ANNUAL REPORT
2024

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE
SOVRINTENDENZA TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI



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Foreword

2024 was a busy year for the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The entity underwent a number of internal restructuring changes in its teams, prompted by the departure of a number of staff on extended leave, termination of employment and internal promotions. By reallocating responsibilities and streamlining workflows, the entity maintained its high standards of performance, ensuring that all tasks and duties were carried out without interruption or delay. This proactive approach allowed the team to adapt effectively to the temporary reduction in personnel, demonstrating resilience and commitment to its objective. The entity also finalised its first management grading structure, identifying middle and senior management grades, which were previously missing in the hierarchy.

During 2024, the Superintendence continued its laborious work on the 20th year anniversary publication, which will include all archaeological discoveries made during the last twenty (20) years. The publication is envisaged to be published in early 2025. Significant work was also done on the sorting project within its inhouse registry and archives, which has files dating back ninety (90) years. Numerous loose photographs were also collected, sorted and catalogued. The year under review also saw the start of the scanning and digitisation of files and documents found within the registry, to allow easier access to both staff and researchers.

During the year under review the Superintendence included three hundred and sixty-nine (369) new sites/properties in the National Inventory, which is a cultural heritage register compiled by the Superintendence as part of its functions. A significant amount of work was also done in the existing entries of the National Inventory to ensure data validity and conversion to an updated format.

The Superintendence's involvement in consultation within the planning process continued at a steady pace with around eight thousand (8,000) consultations from the Planning Authority, together with two thousand five hundred (2,500) consultations related to roadworks. The Superintendence was also heavily involved in the import/export/movement of cultural items and personal items, dealing with over seven hundred and fifty (750) cases.

In 2024, the Superintendence undertook several planned excavations, both on land and underwater, to further its mission to safeguard cultural heritage. The Underwater Cultural Heritage Team was strengthened to support these initiatives, enhancing its capacity to protect submerged archaeological sites.

The year 2024 was another successful year in public relations and outreach. The Superintendence expanded its educational outreach by visiting middle and secondary schools. These visits included lectures and interactive hands-on activities designed to engage students and foster an appreciation for cultural heritage. This initiative complemented the entity's broader efforts in capacity building and professional development. In the first quarter the Superintendence held a week-long training focused on archival and archaeometric research through the E-RIHS Pilot Training School. In November, the Superintendence, in partnership with ICOMOS International, held its first workshop aimed at professionals in the cultural heritage sector, to enhance awareness on Heritage Impact Assessments for World Heritage sites. A workshop in Zooarchaeology was also organised by SCH staff for archaeology monitors, which included expert presentations and practical sessions.

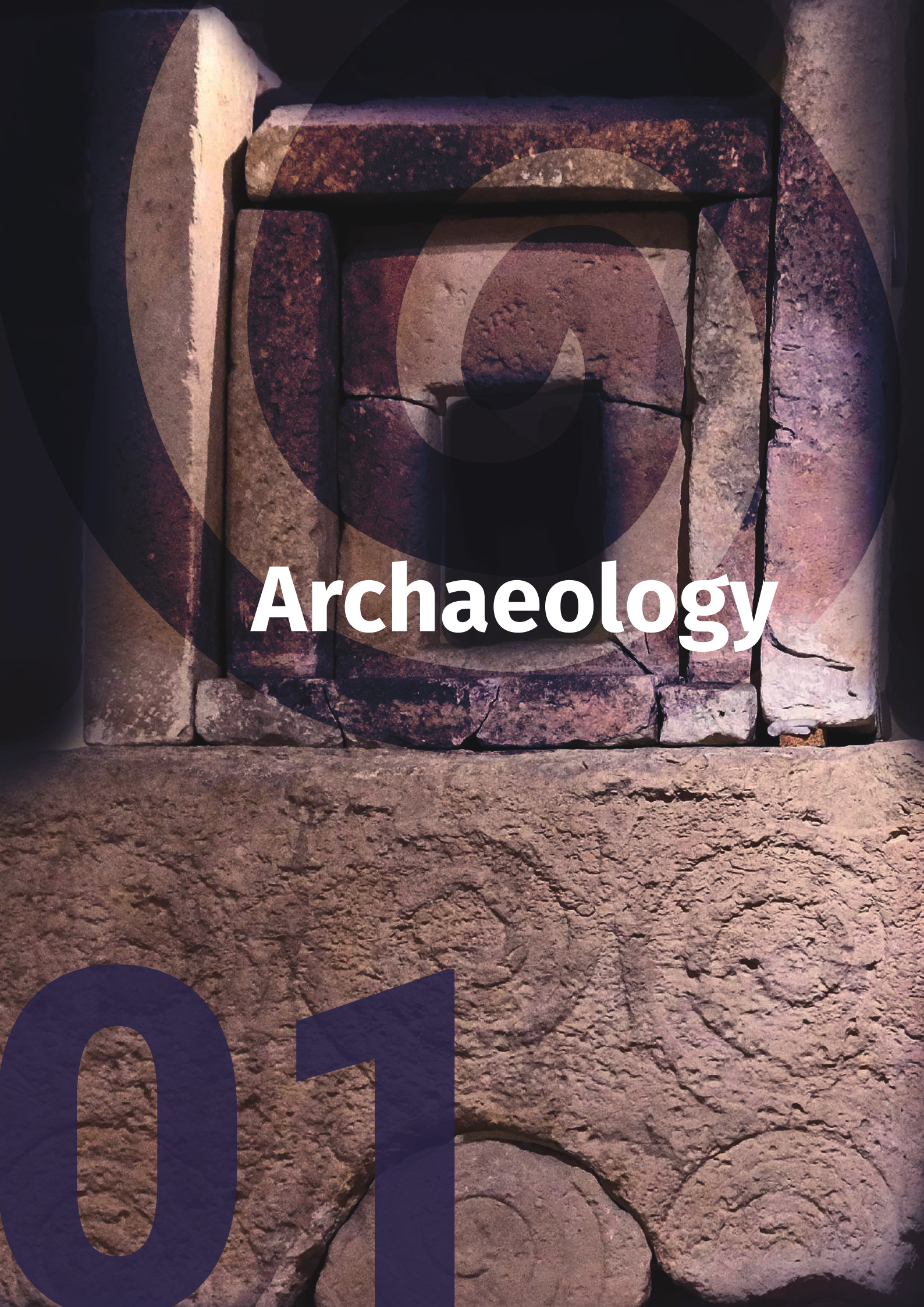
Corporate obligations

The Superintendence continued to fulfil its obligations in participating in a number of local and international committees and fora, representing the State as the National Regulator of Cultural Heritage in the Maltese Islands.

February 2025



Kurt Farrugia
Superintendent of Cultural Heritage



Archaeology

01

Research Archaeology and Conservation

Introduction

2024 brought some changes to the team due to an internal reorganisation to address several staff changes. The said changes happened at a critical time during an elevated number of fieldwork projects which needed the team's engagement – most being emergency interventions resulting from discoveries made during surveillance of development projects which took away resources from the concurrent project of finalising the 20th anniversary publication (details below). The completion of this publication is a priority for the Superintendence.

