards. These were very deservedly awarded to the Casino Calpe for the excellent and sensitive restoration of the former St George's School as the Club's new premises and to Richard Garcia, that stalwart of Gibraltar's Heritage, who has done so much to popularise and promote it.

Another successful painting competition was centred this year on the Moorish Castle, our most venerable heritage site. This year also saw the publication of Gibraltar Heritage Journal Number 7, for which we tender our enduring thanks to Gibraltar Telecommunications Ltd which has once again defrayed its costs. Our thanks are also due to Tito Benady, another eminent guardian and enthusiast of our heritage, who has nurtured yet another edition of the Journal through the various stages of editorship. It gives me especial pleasure to offer him, on behalf of all members of the Trust, our sincerest congratulations on his being awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours for services to history in Gibraltar.

We have recently moved into new offices at The Main Guard in John Mackintosh Square made available to the Trust by the generosity of the Government of Gibraltar. This building has its own particular and varied history and it is fitting that it should now become our offices. We wish to welcome all our members to visit these new premises and hope to attract the interest of the general public and other visitors to our city.

Finally, even as we go to press, we note that railings are being erected at Trafalgar Cemetery, which shall at last be afforded some protection against trespass and vandalism. Marjorie, our longest serving Trustee, has long campaigned for these railings and that they have at last been erected is due to the support given to the Trust by the Gibraltar Tourist Board.

The programme of events for this year shall, as usual, include the Heritage Awards, the Painting Competition and production of Journal Number 8 and a Heritage Calendar. In addition, plans are underway to erect a memorial commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Bedenham Explosion, restoration of The Convent Marsham Murals, further restoration work on the fabric of the Trust's new offices, restoration of the stained glass windows in the Sacred Heart School Chapel and development of the Nun's Well site.

Perhaps the most significant news of the year has been the establishment by the Minister for Heritage of a government-run Heritage and Planning Division. This Division shall in future manage and progress all major heritage programmes, including town planning and all aspects of urban renewal. In particular, the Division is charged with the responsibility for preparing and presenting Gibraltar's bid for designation as an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is, however, vital to remember that our heritage belongs to the people, because it is that which defines and determines our identity. Heritage is not something which can be administered, controlled or dispensed solely by a government department. There must be room to accommodate public and voluntary involvement and there must be a willingness to be sensitive and responsive to public criticism. It is in this respect that the Minister's declared intention to encourage the active participation of non-governmental organisations in the new structure is to be applauded and welcomed.

I have to report that after initial reservations on the part of the Trust, occasioned perhaps by the manner in which control of the Trust's planned millennium project was assumed by the Division, I believe that a productive working relationship can be established between it and the Trust. Whilst still retaining its all-important independence and right to criticise, the Trust is represented on the UNESCO Commission, plays a constructive role in the Heritage Action Committee and has a vote and seat in the Development and Planning Commission.

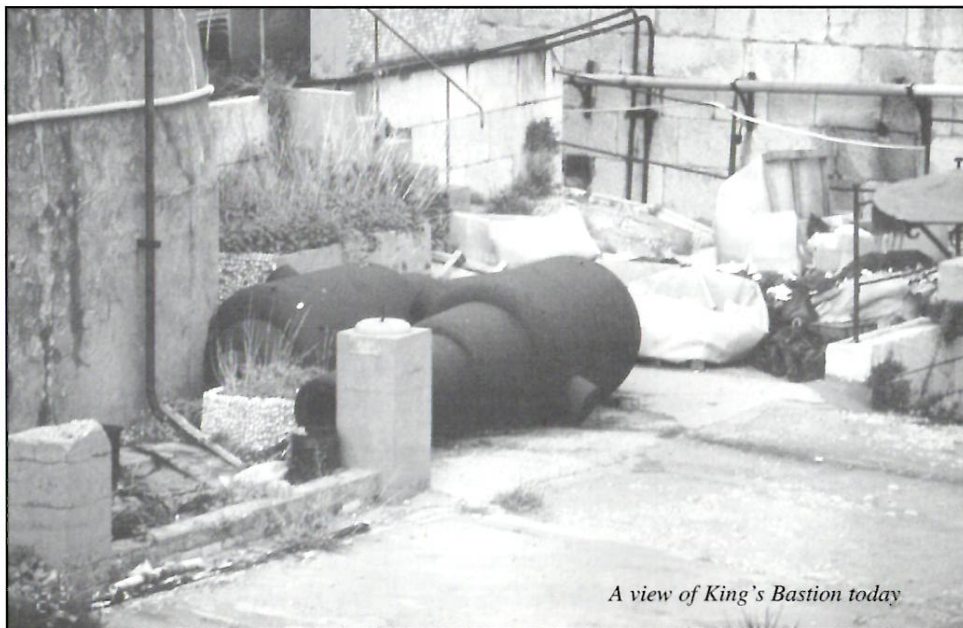
The Trust cannot but be gladdened by the sense of heritage awareness that now appears to characterise many of the Government's plans and objectives. It is, for instance, excited by the imaginative plans to restore the Theatre Royal to its former role as the centre of cultural life in Gibraltar. It has no illusions that the costly

projects now being undertaken by Government are clearly beyond the Trust's own meagre resources.

