



GIBRALTAR HERITAGE TRUST

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CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1998/99

by ALEXIS J ALMEDA

1. **INTRODUCTION** : As Chairman of your Board of Trustees, it is my pleasure to present my Annual Report on the Trust's activities over the last statutory financial year, ie from 1 April 1998 to 31 March 1999. As I have expressed in my previous three such reports, our work has revolved around the need to protect and enhance our unique heritage and the equally important necessity to increase knowledge and interest in our varied past.
 - 1.1 Our ultimate aim continues to be to achieve World Heritage Site status for Gibraltar. In this respect I must express our Board's and, indeed, my own gratitude to the Hon Keith Azopardi, Minister for responsibility for Heritage, the Gibraltar Government and the British Government for their having managed to get Gibraltar included in the British list to UNESCO with a view to achieving what we have long aspired to.
2. **ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCES** :
 - 2.1 **ADMINISTRATION** : The Trust's administration continues to increase, showing the same upward trend of the last five or six years. The Trust's increased involvement in the work of DPC, Government Commissions, various Working Groups and other ad hoc committees, although very welcome and palpable evidence of the Trust's higher profile, is taking its toll in the vast increase in the Trust's workload.
 - 2.1.2 This higher workload, naturally redounds directly on our only staff member, Mrs Brenda Soiza, who continues to produce sterling work under very confined office conditions, in a most unsuitable working environment. As reported last year, we were allocated new office accommodation at the Old Guardroom in John Mackintosh Square. These premises are currently being refurbished by Government and we are all looking forward to the day when our Girl Friday can work, and the Trustees meet, under more humane conditions. Once again I am obliged to show our appreciation to the Hon Keith Azopardi for his interest and help in this pressing problem.

2.1.3 I must here express my, and the Board's, sincere appreciation to our Secretary, Mrs Brenda Soiza, for her dedication and support during this last year. She continues to produce work of the highest possible standard in her own quiet way, never complaining of the load nor her working conditions and always ready to help everyone be they from the Trust or not.

2.2 FINANCES : These are far too important for a layman to try and interpret. I will, therefore, leave it to our Hon Treasurer to present the accounts and explain the state of our finances. This will also provide an opportunity for you to put any questions you may have to him.

You will have noticed a new face at this top table. This has been due to our previous Hon Treasurer William Jardim having stepped down after over three years due to pressure of work, and our present Hon Treasurer, Robert Goldwin, valiantly stepping into the breach and taking on this important if onerous task.

Once again I must express our Board's and my own appreciation to both William and Robert for their great effort and dedication in keeping our finances in order.

2.3 MEMBERSHIP : This continues to give cause for concern as the payment of subscriptions continues to falter. Although our Membership Register shows a total of 1300 plus members, the actual number of those who have paid up is in the region of 450. Our Board's concern is two-fold; first is the noticeable drop in subscriptions, which is always to be deprecated, and the second, equally worrying but less obvious, will be the falling-off of interest in our Heritage with the resultant risk of not being an important enough body to protect our past. I would, therefore, urge our current membership to recruit new members to carry on the good fight.

3. MAJOR PROJECTS :

3.1 THE MOORISH CASTLE : This most important (both locally and internationally) ancient monument, continues to decay and gives us great cause for concern. Such is the pressing need to reverse its structural deterioration that your Board has decided to make its restoration its Millennium Project.

3.1.2 We have, at last, managed to identify three firms interested in assisting us in this important task by undertaking feasibility studies which will, in turn, be used in a concerted fund-raising effort. The Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society have, once again, offered to help in this task and we are currently engaged in preparing such a campaign which, hopefully, will see

us through the works which, of necessity, will have to be phased over a number of years.

Once again I must thank the Government for their undertaking to help us with the cost of the feasibility study.