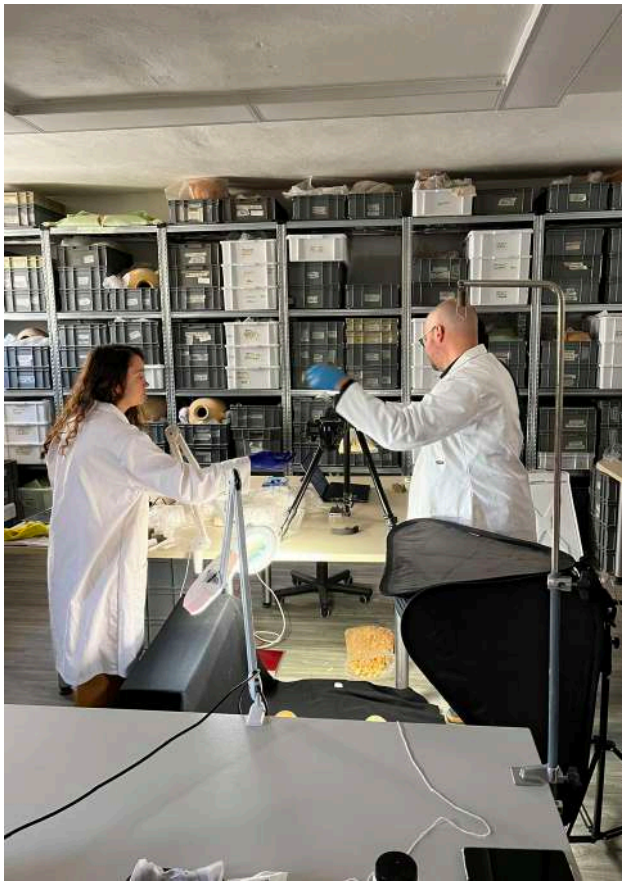
20th year anniversary publication



Post-excavation and conservation on material for the publication.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

This past year was a crucial year for the drafting of the Superintendence's publication entitled "The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage: 20 years of archaeological discoveries". The text was completed by the end of 2024, with the process of reviewing, editing and proofreading also underway. The artefacts described in the publication, originating from more than 40 archaeological sites and amounting to more than 400 crates, underwent several processes in 2024, including selection at the Superintendence's off-site repository. Some of the selected artefacts required further treatment, including cleaning, conservation, further study, and photography, at the SCH lab.



Photographing finds for the publication.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Work for the publication required the digitisation and compilation of a selection of archaeological drawings showing the selected archaeological features and sites which will be included in the final publication. Concurrently, editing of photographs of the artefacts, which are to feature, was ongoing. Both tasks will be carried forward to the first quarter of 2025. During the course of the year, another specialist from the Geomatics team contributed by creating location maps for the sites that will be featured in the publication. The past investment in the acquisition of licenced software, namely ACAD, Photoshop and GIS, has proved to be essential to the proper execution of these tasks. Other SCH staff also contributed to continue improving on the content accuracy of the of the publication.

Major Archaeological Investigations, Post-Excavation, and Conservation

Throughout 2024 several fieldwork projects were carried out by the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team, as listed in Table 1 and described in more detail thereafter. One project included a research-led planned project at Bidnija, l/o Mosta, which comprised a collaboration with the Department of Classics and Archaeology from the University of Malta (UM) and Heritage Malta (HM), and which has set the parameters for an annual excavation in the next few years. Three other projects were features unearthed from SCH monitoring projects, while another was a fieldwork project to inform on future development. Besides the fieldwork, the team also heavily engaged in post-excavation processing of the archaeological material that resulted from these fieldwork projects. Additional post-excavation continued on other assemblages, from sites excavated in previous years, and which are being prepared for the publication, again in collaboration with UM and HM.

A total of **six hundred and seventy eight (678)** intact artefacts and **one thousand five hundred and seventy (1,570)** ceramic fragments underwent conservation treatment at the SCH laboratory during 2024. The intact artefacts cover a range of materials, namely ceramic vessels, metals, glass objects and stone artefacts. Most of the conservation was carried out on artefacts related to the 20-year anniversary publication mentioned earlier. Additionally, over sixty (60) digitised conservation reports were compiled this year.

Table 1: Main fieldwork projects carried out in 2024

Site	Locality	Type of intervention
Agriculture features & deposits (GJN2023)	Għajnsielem, Għawdex	Excavation and post-excavation
Bidnija ancient rural establishment (BDJ2024)	Bidnija, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Coastal Structural remains (BLT2023)	Marsaxlokk, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Punic-Roman tomb (KRB2024)	Rabat, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Punic-Roman tomb (SAM2021)	Birkirkara, Malta	Excavation and post-excavation
Il-Marnisi ancient rural establishment (MRN2018)	Marsaxlokk, Malta	Post-excavation
Phoenician tombs from Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet (QAJ2015, GKB2021)	Rabat, Malta	Post-excavation
Mġarr ix-Xini Valley project	Mġarr ix-Xini, Għawdex	Post-excavation

Agricultural features and Deposits at Għajnsielem, Għawdex (Site Code: GJN2023)

During the first half of 2024, one team member supervised an investigation at Għajnsielem, Għawdex, which formed part of an archaeological evaluation for a potential development project. The site contained rock-cut agricultural trenches in an area of it whilst also soil deposits in another zone, which included prehistoric pottery. The post-excavation of the finds

is currently being carried out by the archaeology monitor responsible for the site.

Ancient rural establishment, Bidnija, l/o Mosta, Malta (Site Code: BDJ2024)

In 2012, a survey project was carried out in Bidnija (Site Code: FHVL187) by the Department of Classical and Archaeology (UM), the SCH and the University of Ghent. Substantial ancient structural remains were identified when a ground penetrating radar survey was carried out but since then t the site has remained unexplored. However, in the meantime it was entrusted to HM, which is now managing the site. In 2020, HM, UM, and SCH, signed a collaborative agreement for the better management of the site and addressing research questions through a pooling of resources.

As part of this agreement, the first season of archaeological excavations was held over a four-week period during mid-June to mid-July in 2024 with the main aim of confirming presence and nature of the structures identified through the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). Moreover, the site will now also serve as training ground for university students studying archaeology. Prior to the excavation, during the first half of 2024, three (3) team members engaged in planning meetings, including on-site discussions, together with HM and UM representatives. Five members of the team were involved during the first season of excavation, two of whom are archaeologists who acted as area supervisors. These team members were entrusted with training the archaeology students and supervising the excavation of the sites. Additionally, two (2) other team members, who work on conservation processes at SCH, were involved in the preparation and support to the excavation for first-aid intervention. An osteo-archaeologist also contributed when human remains were discovered, and supervised studies on how to protect human remains during the excavation process.

Post-excavation of the remains unearthed in the first season of the Bidnija excavation was also carried out during June-July 2024, and is still ongoing, with the supervision of the SCH team members involved in the excavation. The material culture mainly consists of pottery sherds as well as tesserae and seem to cover the Roman and Early Medieval periods. A second season will be carried out in 2025, which will also see the active participation of the team.



First season of excavation carried out at Bidnija.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Coastal structural remains at Marsaxlokk, Malta (Site Code: BLT2023)

During the first half of 2024, the SCH was consulted on a proposed development project along the coast of an area known as *Il-Ballut* in Marsaxlokk, Malta, with the scope of combating coastal erosion in the area. As part of the process to identify any archaeological features that may be impacted by the proposed development, the Underwater Archaeology Team carried out underwater investigations (refer to Underwater Projects section of this report), while the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team carried out investigations on land, where archaeological remains had already been identified in 2023 through a survey carried out by the UM and students of the Global Maritime Archaeology Fieldwork Program.

