



## **GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST**

WELLINGTON FRONT P.O. BOX 683 GIBRALTAR  
TELEPHONE: 42844 FAX: 42844

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 1997/1998**

**by Alexis J. Almeda**

**1. INTRODUCTION:** Once again it is my pleasure , as Chairman of your Board, to submit my Annual Report on the Trust's activities. This, my third report, as in previous years', will cover the period of our statutory financial year, namely, from the 1<sup>st</sup>. April, 1997, to the 31<sup>st</sup>. March, 1998, and, I trust, be in keeping with the standards and traditions set by my predecessors. As always the work of the Trust has centred on the need to protect and enhance our Heritage, and our ultimate aim continues to be the full protection of Gibraltar's Heritage as a World Heritage Site.

#### **2. ADMINISTRATION & FINANCES:**

**2.1 ADMINISTRATION:** The administration work of the Trust continues on the increase due to our welcome increased involvement in D.P.C., Working Groups, consultative processes and other ad hoc meetings, consultations which have shown our Trustees' desire to work for our Heritage and not against the Government of the day, an attitude which has been helpful in restoring mutual confidence between the authorities and the Trust.

**2.1.2:** This increased involvement has put a heavy load on our sole staff member Mrs. Brenda Soiza and also strained our very limited and unsuitable office facilities and accommodation. The latter has been the subject of continued strong representations to Government which, I am happy to say, has finally produced the offer of alternative accommodation. This has been promised to be the top floor of the Old Guardroom at John Mackintosh Square.

**2.1.3:** Such has been the increase in the Trust's work that I was forced into creating a small but active Executive Committee early in the year under review to deal expeditiously with this increase in work. This Committee meets between Board meetings thus doubling the through-put of work.

**2.1.4:** I cannot end these comments without publicly expressing our Board's and, indeed, my own appreciation to our Secretary, Mrs. Brenda Soiza, who, despite the doubling of meetings and, hence the production of Minutes, continues to produce sterling work, without complaining, despite her dreadful working environment which, thanks to our Chief Minister and our Minister will soon change for the better.

**2.2 FINANCES:** These need to be gone into in expert detail. I will, therefore, leave it to our Hon. Treasurer to explain the state of our finances and answer any questions you may have for him. I must, however, express my thanks publicly to him for the time and trouble he has put into the keeping of the Trust's accounts over this past year.



**2.3 MEMBERSHIP:** This gives me genuine cause for concern as, despite our Register showing a roll call of 1,300 names, the actual annual payment of subscriptions has fluctuated with a downward trend over the last years, e.g. 1996 showed 536 paid up Members, 1997 increased to 576, yet so far in 1998 only 391 out of all those registered have paid their subscriptions despite written reminders.

Considering that our Heritage belongs to us all, this lack of support does little to encourage your Trustees in their selfless dedication to their work, apart from considerably curtailing the funds available for that work.

### **3. MAJOR PROJECTS:**

**3.1 MOORISH CASTLE:** This unique ancient monument, the tallest and largest Moorish construction in the Iberian Peninsula, continues to decay and our efforts to obtain expert advice on its restoration have proved difficult, if not impossible, so far. The promised visit by Professor Gianni Perbellini, Chairman of the Europa Nostra Scientific Committee, and his team of three experts never managed to get here.

**3.1.2** The sheer size and cost of these restoration works are beyond our Trust's present resources, but I am happy to report recent moves in this current year that have raised our expectations of both access to expert advice as well as to serious fund raising.

**3.2 PARSON'S LODGE BATTERY:** This has, for years, been the Trust's Flagship, yet, despite all that has been done, the lack of support from taxi drivers, tour operators and our own fellow citizens, it fails to get off the ground. Vandals have again done their worst whenever the Battery has been closed, but we continue our maintenance work regardless.

**3.2.2** The Europa Nostra Award granted to the Trust for this restoration was finally presented to our representative at the Genoa Convention instead of here as originally intended.

**3.3 THE VICTUALLING YARD:** It still remains the Trust's wishes to convert this magnificent building into a badly-needed Maritime Museum, but the huge cost of refurbishment (estimated at £680,000) and the utterly disappointing public response to the Chinese Exhibition there, have shattered any illusions of an early start with that project.

**3.3.2** In an effort to resuscitate that project by attracting foreign capital for its development, the Government assisted us by inviting an entrepreneur in Heritage projects, and his report is eagerly awaited. In the meantime, the Government has requested us to allow the premises to be used as temporary stores and the firm concerned is giving the Trust a donation which will be used to carry out essential maintenance to the building.

