



GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

Newsletter 2003

Foreword by Chairman
Joe Desoisa

The past year has proved to be a notable one for the Heritage Trust in several significant ways. The Trust's Annual General Meeting held in October was addressed by the Hon Keith Azopardi, the Minister for Heritage, thus giving members the opportunity to learn at first hand of the Government's plans for the maintenance and management of Gibraltar's heritage and to question the Minister. It also provided an opportunity to air their misgivings on the manner in which this heritage has been treated in the past and continues to be so neglected in some important respects, such as the retention in the centre of our City of that now perennial 'eye-sore', the old Generating Station.

Surprisingly, this was the first occasion on which a Minister for Heritage had addressed a General Meeting of the Trust. I hope that this is a reflection of the frank relations and spirit of co-operation that have now been established between the Government and the Trust and augurs well for the future. I hope that this practice will continue in the future because it provides a means whereby our membership can exert a direct, albeit small, public influence on heritage matters if our views are sufficiently co-ordinated and may even encourage others to join the Trust.

Even in this latter respect, it has proved to be an encouraging year for the Trust during which we have recorded a significant increase in membership, which now stands at just short of 600. I am confident that this is due to an increasing public awareness of our heritage, an aim which the Trust shares with Government, and a public desire to halt any further erosion of that heritage particularly where architectural aspects are concerned.

Sadly, however, the year has not been without its setbacks for the preservation of Gibraltar's unique vernacular architecture. During the year we have witnessed the successive demolition of 18th or 19th century buildings in Europa Road and Rosia Parade and, most distressing of all, the building in John Mackintosh Square which dated from shortly after the Great Siege.

As an active participant in the proceedings of the Heritage Action Committee and the Development and Planning Commission, the Trust is fully aware of the efforts made by Government to save this building. However, the Trust has good reason to doubt the final conclusion that the building was beyond repair because there was at least one construction company that was willing to invest in its restoration. The harsh fact is that this building, an irreplaceable and quintessential example of our vernacular architecture and which also provided a valuable commentary on Gibraltar's social development, was doomed from the start because it lacked statutory listing protection and the site that it occupied had a high development value. The most that can now be salvaged from this tragedy is that its replacement will be in keeping with the existing buildings in the Square.

The new Heritage Ordinance which will eventually include a revised schedule of listed buildings was an issue covered by the Minister in his address to the Trust's AGM and we expect the new Ordinance to be enacted during 2003. Most of Gibraltar's major buildings and the majority, if not all, of its fortifications are already listed in the existing schedule but, even with the new Ordinance in place, it will be some considerable time before such protection can be extended to other dwellings of special merit in the City.

The Minister also warned that Spanish objections to Gibraltar's application for UNESCO World Heritage Status could thwart our ambition. The Trust is of the opinion that lack of adequate protective heritage legislation will equally weaken Gibraltar's application and hopes that the Spanish stance will not be used as an excuse to delay the implementation of protective legislation. Gibraltar's heritage and character is worthy of preservation and restoration whether or not it is accorded world recognition.

There is certainly no doubt about the protected status of the Garrison Library, which was the venue for the Trust's 2002 Annual Art Competition. The Competition was a particular success and attracted a record number of entries, indicating once again a heartening public awareness of and interest in our City. For the second year in succession, a special competition was organised at the Library by the Headmistress and Staff for pupils of St Mary's First School, one of whom took first prize in the Children's' Section, the prize-giving ceremony being kindly presided over by His Excellency the Governor. On the other hand, there were few nominations for the Heritage Awards and even these were not within the published guidelines. I look forward to attracting a greater number of entries in the coming year.

It is commonly known that the Library was built on the site of the residence of the Commandant of the Spanish Fortress of Gibraltar. I was, however, unaware, until reading The Spanish Red Book on Gibraltar, that it was the then Spanish custom to subordinate the military authority to the local civil council, even to the extent that in

1704 Captain de Salinas, the last Spanish Commandant of the Fortress, had to obtain the appropriate authorisation from the City Corporation before surrendering to the Anglo-Dutch forces. This custom could, perhaps, constitute a profitable practice to be emulated in the present time.

This irrelevancy aside, we are now considering suitable sites for the 2003 Competition. One that suggests itself is Catalan Bay, an area of outstanding natural beauty. Perhaps a more ambitious and exciting one would be O'Hara's Battery. The latter would clearly present some logistical and safety challenges, particularly to the younger participants, and would also be more sensitive to the vagaries of the weather. If members have other suggestions, they are welcome to call at the Trust Offices.