During July and August 2024, members from the Team worked on site to expose further the structural remains, identifying ancient foundations comprising ashlar stone blocks and mortar. Although not entirely exposed, since the structure continues further inland, as noted in the section parallel to the shoreline, the team carried out documentation to record the structure and issue a report to inform further on the SCH Heritage Planning Consultations Team during their assessment of the development project. The land excavation did not reveal further significant diagnostic material culture, making dating of the structure challenging, but the masonry type, size and its location possibly suggested it may have comprised a Roman or Pre-Roman instalment. Parallels to this type of masonry have been identified in other local Roman quarries which the Superintendence had investigated.



Coastal Structural Remains at Marsaxlokk.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Punic-Roman tomb, Rabat, Malta (Site Code: KRB2024)

In June 2024 a site in the outskirts of Rabat was evaluated for a potential development project. During the excavation of the soil above bedrock, the archaeology monitor working under the direction of the Archaeology Monitoring Team of the Superintendence, identified a shaft within which were the articulated remains of an individual. In July, osteo-archaeologists and an archaeologist from the Superintendence joined the freelance archaeologist engaged for the project to carry out a full excavation of the feature. The feature was discovered to be a Punic-Roman rock-cut tomb, consisting of a shaft leading to a single rock-cut chamber which was still sealed with a slab at the entrance. During the two-week investigation, the team identified a minimum of four individuals buried in the tomb, together with a few ceramic vessels and small finds. The finds are currently undergoing post-excavation in the SCH lab and will be included in forthcoming studies and publication.



Punic-Roman tomb, Rabat, Malta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Punic-Roman tomb, Birkirkara (Site Code: SAM2021)

During September 2024, a plot across the main road from Mater Dei Hospital, which was being developed for the construction of a ground-level parking for hospital staff, and the formation of a schemed road and installation of services, revealed the presence of an ancient tomb. This feature consisted of a shaft leading to three chambers, each sealed with a slab at their entrances. From the preliminary assessment of the chambers, it was noted that these were full of human bones, and therefore the assistance of the two SCH osteo-archaeologists was required to assist

the archaeology monitor in the investigation of the tomb, in view of the required expertise. Other SCH archaeologists and staff were also required to assist in the investigation due to the large amount of work involved. The excavation extended over a period of more than three weeks during September and October 2024. Through the careful identification and recording of the large quantities of human remains, the investigation identified that the remains had been carefully moved from time to time to allow for other burials. This mortuary behaviour was documented by means of drawings and labelling of the different bones. Most of the remains were covered in mud, since the chambers had flooded due to the heavy rainfall upon discovery, therefore the bones required cleaning at the SCH Laboratory.



Punic-Roman tomb, Birkirkara.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The post-excavation of the large assemblage of human remains (more than twenty individuals are estimated to have been buried in the chambers) and the pottery assemblage which included urns with cremated remains as well as other Punic vessels, is ongoing, and is being carried out by the team, assisted by other SCH officers and volunteers. Currently the assessment of the human remains and ceramics is underway, with commitments for funding by the developer for further scientific study of the remains.

Il-Marnisi ancient rural establishment, Marsaxlokk, Malta (Site Code: MRN2018)

The materials and data which were gathered in the fieldwork seasons at Il-Marnisi site continued being processed through 2024, as part of a collaboration between the SCH and the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta. One member of the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team is coordinating the post-excavation project on behalf of SCH, together with a Senior Lecturer from the UM. The coming months will also see further discussions on the conservation treatment of the materials from these sites, as well as their photography and documentation. These processes will eventually result in a final publication.

Phoenician tombs from Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet, Rabat, Malta (Site Code: QAJ2015, GKB2021)

2024 saw the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team working on a number of processes for the research project on the Phoenician Tombs from Għajn Klieb and Għajn Qajjet. Firstly, the materials from the tombs continued to undergo a number of conservation processes, especially the human remains found in the sarcophagus from Għajn Klieb (GKB2021). These bones continued being consolidated so that the fragile remains could be handled for osteological studies. The other processes carried out at the SCH Lab for this project included the assessment and documentation of the artefacts and the inventory and study of both animal and human remains. The writing of the publication text also started being drafted. These processes were carried out together with other members of the project from the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta and Heritage Malta. 2025 will see the finalisation of these processes which will provide the data and material for the compilation of the final publication.

Mġarr ix-Xini Valley Project, Għawdex

This project started in 2005 with fieldwork at Mġarr ix-Xini Valley, and for the second year, the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team coordinated the processing of data collected from the past fieldwork season. The result will be the creation of a digital database of the finds and a final publication.

Other Archaeology Collaborations

On separate visits throughout 2024, the Superintendence also provided access and space to a large group of archaeologists from the Italian Archaeology Mission, who regularly come to the SCH repository in Bormla to continue their studies on the *Tas-Silġ* material excavated in the past fieldwork. Additionally, a researcher from the Italian Mission was also provided with the space to work at the SCH lab for a number of weeks throughout 2024 to work on the animal bones from the site. The Research Archaeology and Conservation Team also supported the Italian Mission's studies, by providing the expertise of two of its members, one for the study of the human skeleton found at the site decades ago, and another for the study of medieval pottery. The contributions by the team will be published together with other data being gathered by the Italian Archaeology Mission in an extensive publication in the coming months. Another group of archaeologists from the Italian Archaeological Mission were also hosted at the SCH for two (2) weeks, with the Research Archaeology and Conservation team assisting them through analysis and conservation treatment of materials from the *Ras il-Wardija* site which they are studying for a forthcoming publication.

SCH Storage and Research Facilities

The Research Archaeology and Conservation Team is entrusted to maintain the upkeep of the Superintendence's archaeological repository and archive with the aim of facilitating research by aiding researchers and SCH staff in accessing the various materials stored within the facilities. Apart from managing the facilities and collections, the team also contributes to issuing research permits and drawing up agreements for researchers and institutions who request to carry out studies on archaeological sites and materials, including those housed in the SCH storage facilities. Team members regularly meet and discuss research to organise and for which to schedule the use of the facilities. The team aims to promote research in archaeology on a local and international level as part of the duties of the Superintendence.

SCH Repository of Archaeological Materials

The work carried out at the SCH Repository included the organisation of more than four hundred (400) crates of archaeological materials related to the SCH publication work. The artefacts were assessed and sorted, cleaned, re-bagged and re-labelled, a process required for all materials in storage facilities due to conservation issues.

Additionally, the team heavily engaged in discussions and processes connected to the maintenance of the Repository, a task which at the end of 2024 was passed on to a dedicated SCH staff member outside the team. The works carried out earlier in 2024 were aimed at increasing storage space to accommodate the ever-growing number of materials resulting from surveillance projects. In 2024, more than two hundred (200) crates of archaeological material were received and stored.

SCH Archaeological Documentation Archive

2024 saw a new responsibility being entrusted to Research Archaeology and Conservation Team - that of overseeing the upkeep of, and tasks related to, the SCH Archaeological Documentation Archive. This Archive comprises the entire collection of archaeological records from fieldwork going back to the times of the then Museums Department, now the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, with volumes going back to 1934.