**3.4 KING'S BASTION:** The GHT/DTI Working Group created to restore this magnificent Battery is now defunct. The disused Generating Station, despite our strongest urgings that it be demolished so as to expose the Battery in all its glory, is to be developed as a Leisure Centre. Happily, this decision will not include the Battery itself which, it is understood, is to be developed as a Heritage Site.

**3.5 - THE NORTHERN DEFENCES:** Their massive restoration costs also preclude their being restored in the foreseeable future. Since they remain MOD property, that



authority has sealed off all entrances to prevent accidents. Although this has prevented access to bona fide visitors, it has also helped to put an end to the vandalism that seems to plague our Heritage sites.

**3.6 THE CITY WALLS:** A comprehensive report recommending the cleaning, restoration and repair of our excellent walls was sent to Government. In it we recommended that once the walls were restored, they should be floodlit. This report was favourably received and plans for some of the recommended works were commissioned for the Northern end of the Walls as a start.

**3.6.1** A welcome improvement as a result of our representations has been the long overdue removal of the decrepit garages opposite the former College of Further Education.

**4. LESSER PROJECTS:** These are equally important parts of our Heritage but their smaller size and cost makes action on them possible for us. My brief comments on these are as follows:-

**4.1 THE CITY HALL:** The expert photographic record of the Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour has now been completed. The FOGHS have pledged £10,000 towards their restoration which, together with matching funds from the Trust, makes £20,000 available for these works of restoration. Sadly, the promised advice from Malta on this restoration never materialised but new contacts have already been made with Art Schools both in the UK and in near-by Spain, from which we are awaiting replies.

**4.2 THE THEATRE ROYAL:** This proposed project appeared to have a promising future as the question of the lease seemed to be near solution. A study, however, of whether such a theatre would pay its way given the existing environment has inevitably put it on 'hold' for the time being.

**4.3 THE HORTICULTURAL PROJECT:** This had to be changed due to site difficulties. It was replaced by a Heritage Rock Garden being created in a plot lying fallow at the Gibraltar Botanical Gardens. Funds from a UK Horticultural Trust, the FOGHS and ourselves will pay for a rock garden in which all Gibraltar's diverse floral heritage will be represented.

**4.4 WITHAM'S CEMETERY:** Thanks to the Services' Community Works Programme, this important place of rest for many of our illustrious ancestors has been cleared of overgrowing vegetation, cleaned out and partly restored. Our thanks must go to the Units concerned and Trustee Eric Shaw who organised this project.

**4.5 TRAFALGAR CEMETERY:** The increase in vandalism has caused us to repair the gates and locks, and pay for this sacred area to be locked every evening and re-opened each morning. We are, therefore, spending funds in policing a cemetery when that money could be put to other more appropriate heritage work. Attempts through the pertinent Government department to improve on the upkeep of the gardens by better enforcement of the extant contract have failed, although our questioning appears to have caused a partial improvement. Trustee Marjorie Hoare must get public recognition for her whole-hearted dedication to this National Monument's care and protection.



## **5. GENERAL MATTERS:**

**5.1 LOVER'S LANE:** The struggle to save this picturesque lane has, sadly, failed and Government proceeded to widen Line Wall Road. Phase 2 is now, I understand, to follow with the widening of the South section of this road, but fresh representations by the Trust has resulted in a compromise solution which will allow the road widening to take place without losing as much of the Convent Wall as originally planned. Not the ideal solution by any means, but one which will save part of what would have been otherwise lost.

**5.2 THE MOUNT:** This, unfortunately, was the cause of considerable acrimony about this time last year. The Government had taken it over and, although its future use is still unknown to us, we have been assured that every effort will be made to respect its integrity and Heritage pedigree.

**5.3 THE GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST ORDINANCE:** A final draft which accommodates both the Minister's needs and the Trust's aspirations has been agreed upon. This is now with the Government's Legal Draftsman. It would, therefore, be wrong for me to comment on its contents at this stage except to say that your Board now feels much happier with the Heritage-protection measures planned.

**5.3.2** In this respect, the Trust engaged the services of a young local archaeologist to draw up a suggested list of important building and structures to be incorporated in the Listing Schedules of the new Ordinance once this is in place.

**5.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS:** The Trust has been involved in these operations since they were originally started. These have been undertaken by the Gibraltar Museum with Spanish archaeologists and help from many volunteers and visiting Army Units. They have proved invaluable in helping to piece our medieval past together. Our recommendations that these important discoveries should be protected and exposed for public enjoyment are under active consideration by the powers that be with anticipated positive results.

**5.5 HERITAGE CONFERENCE:** Calpe '97 was the first ever joint Government/Trust attempt at a Heritage Conference. The subject chosen "*The Strait of Gibraltar through History*" was well attended and a great success.