Nevertheless, the existence of a body such as the Trust, capable of tackling smaller tasks, is necessary in order to engage public enthusiasm for the enhancement of our heritage. If everything is left to "Big Brother" we run the risk that public interest will wane and be replaced by indifference and disillusionment.

Gibraltar has many enviable heritage assets in need of renewal and restoration, none more so than our City Walls. It is sad to reflect, therefore, that despite its often declared intention to clear these Walls and the imminent demolition of the Linares building, the Government refuses to contemplate similar action in the case of the old generating station which continues to besmirch the King's Bastion, described in the 1982 Save Report as one of the noblest in the whole Mediterranean.

This is a particular instance in which the Trust sees it as its duty to urge the Government to change its mind and plead that our members lay claim to our heritage by actively campaigning for the removal of this building. Surely the Government cannot be serious in its quest for UNESCO heritage recognition nor in its claim to be heritage-friendly and still allow this outworn monstrosity to remain.



A view of King's Bastion today

Book Reviews

By Sam Benady

De Gibraltar a su Campo, by JA Casás Balau. Colecciones Aurea, 2000.

This book is the third in a series of books about the Campo area from a new publisher based in La Linea.

The first part of this book gives a useful description of Gibraltar and its people in the century before 1704, using material drawn from contemporary sources. As such, it is a welcome addition to the history of Gibraltar, dealing as it does with a period that has been largely neglected by other historians. Subjects dealt with in this section include among others the economy, the plague of 1649, the use of Gibraltar as a base for the expulsion of the Moriscos, and the slave trade.

The second section records what happened to the inhabitants after they left the Rock following its capture by Sir George Rooke, and includes a list of all the inhabitants who fled and their destination where this is known. The better known inhabitants, like Father Romero, Simon Susarte and Governor Diego Salinas are there, but so also are a large number of humbler folk.

This is a valuable addition to the works available to all who are interested in Gibraltar and its heritage,

The Royal Navy at Gibraltar, by Tito Benady, has appeared in a paperback edition. If you missed the 1992 hardback, which is now out of print, grab this one!

Kitchener's Sword Arm, by Archie Hunter (Sarpedon, 1996) is a biography of Sir Archibald Hunter by his great nephew. Two chapters tell of Hunter's time as Governor of Gibraltar, and the *faux pas* that led to his early recall. It is useful to have a more rounded view of Hunter - after Gardiner, surely one of the most reviled Governors. He was a brilliant soldier, and after the First World War, a Member of Parliament. His reply when he was asked why he did not stand a second time is worth quoting: "Because I wish to die an honest man!" DATE

GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

Programme of events 2001

DATE	TIME	EVENT	MEETING PLACE
Saturday 24th February	10.30am	Visit : (a) Gibraltar Museum (b) King's Bastion	Gibraltar Museum. Led by Tito Vallejo and Keith Farrell.
Saturday 17th March	10.30am	Tour of Places of Worship	Engineer Lane Car Park (By Hindu Temple)
Tuesday 20th March	8pm	Talk by Dr Clive Finlayson: "Why did Neanderthals not invent agriculture? Towards the theory on the origins of civilisation".	John Mackintosh Hall - Charles Hunt Room
Saturday 21st April	10.30am	Visit: Jews Cemetery/ Mediterranean Steps	Jews' Gate
Saturday 5th May	10am to 5pm	Open Air Painting Competition Theme: John Mackintosh Square (any aspect /feature)	Registration at Gibraltar Heritage Trust office, The Main Guard, 13 John Mackintosh Square, as from 9.30am.
Tuesday 8th May	6pm	Official Opening of Exhibition of Paintings entered in the above competition and Prize-giving	John Mackintosh Hall - open to participants and guests only
Wednesday 9th May till Wednesday 16th May	10am to 10pm	Exhibition of competition entries	John Mackintosh Hall (Upper floor)
Saturday 19th May	10.30am	Visit : Moorish Castle and Waterworks	Hays' Level
Thursday 7th June	7pm	Talk by Joe Desoisa: Council Chamber (City Hall) -	John Mackintosh Hall - Lecture Room
Saturday 30th June	10.30am	Restoration and Iconography Visit: WWII Bunkers/Ruins Santa Barbara (La Linea)	(Details will be announced nearer the date)
SUMMER BREAK			
Saturday 15th September	10.30am	Tour of Northern Defences	Casemates Square (by Koehler Gun)
Thursday 27th September	7pm	Annual General Meeting	Garrison Library. Pre-meeting drinks as from 6.30pm
Saturday 13th October	10.30am	Bay/Eastside Cruise	(Details will be announced nearer the date)
Saturday 10th November	10.30am	Tour of World War II Tunnels	The Casino Car Park
Saturday 8th December	10.30am	Tour of Europa Point (Mosque/ Shrine of Our Lady/ Nuns' Well/Bombproof barracks)	Car park by The Mosque