Over the last few years, a total of two hundred and fifty (250) binders in the Archives have been reorganised and filtered, and the digitisation of all documentation has been an ongoing effort to allow for efficient access in the future. In parallel to the digitisation of paper files, photographs, slides and reels relating to archaeological excavations, are also being digitised. This process also includes a spatial element, where the locations of past discoveries are being plotted on the authority's internal and external GIS portal, enriching the information available to staff and the public. This includes any sites or finds that were discovered not only on land, but also during underwater archaeological investigations both near

the coast and in open areas within Maltese territorial waters. The Superintendence aims to take this spatial cataloguing further, plotting files from the Museums Department which are related to a specific location. The team continued working on the upkeep of the collection through its organisation, whilst providing access to SCH staff and other researchers outside the entity who need access to the archive to carry out research.

The SCH Laboratory

Apart from the post-excavation, conservation and photography connected to the fieldwork projects and publication projects discussed earlier, the SCH laboratory was also used for educational and mentorship purposes. As in previous years, throughout the year several university students and local archaeologists were hosted in the SCH lab to participate in post-excavation sessions. Students studying archaeology were given the opportunity to learn more about the functions of the SCH, as part of their MA and BA courses with the Department of Classics and Archaeology. The freelance local archaeologists attended post-excavation sessions as part of their continued professional development, honing their techniques in fieldwork and post excavation from surveillance projects. Fragile materials such as human remains and other artefacts were brought to the SCH lab from such projects and together with SCH specialists, the archaeologists worked on cleaning and processing these remains, whilst working towards extracting useful data from the interpretation of archaeological sites.



Post-excavation process at the SCH Laboratory.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The team also hosted other students from MCAST, UM and De La Salle Sixth Form, who were required to take part in post-excavation processes as part of their course work. Additionally, a group of fifteen (15) students from Savio College also spent the day at SCH including the lab, where the team showed them how archaeological materials are treated and assessed, and how documentation gathered from archaeological sites is processed. These students are following Archaeology as a choice subject leading them to sitting for a MATSEC exam on the subject.



Post-excavation process at the SCH Laboratory.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The SCH Library

The small reference library of the Superintendence also falls under the responsibility of the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team. One team member ensures that the books are organised, and new accessions registered, whilst providing access for SCH staff and researchers working at the SCH.

Archaeological Monitoring and Discoveries

Introduction

Through its Archaeology Monitoring Team, the Superintendence regulates archaeological monitoring of ongoing development works and continues to maintain a role in the management of the archaeology resource when discovered within development sites falling in areas of archaeological sensitivity. The team's function is not limited to the identification of archaeological features but also ensures proper documentation and safeguarding measures.

Archaeological monitoring is carried out by freelance archaeologists approved by and working under the direction of the Superintendence. Currently the team is composed of a senior executive and five (5) executives, the sixth member having joined in the first quarter of 2024 and all of whom are archaeologists. The team oversees a turnover of circa four hundred (400) cases at any given time and in 2024 alone, three hundred and thirty-nine (339) Terms of Reference for new developments to be carried out under archaeological surveillance have been issued. The team carried out two hundred and fifty-four (254) inspections in relation to ongoing surveillance. During 2024, archaeology watching briefs and evaluations yielded a total of one hundred and twenty-seven (127) newly discovered sites, and a further fifteen (15) sites resulted from accidental discoveries, meaning that there was no watching brief in place. Approved archaeologists on site monitored works on behalf of the Superintendence and carried out investigation and documentation of the discoveries as directed by the team. Once this process was completed, the Superintendence adopted various mitigation measures to ensure the preservation of features. All cultural heritage features are important; however, the level of importance can vary between outstanding, high, medium or low. The mitigation measure adopted for each individual case depends on the assigned value.

In 2024, **one hundred and seventeen (117)** archaeology monitoring cases from 2023, 2022 and the preceding years have been finalised, with a total of **one hundred and sixty-one (161)** certifications for the completion of archaeological surveillance issued. In 2024, the Archaeology Monitoring Team continued making use of the GIS based system to strengthen data capture and collection which facilitates data access and retrieval. In 2024, the team plotted more than one thousand and three hundred (1,300) unique entries, consisting of site points and individual feature points. The feature points are publicly available through the Superintendence GIS interface which can be accessed from its website.

Archaeological Discoveries

Table 2 shows the different types of features and discoveries made in 2024 by category:

Table 2: Breakdown of the different types of features and discoveries made in 2024 by category

Category	Frequency of features in different sites
Burial:	8
▸ *Shaft and Chamber Tomb*	4
▸ *Catacomb*	3
▸ *Burial Pit/Burial*	1
Engineering/Industrial:	218
▸ *Agricultural Trenches*	133
▸ *Qarrying/Quarrying Marks*	18
▸ *Water Management Systems*	41
▸ *Cart-Ruts*	26

Category	Frequency of features in different sites
Military:	54
▸ *Shelters*	8
▸ *Fox/Slit Trenches*	46
Miscellaneous:	101
▸ *Structural Remains*	37
▸ *Rock-cut Features*	13
▸ *Unclassified*	24
▸ *Post Holes*	2
▸ *Pottery Scatter/Cultural Deposit*	11
▸ *Flooring*	4
▸ *Other*	10

Table 3 features the more interesting archaeological discoveries made in 2024. Details of each discovery are provided further on in the report:

Table 3: Interesting archaeological discoveries made in 2024

Site	Locality
Agricultural features, cart-ruts and shelter	Attard
Structural remains and water management systems	Birgu
Agricultural features, burials, military and structural remains	Gżira
Classical cisterns and shaft, and chamber tomb	Luqa
Cisterns and cultural deposits	Qormi
In-situ vessel	Rabat, Għawdex
Quarrying and water management systems	Rabat, Għawdex
Cart-ruts	Rabat, Malta
Structural remains and Classical deposits	Rabat, Malta
Rock-cut features and cultural deposits	Rabat, Malta
Cart-ruts and shaft, and chamber tomb	Rabat, Malta
Reservoir and shelter	San Pawl il-Baħar
Agricultural, military and water management remains	San Ġiljan
Burials	Valletta
Cart-ruts and catacomb	Żejtun

Agricultural features, cart-ruts and shelter, Attard

The site lies in an archaeologically sensitive area owing to the vicinity of numerous discoveries which include tombs, shelters, agricultural trenches, quarry marks, silos and water management systems. This site was subject to an archaeological evaluation during the determination of the development application so as to inform the decision process, which investigation resulted in the discovery of diverse rock cut features. A Second World War air raid shelter, interconnected to a reservoir, is located within the site footprint. Of particular interest are four pairs of cart-ruts discovered during the investigation. Three (3) pairs of cart-ruts run in an east-to-west direction for a length of approximately twenty-eight (28) metres each, with an average rut width of zero point twp zero (0.20) to zero point two five (0.25) metres and a rut depth that ranges from zero point zero five (0.05) to zero point five (0.5) metres. Worked stone wedges were uncovered in the fills of these ruts, some of which also bear rut marks. This is interpreted as ancient repairs of the cart-ruts to permit their continued use. The remaining pair of cart-ruts run in a north-to-south direction for a length of approximately thirteen (13) metres and an average rut width of zero point one (0.10) metres with a very shallow rut depth of zero point zero two (0.02) metres. Agricultural related features consisting of trenches, postholes and a tree pit have also been discovered. Considering the significant value of these archaeological features present within the site proposed for development, the Superintendence requested the retention of all the features.