During the course of the past year, the Marshman Murals were inaugurated and we also organised a successful exhibition, opened by the Hon Keith Azopardi, of the Haynes collection of 17th and 18th century maps and charts of Gibraltar and the Strait. These prints also provided the theme of the Heritage Trust 2003 Calendar, which has sold very successfully and we thank Mr Haynes for his kindness in allowing us to make use of the prints for this purpose.

Pablo Fernandez-Trujillo is now nearing completion of the task of restoring the stained glass windows in what once was the Christian Brothers private chapel and is now the Chapel of the Sacred Heart School and I thank the Minister and his colleague Dr Linares, Minister of Culture, for the assistance that they have given us towards meeting the costs involved. I have high expectations of this particular project which presents a rare opportunity of illustrating the concept of heritage in an unexpected context and also of bringing home the idea of heritage to a younger generation. As ever, the Headmaster of the School, Arturo Gonzalez, has been quick to take advantage of this opportunity to allow his pupils to see an expert craftsman practising the skills of his trade. These impromptu lessons have also acquainted the youngsters with a technical Spanish vocabulary not usually encountered in Gibraltar.



Pablo at work on the Sacred Heart School Chapel Windows and evidence of deterioration to South Wall

A potentially exciting dimension has been added to this work by the discovery of the original marbled stucco covering the walls of the Chapel underneath five successive coats of paint. This stucco, which is of interest not just in itself but is also a commentary of the crafts practised in the Gibraltar of a century years ago, appears to be largely intact over most of the interior walls. That on the southern wall, whose exterior has been exposed to the heat of summer and the rains of winter for more than a century, is, however, in urgent need of more extensive repairs.

The Trust is exploring the feasibility of restoring these walls to their original appearance and also including some minor repairs to the ceiling of the Chapel. However, a necessary first step to this undertaking would require complete re-rendering of the exterior of the building to make it weather-proof and we are hoping that government will shoulder this task of building maintenance.

This Chapel also contains the exquisite altar rescued from Arengo's Palace. If we could but accomplish this restoration we would have in Pablo's words 'un bonboncillo' of decorative art whose presence has remained hidden for so long.

Additionally, the Trust has also been engaged in a number of smaller tasks which have included renovating dedicatory plaques within Trafalgar Cemetery; repainting the Black Watch Cairn at Eastern Beach; marking the site of the last remaining visible anti-tank obstacles from World War II and repairing the Elliott statue in the Convent patio. If any of our members or, indeed, of the public in general think that there are other objects of this nature that require attention we would be pleased to hear from them.

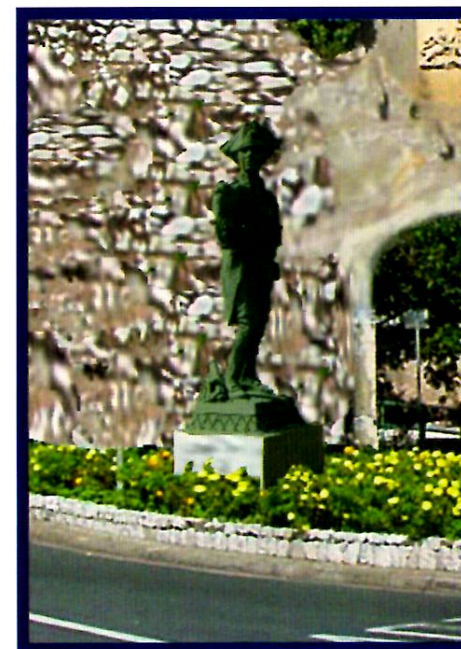
It is mentioned on occasion that the restoration tasks upon which the Trust has been engaged over the past several years, such as the Council Chamber in the City Hall, the Marshman Murals and now the Sacred Heart Chapel, do not lend themselves to ready public access. There is, of course, some truth in this, although arrangements for viewing are made from time to time for members and the general public. But it must be accepted that public accessibility is not a criterion which features prominently in the choice of restoration projects. The choice is dictated primarily by need and it is a fact that had the Trust not undertaken the restoration of any one of these projects their deterioration would have just continued to the point of total destruction. A secondary consideration is the scope of a project because the Trust is necessarily constrained by its limited human and financial resources.

Major projects waiting to be done and which would enhance the appearance of our City and its enjoyment by both visitors and inhabitants alike, abound. One has only to mention the Moorish Castle, the City Walls and the Kings Bastion to imagine the potential attractions of our heritage and the immense cost involved in its restoration, such has been, and indeed still is, the intense pressure for living space in Gibraltar.

Such projects are clearly beyond the capabilities of the Trust and all we can do is to encourage, and occasionally shame, from the sidelines, functions which the Trust can indulge in through its representation on the Heritage Action Committee. And to be fair, we must take cognisance of the major heritage projects that the Government already has in progress, such as the Theatre Royal and the World War II Tunnels.