**5.6 THE EVELEGH FAMILY GREAT SIEGE RELICS:** This unique collection of scale models of all the cannon used during the Great Siege was created by prisoners during those momentous years from materials and with tools provided by Maj. Gen. Eveleigh to better their lot in prison by their selling their work. In appreciation of his humane actions and on their release in 1783 they presented their benefactor with this set of models which has been in the Eveleigh Family ever since. After long and successful negotiations with Col. Eveleigh, the current custodian of the Collection, it has been loaned on a semi-permanent arrangement with our Trust for exhibition in the Gibraltar Museum.

**5.7 THE 100 TON GUN:** As a result of contacts made with Malta, our 100 ton gun and Napier Battery have been twinned with the only other such gun remaining in the Mediterranean, namely, that at Fort Rinella in that island. This twinning will, apart from



providing common ground to share views and experiences, allow us to enter Europa Nostra Competitions on twinned projects. We must thank Trustee Tito Vallejo for his success in this twinning.

**5.8 NUN'S WELL:** This monument has also been the object of continued vandalism for years now. An offer from an entrepreneur to improve the facilities and show the Well was, therefore, most welcome and accepted by both the Government and the Trust. The intended continued use of the site should do much to encourage visitors to this ancient monument and at the same time deter further vandalism.

## **6. ANNUAL EVENTS AND OTHER MATTERS:**

**6.1 THE ANNUAL HERITAGE AWARDS:** This year's awards were the following:-

**(i) THE SENIOR AWARD** went to Mr. Tito Benady for his excellent and dedicated research into Gibraltar's history and his publication of a number of books on the subject;

**(ii) THE GROUP AWARD** was given to Strait Vision for their equally excellent research and production of the T.V. Series and cassette "*Evacuation - Cause and Effect*".

**(i) THE JUNIOR AWARD** failed, yet again, to attract any nominations and, hence, could not be given.

**6.2 LECTURES AND OUTINGS:** An excellent and varied programme of events was prepared by our sub-Committee charged with this task. All events proved popular and were most enjoyable and our thanks must go to that hard-working Committee.

**6.3 OPEN DAYS:** No Open Days have been held this year although H.E. The Governor kindly consented to conducted tours of The Convent being organised at regular intervals. All donations received as a result of these tours are being set aside for the restoration of the two frescoes in the Cloister which were painted by Capt. Marshall at Lady Airey's request and which are badly in need of restoration. A photographic record of both frescoes has been arranged with H.E.'s permission to ensure their faithful restoration once enough funds are available.

**6.4 THE ANNUAL PAINTING COMPETITION:** This year's theme was "The Mount" which proved to be a most popular choice judging from the number of participants and their favourable comments. Our thanks to the organisers Trustees Jenny Whiteland and John Langdon as well as our Girl Friday Brenda who held the fort since early morning that day.

**6.5 ANNUAL VISIT BY THE FOGHS:** These visits are becoming an annual event and are helping to cement friendships and increase their awareness of our Heritage and the problems of protecting them. These increased contacts should also encourage them in their fund raising efforts on our behalf in the Mother Country.

**6.6 THE HERITAGE "GIBTEL" JOURNAL No. 4:** This joint GHT/FOGHS publication took some time to reach us due to post and printing difficulties, but its excellent articles made the long wait worthwhile. Since the Friends have kindly agreed to donate their

share of the proceeds to the Trust, the sale of this excellent record of our past should benefit our ailing funds to a great extent.

**7. TERMINATION:** The Chairing of your Board of Trustees has, once again, been an honour and a pleasure for me, although I must confess it has also been quite an exhausting experience. You can have no doubt whatsoever of your Trustees' stamina or of their dedication to our Heritage.

I must thank the many helpers, too numerous to mention by name, for their help and support throughout the year. I will, therefore, limit myself to thanking our Patron H.E. The Governor and Lady Luce for opening their home to our regular tours, the Government, the Services, the Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society and the many firms and individuals who have helped us in our difficult task over the year under review.

Last but by no means least I must thank my long-suffering colleague Board Members who have been so generous with their time and expertise in supporting our Trust throughout the year.

In ending I am obliged by our statute to step down with our Vice-Chairman Eric Canessa since two of the elected Trustees must do so on rotation each year and it so happens that it is both our turns this year. If you all agree, I will continue as interim Chairman for the rest of this AGM in order to answer any questions you may have and also complete the proceedings. Thank you for your attention.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alexis Almeda', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alexis Almeda  
Chairman.

24<sup>th</sup>. September, 1998.