Aerial view of the site clearly showing the cart-ruts, and reservoir/shelter.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Stone wedges discovered and preserved in situ within cart-rut.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Structural remains and water management systems, Birgu

The ongoing works at Pjazza tal-Belt Vittoriosa in Birgu have unearthed several archaeological features during works being monitored under the direction of the Superintendence. Various water management systems such as wells, cisterns, and culverts have been unearthed, as well as in situ flooring and foundations belonging to buildings which no longer stand. All features have been fully documented and safely covered to ensure both their preservation as well as to allow the works in the square to continue as planned. The Birgu clock tower was known to have occupied a spot in the square, but after its bombing during the Second World War and its subsequent demolition, the exact location of this iconic structure was for a period unclear. Exploratory excavation works headed by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in 2004 set out with the intention to relocate the clock tower's foundations. The investigations were successful in that the foundations of the clock tower were identified. Their location was recorded,

and the foundations were covered with geotextile and gravel, so that those conducting future works in the square could be cognisant of the clock tower's surviving foundations. In 2024, works in the square once again unearthed the tower's location and the archaeological monitor onsite duly informed the Superintendence. This re-discovery highlights the importance of quality documentation and record keeping during archaeological monitoring projects, which allows for more efficient planning and organisation when new construction projects are conducted within a particular area in which the presence of buried archaeological features is known.



Various features uncovered during works.
PHOTO SOURCE: IVANA JERKIN ERAK



Part of the foundation wall of the old clock tower.
PHOTO SOURCE: IVANA JERKIN ERAK

Agricultural features, burials, military and structural remains, Gżira

Archaeological investigations at Manoel Island continued throughout 2024 in line with Terms of Reference issued by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, following up on previous investigations. Site works commenced by removing all accumulated spoil heaps and invasive vegetation overgrowth within an area identified as Zone A, as per approved Zoning Plan. Subsequently, extensive clearing works commenced.

The monitored investigation of soft deposits and detailed cleaning of the bedrock surface exposed a total of two hundred and ninety five (295) features spread throughout the entire area of the site identified as Zone A. These consist of: one hundred and ninety four (194) agricultural trenches; sixteen (16) wall alignments; twelve (12) fox trenches; forty four (44) rock-cut features of unknown typology; six (6) rock-cut drainage systems; sixteen (16) rock-cut tree pits; eight (8) traces of quarrying; various postholes; rock-cut shallow linear grooves; a rock-cut feature associated with mooring of ships; an alignment of concrete blocks; foundations for a pre-existing guardroom; a concrete platform; a rock-cut feature containing animal bone; and a deposit containing in situ human skeletal remains. The following is a description of the more interesting features - the agricultural trenches, the fox trenches and the deposit containing in situ human skeletal remains.

The agricultural trenches are rectangular in shape and located within the northwestern and central extents of Zone A. A total of four (4) alignments (N-S, E-W, NE-SW, & NW-SE) were found to be present. The majority of these trenches are aligned in a NE-SW orientation. Initial interpretation of their location and NE-SW orientation suggests deliberate positioning in relation to prolonged exposure to sunlight to aid in vine/vegetation growth. Archaeological investigations also revealed homogenous fills within many of the agricultural trenches investigated. Some of the trenches consisted of a light reddish brown silty sand deposit whilst others consisted of a greyish dark brown one. Many of the agricultural trenches contained pottery sherds dating to the

classical period of the Maltese Islands. A particular agricultural trench contained two deposits, the upper deposit consisting of a greyish-brown silty-sand with abundant stone inclusions. Some pottery sherds were present within this deposit, which were collected. The underlying deposit was covering the base of the feature. Towards the bottom of the feature, two broken vessels still in situ were uncovered. The apparent intentional positioning of vessels in such features (which has been noted in other sites) might possibly provide insight into ancient agricultural practices. Additionally, other agricultural trenches are also present on the exposed foreshore to the north of the above-mentioned agricultural trenches, beyond the approved area.



Aerial view of aligned fox trenches.

PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA



Aerial view of aligned agricultural features.

PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA

The fox trenches are related to Second World War warfare, providing cover for military personnel in both defensive and offensive action. On plan, these features have an 'L' shape, consisting of rock-cut steps leading to a shallow rectangular rock-cut trench. At the base of the steps, there is a square-shaped rock-cut sump. These fox trenches are at a parallel to the original shoreline prior to post-war land reclamation activities. Such an alignment would have provided an all-round defensive strategy covering an extensive area of the westernmost extent of Manoel Island.

A deposit containing in situ human skeletal remains was discovered on site close by to foundation walls belonging to a pre-existing building and abutting the waterlogged area located in that vicinity which relates to the location of the original foreshore. In view of the presence of articulated human remains, an osteologist forming part of the Archaeology Monitoring Team assisted the approved monitor during this investigation, together with the case officer responsible for this case. Investigation works commenced by removing a deposit composed of yellowish sandy silt containing large sized stone inclusions to define the whole extent of the burial deposit which consisted of a fine pale brown sandy deposit.



Broken vessels discovered in situ at the base of an agricultural trench.

PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA

In total, three (3) partial yet articulated skeletons were present within. At the top was Skeleton One (1), which was present from skull down to the proximal left femur. This individual appeared to be a fully developed adult, based on surviving teeth and advanced bone development. Skeleton Two (2), was uncovered immediately underlying the former and was present from approximately the middle of the ribcage down to the knees. The young age of this

skeleton was apparent primarily due to its small size in comparison to Skeleton One (1), as well as due to the unfused state of the long bones. Skeleton Three (3) consisted of just a partial left arm, the finger bones of which were discovered to continue beneath the rib cage of Skeleton Two (2) indicating that Skeleton Three (3) was the first of the three (3) to be buried. The death of Skeleton Three (3) likely happened before the individual reached full skeletal maturity, indicating that the individual could have been a teenager at the time of death. A few disarticulated bones were also present throughout the deposit which were not associated with any of the three (3) articulated skeletons. This indicates that other burials were once present but have since been lost to the sea or to development.



Burials discovered and fully investigated.

PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA



Burials discovered and fully investigated.

PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA

Comparison to historic maps indicates that the location of these burials is very close to the original foreshore offering the most likely explanation to their incomplete survival. The daily rising and lowering of the tides over a long period of time gradually eroded the deposit they were buried in, displacing the bones in such a way that entire sections of the skeletons are missing from the archaeological record. This discovery is not unique since four (4) cemeteries are known to have existed on Manoel Island, the remains of which were found during previous investigations. Historical records also document that during plague outbreaks, the dead were being brought for hasty burial on Manoel Island. This deposit was also waterlogged with sea water and after their extraction the bones developed a layer of salt crystals on their surfaces. Once in the SCH laboratory, the bones underwent a month-long desalination treatment to ensure their preservation and the possibility of further studies being conducted on the remains in the future.