It is also within the forum of the Heritage Action Committee that the Trust is participating in discussions on the manner in which to celebrate two important anniversaries that will soon be upon us. The first is the tercentenary of the British capture of Gibraltar and the idea of establishing a walk along the City Walls to commemorate this event has been mooted. The erection of a bust of Admiral Rooke to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our City which led directly to the establishment of a distinct Gibraltarian identity is also under consideration.

The other event that is fast approaching is the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar which the Trust has suggested marking by erecting a seven foot high statue of Admiral Nelson in the vicinity of Southport Gates. This project will necessarily be funded and managed by Government, but the Trust has obtained three preliminary costings and commissioned a bronze copy of the maquette that formed part of the submission of one of the sculptors consulted. This statuette has been lent to government to assist in the final choice of design, but an illustration is included in this Newsletter. Apart from its historical significance, I believe that such a project would be of great benefit to our City and would enhance the perennial attraction of Trafalgar Cemetery for visiting tourists. At the AGM, the Minister was supportive of the idea and the Trust is optimistic that the project will come to fruition.



Illustrative Setting for a Nelson Statue

I end this Foreword with a plea to our membership for volunteers to serve on the Board of Trustees. Many of those currently carrying out these duties have done so for many years. The vigour and enthusiasm of the Heritage Trust can only be sustained by a constant influx of new recruits who value our inheritance and are ready to devote the time and effort needed to safeguard and maintain it.

This and That

Much more than bricks and mortar disappears from an old building when it is knocked down - demolished to make way for yet another block of flats. In addition to its architecture, history, and its place within the local landscape, the old house would undoubtedly have had other elements to recommend it.

Take, for example, the fanlight, a feature that was extremely popular in Georgian and Regency houses, mimicked in Gibraltar during Victorian times (1837 - 1901). Essentially semicircular in shape some have radiating glazing bars which suggest the segments of an open fan. However, the word has come to mean any shape of window above a door.

Many of the old buildings in Gibraltar have fanlights in a wide variety of patterns, reflecting the taste of the owners or craftsmen who made them. Cast in iron, or made of wrought iron, some look like a spider's web, others are more ornate in design, with undulations and curlicues, twists and turns. Beautiful examples of this type of craftsmanship can be found in the Upper Town area, in Irish Town, Main Street, Scud Hill, and other places. Many of these fanlights are related to the early years in which the houses were built, reflecting the prosperity of the times. This accounts for the houses of the wealthy merchants having more elaborate patterns than others of a more simple kind. All are worthy of our notice.

Other items of door furniture also vanish with the building. For instance - brass doorknockers and nameplates, latches etc, to name a few of the things that add distinction to the door of an old house. Sash windows were introduced into England from Holland in the late 17th century, and later adopted locally. The dangers implicit in the untimely snapping of sash cords are only too obvious! But preventative measures can be taken.

Balconies of different types with their decorative cast-iron panels constitute one of Gibraltar's main architectural attractions. By knocking down a 19th-century building we not only remove all traces of the period to which it pertains, we lose yet another fragment of our heritage as well.

Turning to another subject - the vast constructions at the extreme northern end of the Dockyard have been cleaned out of everything they once possessed, only their empty shells remain. The vandals have robbed us of a unique piece of our history and turned the area into a rubbish dump and car park. Once again we have missed the opportunity of creating something truly memorable out of these magnificent buildings. Sadly, this state of affairs seems to have been accepted with equanimity by the rest of the community. Surely it is this indifference to the destruction of some of the most historic buildings in our midst that allows those with the power and the money to get away with so much.

Now, another idea has been floated, the so-called 'Island' development at the cost of 20 million pounds. This project is to be situated slap in the middle of the water opposite Queensway Quay, ruining one of the few decent promenades left in Gibraltar where views of the sea predominate. No doubt other debatable concerns will emerge as this controversial scheme gets under way.

Palm trees swaying in the breeze, and an artificial island extending 10,000 sq metres the length of the marina designed to accommodate nineteen semi-detached luxury townhouses, will not enhance our heritage; they are more likely to confuse the visitor approaching from the sea, whilst at the same time making a mockery of Queensway Quay.

"Where is the bold silhouette of the Rock? And the other part of the Dockyard? They seem to have disappeared!.....Ooops! Sorry! We must have taken the wrong turning. This isn't Gibraltar after all - it must be the Canaries!"