Gibraltar's Architecture

by Tito Vallejo

I would like to begin this article by saying that I am no authority on architecture and that I stand to be corrected, however it does not take a Christopher Wren to realise that Gibraltar lacks buildings of aesthetic and ornamental beauty. Undoubtedly it is the Rock's fortifications, which places us at the forefront with the rest of the world when it comes to military architecture. Our belligerent past has not been a great help either in the conservation of any buildings which might have been worthy of preservation. One has but to look at the old prints of the Great Siege in the museum to see how the whole city was destroyed by the enemy's cannon balls. One building which sticks out significantly and defiantly, with its share of war wounds is our dear old Cathedral of St. Mary the Crowned. Here we have a perfect example of what could have been, perhaps, Gibraltar's jewel in architecture. It is said that when the Spaniards captured the Rock from the Arabs and turned their main mosque into the Roman Catholic Cathedral, all the stucco ornaments inside were destroyed as they were seen as heathen art unworthy of being inside such a sacred Christian place.

After the Great Siege a great opportunity was missed to have planned and built a new city with wider streets and better distribution of housing. Instead, houses were rebuilt on the ruins and foundations of the old ones and our streets remain the same size as those for horse drawn carriages. I think I can safely assume that most of the re-building of the city fell to the Boschetti brothers from Genoa. The new city therefore emerged to look more Italian than British or Spanish. I happen to have some photographs of a few streets in Genoa which are exact replicas of our own Irish Town!

Irish Town has quite a variety of very old buildings, some of high historical value and others of external beauty and ornamentation. These latter ones must be preserved, however there are some which have no significance at all and in some cases it would be better if they were done away with altogether. Remember the house at the corner of Parliament Lane, which was in danger of collapsing and had to be finally demolished. Renovations should be done keeping with the same original style of the building and not defacing it by completely changing the facade. There has been a lot of indiscriminate use of reinforced concrete on the exterior of buildings, which gives a rather bunker-like look to houses.

There are a variety of differences between the planning of old and new buildings. The elaborate furnishings and adornments found in the majority of old buildings are not seen that often in modern ones. Whereas old architects went for the looks, modern ones go for the maximum utility of a building. Nowadays the costs are the controlling factors, which determine how a building will look. Modern architects dream of being given a loose reign to be able to put their talents to the test, but alas they are restrained by the stringent budgets of the developer.

Let us compare for one moment the vast rooms, the high ceilings and the big windows of old buildings in contrast to their counterparts in modern houses. The majority of modern developers are only concerned with the sale of flats, the more flats one can fit into one floor the better, no matter if your furniture will not fit, but as long as sales are made it does not matter.

In Gibraltar we have had a few attempts at trying to design some of the exteriors of new buildings to conform to their older neighbouring ones. Take Casemates for example. The ex-Health Centre has the original stone arches belonging to the old buildings, which were demolished for its construction. On the other hand the new ICC building and the one where Burger King is, have had new arches incorporated in the new design to match the others around the square.

Because of certain social needs and aspects of life in Gibraltar such as the lack of streams and rivers, our water supply has always been very precious. It was therefore necessary for houses to be built with a cistern in the basement, for the collection of rainwater from the roof. Another feature, which has also disappeared from modern buildings, are chimneys and fireplaces; today these are considered as luxuries. In modern times the building of high rise buildings, which were thought to economise in floor space turned out to be the breeding ground for slums. People living in floors high above the ground, finding themselves quite excommunicated from other neighbours, started to develop all sorts of domestic and psychological problems, so much so that they have started to pull down many of these estates. In their place smaller semidetached maisonettes have been built in a village-like pattern which gives the environment of a much cosier and homely atmosphere.

In Gibraltar we can take the following estates as examples: Glacis, Laguna, Moorish Castle and Varyl Begg; now compare these to Catalan Bay, Rosia Dale and Europa

Point flats. All these, which I have mentioned, were built before the building craze started. At the moment there is a total disregard for the aesthetic looks of buildings or the size of their interiors; a sale is what matters most. I think everyone will agree what a difference it makes to see the facelift of the Harbour Views Estate at West Side; the Lego monster is no more.

New developments have indeed killed off many of our old landmarks of historical and cultural value. I will only mention a few of the main ones as the list is endless.

Devil's Tower demolished during the War to make way for the field of fire of the guns.

Engineer House and Arengo's Palace two prestigious residences demolished to make way for two car parks.

Dockyard North Gate original stone building at the entrance to the dockyard, raised to the ground to widen road.

ICC at Casemates 16th century Victualling Yard and Casemates, demolished to make a shopping centre and multi-storey car park.

Cornwall's Centre demolition of old 16th century buildings and even older subterranean Spanish works to make way for a shopping centre.

Rosia Plaza discovery and demolition of old Spanish battery to make way for an underground car park.

Westside Reclamation the covering up of the only Spanish Floating Battery discovered to date.

Cumberland and Tower Buildings, and New Mole House the most British-looking street in Gibraltar, knocked down God knows what for. The area is still an eyesore having become a rubbish and scrap yard.

If this trend carries on unabated, we will soon have a concrete jungle devoid of all the attractions that tourists come looking for and which makes Gibraltar exclusive and so different to neighbouring Spain.

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The main Guard (Circa 1946) - The Trust's new offices.

Pay Us A Visit...





GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

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