Classical cisterns, shaft and chamber tomb, Luqa

During the ongoing works related to the extension of taxiways and the new apron forming part of the Malta International Airport (MIA) expansion project, a tomb has been discovered, which is the fifth since four (4) tombs were already discovered in 2023 during such works in the area. The tomb had been truncated in the past and yielded no archaeological material or human remains during its investigation. Further interesting discoveries within the site consist of three (3) bell-shaped cisterns, one (1) basin-shaped cistern and two (2) rectangular cisterns datable to the Roman period. The investigations clearly indicated that these features have been disturbed in the past, as evidence by the number of ashlar masonry and structural remains dumped into all the cisterns, some including Twentieth (20th) Century cultural material. Notwithstanding, considerable amounts of pottery sherds have also been found within these features together with several broken stone basins. Of particular interest is a press bed associated with olive oil production. These remains indicate that a Roman structure, possibly an agricultural establishment, was present in this area. Further agricultural trenches and quarrying were also discovered as works progressed. All features have been investigated and documented. Further post-excavation work is required to obtain further data and information about the site. Site works are still in progress.



Truncated tomb discovered in Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Bell/basin-shaped cisterns discovered and investigated in Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Bell/basin-shaped cisterns discovered and investigated in Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Bell/basin-shaped cisterns discovered and investigated in Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Rectangular cisterns discovered and investigated at Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Rectangular cisterns discovered and investigated at Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Rectangular cisterns discovered and investigated at Luqa.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY

Cisterns and cultural deposits, Qormi

During routine monitoring works on a remnant plot of land in a high-traffic part of Qormi, two bell-shaped cisterns and associated culverts were uncovered. One of the cisterns was found to contain a substantial amount of worked stone and material culture in the form of pottery. Some of the unearthed pottery was decorated with painted red bands in the Punic style, whilst others were diagnostic parts of vessels (rims, handles, and bases). A range of vessel types is represented, including amphorae, plates, bowls, and jugs. Within the sump of the cistern, a partial double spouted oil lamp and nearly complete Hellenistic cup with fine black decoration, were discovered. Additionally, fragments of plaster which once lined the well were also excavated from within this feature. The finds have been generally dated to the Late Punic and early Roman period, which is congruous with other discoveries made in the area, including tombs and other water management systems of similar date. This feature also highlights that even though the immediate area of the site was subject to intense development in recent years, archaeology can still survive.



Feature within which the cultural deposit was discovered.
PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA



Pottery excavated and discovered from the bell-shaped cistern.
PHOTO SOURCE: KARL CACHIA

In-situ vessel, Rabat, Għawdex

During monitoring of a private development in Rabat, an in-situ vessel in a fragmentary state was discovered, embedded within the natural clay slopes formation during ongoing soil/material removal. After carrying on site documentation as requested by the Superintendence, the vessel was extracted. This pottery item appears to pertain to the Classical period.

Detailed documentation and post-excavation work on the vessel has been conducted by the archaeological monitors. This find appears to have been in isolation and no further archaeological deposits or features were discovered on site. All investigation and documentation have been concluded. Further studies on the retrieved material are being carried out by the Superintendence. Siteworks have been concluded.







Vessel pre and post-excavation in Triq ta' Wara is-Sur, Rabat, Għawdex.

PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY

Quarry and water management remains, Rabat, Għawdex

During the archaeological monitoring in relation to the Victoria-Marsalforn Road works, an ancient quarry was discovered during soil removal. The quarry is very well defined with evident quarrying marks and ashlar negatives clearly indicating the traditional quarrying methodologies as well as the size of the blocks being quarried in antiquity. It appears that the quarry was used for the creation of *'vażi'*. Material culture pertaining to the Roman period has also been discovered within the quarry, thus indicating that the quarry possibly pertains to this period, if not earlier. The quarry has been fully investigated and documented. Adjacent to this quarry two (2) bell-shaped wells with interconnecting water channels have also been discovered. In other areas of the project, further quarrying has also been discovered. All of the identified features will be reburied in line with a methodology approved by the Superintendence and retained underneath the constructed road. Works on site are still ongoing.



Various quarrying and water management remains in Rabat, Għawdex.

PHOTO SOURCE: JOSEPH GRIMA







Various quarrying and water management remains in Rabat, Għawdex.

PHOTO SOURCE: JOSEPH GRIMA

Cart-ruts, limits of Rabat, Malta

During an archaeological investigation for private development of two adjacent sites in Rabat, Malta, a series of cart-ruts have been discovered. The cart-ruts form an intricate network, intersecting each other at different intervals. A total of eight (8) different sets of cart-ruts have been discovered on site. Within the immediate surroundings, a large number of archaeological features consisting of cart-ruts, ancient quarries and tombs, were recorded. The features will be retained within the proposed development.



Network of cart-ruts discovered in the limits of Rabat, Malta.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Structural remains and cultural deposits, Rabat, Malta

The site in question is located within the Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) of Rabat and Mdina, and situated just outside the buffer zone for the protection of the setting of *Il-Mitħna tal-Għeriexem,* scheduled at Grade One (1) by the Planning Authority. The site is thus located within an area of high archaeological sensitivity requiring that any works involving ground disturbance had to be archaeologically monitored. The relevant Terms of Reference were issued by the Superintendence and clearing works for the proposed lift pit commenced. A pit measuring one hundred and ten (110) centimetres long by one hundred and twenty (120) centimetres wide was opened. After the removal of tiles and underlying layer of construction debris, a compacted layer of white deposit was reached at a depth of forty-five (45) centimetres, a possible preparational layer for flooring. This white layer covered the entire extent of the opened pit. Investigation works continued by removing the layer of white deposit. Upon complete removal, further archaeology was revealed. At the western extent of the opened pit, a brown deposit

rich in pottery (both diagnostic and non-diagnostic sherds), plaster, stone, bone, and shell, was identified, and abutting this brown deposit to the east, two (2) aligned large sized ashlar blocks having a NW-SE orientation, were identified. Upon reaching a depth of circa one hundred (100) centimetres from the topmost edge of the opened pit, a layer composed of a dark grey ash deposit was discovered at the pit's northernmost extent. The ash deposit was left untouched. In view of the high concentration of archaeological remains, it was made clear that the required depth for the proposed lift pit could not be reached and approved plans were revised accordingly. The remaining deposits and the two ashlar blocks have been fully preserved in situ.



Pottery sherds collected from cultural deposits.
PHOTO SOURCE: AEC MALTA



Ashlars and deposits recovered.
PHOTO SOURCE: AEC MALTA

Rock-cut features and cultural deposits, Rabat, Malta

Archaeological monitoring at a development site in Rabat (Malta) has uncovered several agricultural trenches as well as a feature which is relatively unique and of particular interest. At first glance, the feature was thought to be an irregular tomb shaft. However, further stratigraphic excavation conducted by the archaeological monitor under the guidance of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage led to the conclusion that this could be a Bronze Age pit similar to another site reported in 2022. The feature consisted of a sizeable and wide pit excavated by hand, and the deposit within it contained multiple pottery fragments with pierced lug handles, pieces of worked stone, an animal mandible, as well as an animal horn. The investigation of this feature could not be fully carried out due to safety reasons, therefore the Superintendence directed the developers to integrate a permanent access to the feature in the approved development, so that this feature may be fully investigated and documented in the future.



Feature discovered during investigation, Rabat, Malta.
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Possible Bronze Age pottery discovered in Rabat, Malta.
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Cart-ruts and tomb, Rabat, Malta

Located in the Area of Archaeological Importance of Rabat and Mdina (AAI), this site is surrounded by several tombs, catacombs, quarrying and agricultural trenches. Consequently, any ground disturbance works were to be archaeologically monitored. On completion of soil/material removal works, a rock-cut tomb (shaft and chamber), cart-ruts, and a modern well, were discovered.