Marjorie Hoare
19 November 2002

BOOK REVIEWS

By Sam Benady

An Old-Fashioned Socialist

An Autobiography by Lorenzo Quelch

Published by the Lorenzo Quelch Memorial Group, Reading, 1992

This book, which was published 10 years ago, seems to have escaped the notice of most of those interested in Gibraltar's social history. It is the personal record of one of the pioneers of socialism and workers' rights in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as such is a fascinating social document in its own right.

The interest for Gibraltar readers comes in Chapter 6, where he describes how he was invited to Gibraltar in 1898 to organise the Coal Porters Union, which was in dispute with the coal merchants. In spite of not being able to speak Spanish, he seems to have done a good job in difficult circumstances, with the threat of violence always in the offing. He was able to broker an agreement between the men and the merchants; this and several other documents related to the dispute are to be found in the appendices.

Both the Coal Porters and the merchants asked him to stay on in Gibraltar, but after consideration, he declined, and left Gibraltar in 1899.

A fascinating story of a landmark episode in Trade Union development in Gibraltar.

Almoraima

Issue No. 28

Mancomunidad de Municipios del Campo de Gibraltar, October, 2002

This biannual journal is the Spanish equivalent of our own *Gibtelecom Gibraltar Heritage Journal*. The present issue has several articles of interest to Gibraltar readers, including an ecological section with contributions from several Gibraltar researchers.

There are also articles on British travellers who set off from Gibraltar to

explore Spain in the 18th and 19th centuries, on military aspects of the Straits from the Spanish point of view, and on Spanish books about Gibraltar and the Campo, as well as many other articles which, although they may have no direct bearing on Gibraltar, present points of interest to Gibraltar readers. There is also a supplement devoted to prose and poetry by Campo authors.

A free subscription to this excellently produced journal may be obtained on application to the publisher, at *Parque "Las Acacias" s/n, 11207 ALGECIRAS (Cadiz)*.

The Rough Ashlar

Keith Sheriff

District Grand Lodge of Gibraltar, 2002.

This book has been compiled to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the District Grand Lodge of the Freemasons of Gibraltar.

It is the result of much hard-working research over a short period of time, and is full of historical detail of the ups and downs of Freemasonry in Gibraltar which will be primarily of interest to fellow-masons, but which also provides insights into the social history of Gibraltar for the lay reader.

The author makes a creditable attempt to link his account to the general history of Gibraltar and the wide world. This is only marred by occasional inaccuracies - to cite a trivial example, the Great Siege ended in 1783, and not in 1784.

The book, which is illustrated by photographs in black and white and in colour, is on sale at £14.95.

ARTILLERIA EN EL ESTRECHO DE GIBRALTAR DURANTE LA EDAD MODERNA

Angel J Saez Rodriguez

RACTA No. 5, Algeciras, 2002.

This is a well-researched book dealing with the use of artillery, and defensive fortifications erected in Gibraltar and the Campo area in the last 600 years. It is a useful addition to the military literature of the area.

GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

Programme of events 2003

DATE	TIME	EVENT	MEETING PLACE
Thursday 30th January	7.30pm	Talk by Dr N Erzini - "The 19th century Moroccan Consulate in Gibraltar; some recent discoveries in the Erzini archive in Tetuan"	John Mackintosh Hall - Charles Hunt Room
Saturday 15th February	2.30pm	Visit to Arow Street. Maximum: 40 members	Entrance to Dudley Ward Tunnel by 'Hole in the Wall'
Saturday 15th March	2.30pm	Visit to Ragged Staff Tunnel. Maximum: 40 members	Ragged Staff Gates
Sunday 13th April	10.30am	Visit to Carteya (by popular request). Maximum: 40 members	Coach Park
Saturday 3rd May	10am to 5pm	14th Annual Open Air Painting and Drawing Competition. Theme: O' Hara's Battery	Registration on site as from 9.30am
Wednesday 7th May till Friday 16th May	10am - 10pm	Exhibition of Competition entries	John Mackintosh Hall
Saturday 17th May	2.30pm	Visit to Bolonia and Huerta Grande. Maximum: 40 members	Coach Park
Saturday 21st June	2.30pm	Visit to RAF Museum	<i>To be announced</i>
Sunday 21st September	10.30	Visit to Bacinete (by popular request). Maximum: 40 members	Coach Park
Thursday 16th October	7pm	Annual General Meeting	Garrison Library. Pre-meeting drinks as from 6.30pm
Saturday 18th October	2.30pm	Visit to the 'Museo del Istmo' and new excavations in La Linea	Frontier (Gibraltar side)
Saturday 22nd OR Sunday 23rd November	10.30am	Tour of The Convent	Rear entrance - Governor's Lane
Saturday 13th December	2.30pm	Visit to Los Barrios bull-ring and Museum. Maximum: 40 members	Coach Park

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