- 3.2 PARSON'S LODGE BATTERY :** After a period in which we were forced to close down this important heritage site, I am pleased to report that it is once again open to visitors. We have a new site manager, Mr Alan Lieb, who not only is doing great maintenance and improvement work, but is also gradually attracting more visitors. I am, therefore, obliged to thank Alan for the great work he is doing there.
- 3.3 KING'S BASTION :** The Gibraltar Heritage Trust/DTI Working Group, created to restore this important battery, continues, I am sorry to say, in a state of limbo. On the positive side, however, I am pleased to say that the Government has at last decided to demolish the former Generating Station building, thus exposing this magnificent structure. It is hoped that the plans for the area are to be heritage sensitive and not repeat the mistakes of the past.
- 3.4 THE NORTHERN DEFENCES :** These have always been a daunting task but I am now pleased to report that Government, with a valuable input from both the Trust and independent experts, has commissioned a feasibility study of the Galleries, part of the WWII tunnels and the Northern Defences with a view to their being opened to visitors.
- 3.5 THE CITY WALLS :** The Trust's report on this essential part of our bid for UNESCO World Heritage status is bearing fruit. The Government has already set about cleaning sizeable lengths of our Walls and repainting the names of the various batteries on them. There have been, however, certain differences of opinion on whether to have flower beds and, sadly, refuse bin recesses against these national monuments. A certain amount of give and take took place and the flower beds remain whilst the refuse recesses were re-sited away from the Walls. Refuse recesses are never eye-catching and their siting only feet away from one of our main tourism assets has to be censured.
- 3.6 CITY HALL :** The restoration of the Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour, formerly classified as a lesser project, has become a major one due to the dilapidated state of the walls and the serious damage done by water penetration over the years. A complete repair and restoration of these two important rooms, in a building which played such a historic part in Gibraltar's political emancipation, has at last been put in hand thanks to the generosity of Government, the Friends and a matching donation from

our Trust. The works are being carried out by a father-and-son team of expert restorers who have undertaken the restoration of similar works of art in important buildings in the region with great success.

- 3.7 THE THEATRE ROYAL :** A survey of this important cultural monument has revealed the need for equally important and costly repairs. It has, therefore, passed to the Major Projects league. The Government has made the Theatre's restoration one of its Millennium Projects, a decision the trust warmly applauds. We are, however, in a cleft-stick situation here since our efforts to restore the Moorish Castle will involve us, and the Friends, in a huge fund-raising exercise which will not leave us much opportunity to tap financial resources for two important projects. Whilst wishing to support both such commendable projects, the Trust will have to assess its future plan of action if we are not to fall between two stools.

4. LESSER PROJECTS

- 4.1 TRAFALGAR CEMETERY :** Vandalism continues to plague our efforts to maintain this garden of repose. Apart from its Heritage standing, it is the final resting place of many; it is, therefore, impossible to understand why such wanton damage and desecration continues to be carried out.

The Trust continues, with the help of the Gibraltar Tourist Board and a firm of landscape gardeners, to attempt to maintain this garden cemetery but with limited success. We continue to pay for the closing of the site at sunset but the vandals continue to climb over the gates and perimeter walls. We are therefore considering having railings provided which will mean our spending hard-earned funds which could be out to better heritage use elsewhere.

- 4.2 THE HORTICULTURAL PROJECT :** Although well in hand, I am sorry to say the Gibraltar Botanical Gardens staff have been unable to complete it within the time planned. The various mini natural disasters which have beset the gardens of late have prevented the works from proceeding as originally intended but it is hoped that this Heritage Garden will soon be formally opened.

- 5. GENERAL MATTERS :** These are matters which have a direct impact on our Heritage but do not come within the works which the Trust can undertake.

- 5.1 THE OLD NAVAL HOSPITAL :** This was and continues to be a genuine cause for concern for our Board. When the Government invited tenders for the "Heritage sensitive" development of this last remaining

large area of our architectural heritage, the would be tenderers were invited to consult our Trust in the preparation of their submissions. All but one took up the offer but, as luck would have it, the only one that did not consult us became the successful tenderer. Undaunted, we are in contact with Government in the hope that we are still in time to ensure that whatever is done at the Old Naval Hospital does not result in the defacement or destruction of such an important part of Gibraltar's past.

5.2 FORBES BARRIER : Although not an easily seen part of our Northern Defences, Forbes Barrier was demolished, allegedly by mistake, by the developers of the new garages in that area, despite our Board's efforts and advice to retain it. A private prosecution was contemplated by us but the prospect of a maximum fine of £50 and the fact that the Barrier could not be restored, resulted in our being legally advised against such action. The developers, however, undertook to clean and tidy-up Forbes Quarry as compensation for their "mistake".

5.3 THE Gibraltar Heritage Trust ORDINANCE : I reported last year that the Government and the Trust had reconciled their differences. However, the Bill produced by the Law Draftsman did not come up to expectations and the draft is still the subject of discussion with the Minister.

It is essential that this Ordinance is got right since it will have an essential bearing on our bid for UNESCO recognition.

5.4 NUN'S WELL : Plans to develop this Heritage site are still in being but have not been implemented due to the need for it to fit in with the Tourism plans for the area and the ubiquitous problem of funding.