Aerial view of the site showing cart-ruts and shaft and chamber tomb discovered.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Upon commencement of the investigation, it was noted that the rock-cut tomb dating to the Punic-Roman period was disturbed with modern backfills and a foundation wall having a height of nine courses had been constructed within the shaft. The bottom of the shaft was reached at three hundred (300) centimetres below the bedrock level and an entrance to a chamber was discovered. The sealing slab had been removed in the past and the inside of the chamber floor was covered with a modern pale whitish brown backfill. Notwithstanding, upon removal, a brownish soil layer, twenty-four (24) centimetres thick, with bones and Punic pottery sherds, was identified beneath. This was initially thought as being a potential undisturbed layer of funerary remains.



Aerial view of tomb shaft during investigation.

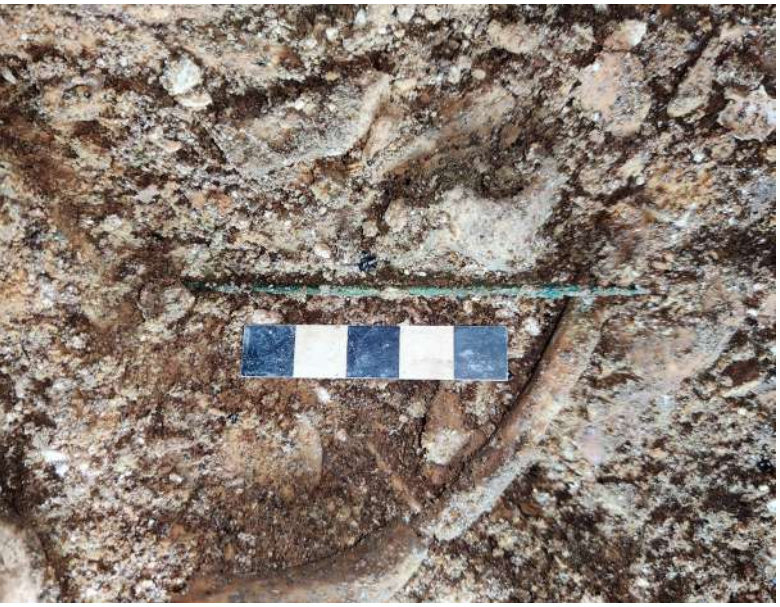
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

On investigation, the funerary context of the chamber was noted as disturbed at approximately one hundred and twenty-five (125) to one hundred and fifty (150) centimetres below the ceiling of the tomb chamber. Scattered human bones (non-articulated) were noticed at the eastern and the southern part of the chamber. During the investigation of the chamber, a large quantity of Punic pottery sherds was collected. Many of the fragments that were collected seemed to form part of the same pots (based on the context, size, and patterns). Ash remains with burned bones were also noticed at the middle and southern part of the chamber. Most probably this ash was once placed in one of these funerary pots but were later emptied, with the pots having been crushed and dumped haphazardly around the chamber. The burial assemblage included unguentaria, beads, pins/needles, jewellery, and pottery vessels.



Part of the funerary assemblage containing beads, needles, jewellery and pottery vessels.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM





Part of the funerary assemblage containing beads, needles, jewellery and pottery vessels.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Once all the features within the site footprint were fully investigated, the Superintendence liaised with the architect and features on site have been retained.

Reservoir and shelter, Wardija l/o San Pawl il-Baħar

The site is located within a significant rural landscape in the limits of San Pawl il-Baħar, designated as an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV). This site is also located within an area of high archaeological sensitivity with known cart-ruts in its immediate vicinity, placing it in an area with a potential for archaeological features to be present within the site footprint.

The site was investigated via an archaeological evaluation during the determination of application in line with Terms of Reference issued by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Although the site was affected by dumping, the Superintendence noted a low stone wall/structure constructed of sizeable ashlars within the site and the archaeology monitor was instructed to start investigating this area, before extending the investigation to the rest of the site.

Bedrock was uncovered at a shallow depth and the archaeology monitor noted that the low stone structure forms part of a reservoir which also holds an access point to a Second World War air raid shelter at its rear. The shelter has three rooms and is linked with a well (*spiera*). This shelter leads to a third-party field.



Reservoir structure.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM





Shelter discovered on site, and spiera *found within the shelter.*

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Shelter discovered on site, and spiera *found within the shelter.*
PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Agricultural, military and water management remains, San Ġiljan

Pembroke was formerly a British military base from the 1850s to 1979. The former Institute of Tourism Studies campus, which overlooks St. George's Bay, is a British period military barracks scheduled at Grade Two (2). This building was used by the British army as part of the Pembroke Garrison called St. George's Barracks. The site is also located in the immediate vicinity to the *Ħarq Ħammiem* Cave, an extensive geological feature, scheduled at Level One (1). During the processing of the development application affecting the site, a cultural heritage assessment identified other cultural heritage assets, namely historical reservoirs, a cluster of monumental regimental crests and an underground sub-station dating to the Cold War period. Following the approval of a development permit on site, Terms of Reference were issued by the Superintendence and site works commenced. Cultural Heritage remains consist of - small and large reservoirs; tree pits; traces of quarrying activity/levelling works; stone alignments; water management systems (stone capped channels)] service trenches; various cuts of unknown typology; a tunnel leading towards the bay area; and fox trenches related to Second World War warfare. Fox trenches are rectangular in shape and vary in orientation, although some of them are aligned. In one of these trenches, an anti-aircraft machine gun, possibly belonging to the M1919 Browning Type, was discovered. Works on site are still ongoing.



Stone Capped Channels.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



One of the fox trenches discovered.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY



Machine discovered in one of the fox trenches.
PHOTO SOURCE: QP ARCHAEOLOGY

Burials, Valletta

The St. John's Co-Cathedral Museum project has been ongoing for the past few years, with works taking place throughout what was previously the courtyard as well as within the Bartolott Crypt. Human remains have been unearthed for the whole duration of the project, with particular intensity in the courtyard area where remnants of the original cemetery burials were unearthed in 2020. In 2024, limited ground disturbance conducted in the courtyard area uncovered further evidence of the cemetery's extent in the form of disarticulated human bones. The remains appeared to have been disturbed in recent times, possibly due to the installation of piles as part of the museum project, as well as truncated further in the past by the construction of a wall in the Nineteenth (19th)

Century. The bones exhibited a high degree of fragmentation, meaning that a specific methodology of documentation and extraction was developed for the archaeological monitors to follow. As each layer of bones was carefully revealed, detailed orthophotos and sketches were taken, on which the individual bones were numbered, extracted, and placed in bags bearing the corresponding bone number. This system will allow for accurate reconstruction of the burial within a lab environment, detailing the position, level, and orientation of the bones. It also highlights the importance of good communication between SCH case officers and monitors onsite, and the fruitful results it reaps.