5.5. CALPE '98 CONFERENCE : This was based on the 150th Anniversary of the first discovery of Neanderthal remains which, but for a cruel twist of fate, would have been Gibraltar Woman. The Conference attracted speakers of world renown and was extremely well supported, all of which led to its undoubted success.

5.6 GRAND BATTERY : The Trust's request to Government that the proposed Parcel Post Office should be re-sited and this Battery restored to its former glory was well received and this site, it is understood, is to become a major heritage attraction at the entrance to our City.

5.7 MEMORIAL TO THE EVACUATION : This landmark in the creation of the Gibraltarian of today is to be commemorated by a statue in the area of

Waterport from where the evacuation took place sixty years ago. Work on the model is already in hand through the efforts of the Millennium Committee on an idea mooted by the Trust.

6. ANNUAL EVENTS AND OTHER MATTERS :

6.1 THE ANNUAL HERITAGE AWARDS : (i)The Senior Individual Heritage Award went to Mr Joseph (Pepe) Morello for his dedication in the collection and public display of Gibraltar memorabilia which represents an important record of Gibraltar's latter history ;
(ii) The Group Heritage Award went to the Management of Crédit Agricole Indosuez for the careful and heritage-sensitive external and internal restoration of their bank's premises in Main Street ;
(iii) The Junior Heritage Award went to the Pupils of St Christopher's School, Gibraltar for their Design and Fabrication of two textile hangings evoking Gibraltar's Military History and its religious harmony.

6.2 LECTURES AND OUTINGS : As in previous years an excellent and varied programme of events was prepared by our sub-committee charged with the task who must be congratulated for their efforts.

6.3 ANNUAL PAINTING COMPETITION : The theme this year was the Alameda Gardens. A record number of participants made this an even bigger success than previous years' efforts. We must once again thank the organisers, Trustees Jenny Whiteland and John Langdon and, of course, Brenda, who, as always, made certain everything was in place for the smooth running of the competition.

6.4 ANNUAL VISIT BY THE FOGHS : Yet another most successful visit by the Friends and our thanks to Trustee Pepe Rosado who organised and run the visit single-handed. Well done, Pepe.

6.6 The GIBTEL HERITAGE JOURNAL No 5 : This bi-annual Gibraltar Heritage Trust/FOGHS publication was again late in appearing due to printing and postal delays, but, as in previous years, the articles made the wait worthwhile. Here I must thank the Friends for their kindness in donating to us their share of the takings, the Editorial Committee for their great work and last but not least, GIBTEL, for yet again sponsoring the printing of this valuable heritage publication.

7. **TERMINATION** : As I draw to the end of my Annual Report I am obliged to announce Trustee Pepe Rosado's decision to vacate his seat as an "appointed" member of the Board after this AGM. This he has done in order to dedicate more time to research Gibraltar's past and write a history of the Gibraltar he so dearly loves. I feel this is as good a time as any to give you some idea of the marvellous work he has done for our Heritage. In the six years he has been a Trustee he has personally shown a total 5172 persons round The Convent, in the course of 205 organised tours. He has also organised special open days and similar events which attracted thousands of visitors and raised over £6265. We shall miss Pepe in our deliberations but in wishing him every success in his efforts to enhance our heritage we also thank him for everything he has done for Gibraltar.

I must also thank the many helpers, too many to be mentioned by name for fear of offending anyone through an inadvertent omission, for their help and support throughout the year. I will, therefore, limit myself to thanking TRHs The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester who, as a result of their recent visit to Gibraltar have helped our Trust and its work from the UK, our Patron HE The Governor and Lady Luce for their ready support and for opening their home to our regular tours, the Gibraltar Government, the Services, the Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society and the many firms and individuals who have also helped us in our task over this last year.

Last but by no means least, I must thank my dedicated Board Members who have so generously given of their time and expertise in working so hard for Gibraltar's past which, paradoxically, is also our future.

In ending I must once again record my pleasure at having been honoured to be the Chairman of your Board of Trustees. As in previous years, I must admit to having thoroughly enjoyed a challenging if exhausting responsibility. It is, therefore, with a heavy heart that I feel obliged, for personal reasons, to step down as Chairman after over four years at the helm to make room for new blood and new ideas at the head of the only non-Governmental body set up to protect our Heritage.

The law provides for two Trustees to step down on rotation each year. This year it is the turn of Trustees Mrs Doris Torres and Lt Col Eddie Guerrero and we will be holding an election to fill the two vacancies in keeping with the set Agenda.

Thank you all for your attention.



ALEXIS ALMEDA
CHAIRMAN

20 September 1999