Disarticulated and highly fragmented bone excavated within the trench.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



Crushed Skull under investigation.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM

Cart-ruts and catacomb, Żejtun

During archaeologically monitored trenching works for the laying of a new water distribution system, a stretch of circa forty (40) metres of cart-ruts and a catacomb, were discovered. Of interest is the fact that the current rural road follows the trajectory of these cart-ruts, possibly indicating that the same route has been retained over centuries, with the ancient cart-ruts becoming buried by road build-up as the area remained in use. Alongside these cart-ruts a catacomb in close vicinity to a previously known catacomb was also discovered. The catacomb was found to contain a very thick, clayey deposit which proved challenging to excavate. Preliminary site investigations and material removal revealed carved Tuscan columns flanking the entrance leading to an open area containing a *Baldacchino* tomb, to the right of which is a corridor containing ten (10) burial chambers of the *arcosolium* type, one of which has an impressive scallop shell decoration. To the left of the *Baldacchino* tomb is a circular room with a number of lamp holes, possibly housing a triclinium. Both the stretch of cart-ruts and the catacomb have been safeguarded from the ongoing trenching works and preserved underneath the existing road.



Part of the stretch of cart-ruts discovered. Photo Source:

JB ARCH TEAM



Catacomb discovered on site, containing baldacchino tombs and tuscan-type columns.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM





Catacomb discovered on site, containing baldacchino tombs and tuscan-type columns.

PHOTO SOURCE: JB ARCH TEAM



National Inventory

02

National Inventory Process

The National Inventory of Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands is an integral and key pillar of Malta's efforts to safeguard the nation's cultural heritage. Established under the Cultural Heritage Act, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage acts as the sole national repository of this inventory, whilst continuously compiling and integrating further entries through a methodical and thematical approach. The National Inventory encompasses a broad spectrum of cultural property, including buildings and structures of historical significance, archaeological sites both on land and underwater, and artefacts of artistic, research or collectable value. The National Inventory plays an important role within the Superintendence operating framework, aiding in the identification, protection, and promotion of Malta's cultural heritage. However, the omission of a cultural asset from it does not preclude its significance or need for protection.

The inventory is being continuously updated following a revision of the inventorying process between 2021 and 2023, aligning it with current technological advancements and tools. First introduced in the Cultural Heritage Act in 2002, the National Inventory saw its first inclusions in 2011. Ten (10) years later, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage updated the inventory's structure through an introduction of an online GIS platform and implementing standardisation measures, meaning that 2024 was the first complete year throughout which the National Inventory was run under the updated framework.

Immovable National Inventory

The inclusion of immovable property in the National Inventory entails a long process of desktop study and on-site data capture, looking at the many different types of cultural sites on the Maltese Islands, from Neolithic temples to corner niches. The Superintendence approached 2024 with a structured mindset, identifying lacunae amongst the existing entries in the National Inventory, and compiling a priority list of thematic exercises to expand this dataset, whilst periodically revising and checking the existing entries which amounted to two thousand five hundred and fifty-two (2,552) at the start of the year.

Revision of the entries in the Inventory

Despite the efforts of 2023 to verify and reclassify the data of the existing entries of the National Inventory, ensuring its validity and converting the entries into an updated format, such a process continued well into 2024. A major updating process relating to the way that site extents and location are recorded and displayed, was initiated early in 2024 and is forecasted to take a few years before it can be considered as finalised. Since its inception, sites in the National Inventory of immovable property have been kept in point form (through spatial platforms or by recording centre points on maps) but in 2024, the first efforts were taken to translate this dataset into polygons. Through the re-introduction of a GIS software in the last couple of years, the Superintendence was able to start once again plotting the extents of the properties being included in the inventory and produce an attachment which outlines the actual extent of the site. In addition to the replotted features from earlier inclusions on the new GIS platform, these features will constitute new spatial data which will better serve the purposes of the inventory once it is complete.

Identifying lacunae to conclude thematic projects

During the ongoing revision of the National Inventory, it became apparent that there was a need to address past thematic exercises which had never been completed. Notably, the Superintendence identified early on that the exercise to capture and document religious niches, which characterise our streetscapes, was never completed, with some localities in the North of Malta having been omitted completely. This prompted a two-year long exercise to revise the existing entries, validate their data and identify others that were not part of the National Inventory. This led to the identification of **nine hundred and twenty-two (922)** non-inventoried niches, all of which were inspected, to accurately record their location and photographically document them.

These religious monuments consist of corner, wall and standalone niches, statues, reliefs and plaques, primarily dating from the Late Modern Period, with a few from the Knights Period whilst others being contemporary; all displaying a varied level of workmanship and condition. The National Inventory is a recognition of the asset's cultural value. Therefore, the Superintendence exercises a high degree of caution before including a property in the inventory, assessing in detail the aesthetical, historical, social, and scientific significance of every proposed asset before its inclusion. For this reason, out of the said nine hundred and twenty-two (922) documented monuments, only two hundred and ninety-nine (299) were deemed to be of sufficient value as to be included in the National Inventory, and these were published in Government Notice 1732 on the 6th of December 2024.



SCH officer documenting niches as part of the National Inventory Process.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Apart from the Religious Monuments, in 2024 the Superintendence identified other themes with features forming part of the inventory, which can benefit from a revision.As an example, the number of historic windmills in the National Inventory was significantly low when compared to what existed. This has been remedied and all surviving windmills on the Maltese islands have now been documented. The resulting dataset has not yet been added in the National Inventory as of the end of year and efforts are being made to populate the spatial data in preparation for their addition. Another incomplete theme is related to cultural properties subject to a Guardianship Deed, where such properties which are not yet in the Inventory have been identified and their inclusion will be seen to in the coming years.

Another lacuna of the National Inventory emerges from additions to the Scheduled Property Register in the last years. The Cultural Heritage Act states that in establishing the National Inventory, the Superintendence shall make use of the Scheduled Property Register. Some of the more recent scheduling exercises haven't yet been considered by the Superintendence for inclusion in the Inventory, creating a discrepancy which needed to be addressed. In an ongoing effort, the Superintendence is identifying such properties and prioritising their inclusion in the Inventory. Throughout this year, forty-five (45) of the new entries in the National Inventory have already been scheduled. On the other hand, eleven (11) properties had already been included in the National Inventory prior to their scheduling.

Thematic Priorities, Data Capture and Inclusion in the National Inventory

2024 was successful year in including a number of thematic priorities which were identified during the same year. The Superintendence published new entries to the National Inventory on six (6) separate occasions during 2024, namely;

- **Purposely Built Semaphore Towers**
  Entry Numbers 02553-0255, published on the 6th of February
- **Air-raid Shelters with religious imagery in Msida-Pietà area**
  Entry Numbers 02556-02562, published on the 6th of February

- **Culturally Significant Properties in Żejtun (previously identified by Wirt iż-Żejtun)**
  Entry Numbers 02564-02585, published on the 24th of May
- **Properties in the Historical Outskirts of Żabbar**
  Entry Numbers 02601-02613, published on the 3rd of September
- **Freshwater Springs and Aqueduct related Features**
  Entry Numbers 02614-02623, published on the 3rd of September
- **Religious Monuments**
  Entry Numbers 02624-02922, published on the 6th of December

In addition to the six (6) thematic exercises completed and published this year, the Superintendence published a number of miscellaneous properties based on their inherent value and individual need for protection. The entries were as follows:

- **Palazzo Marnisi in Marsaxlokk**
  Entry Number 02563, published on the 13th of February
- **Empire Stadium Gatehouse in Gżira**
  Entry Number 02586, published on the 24th of May
- **Palazzina Vincenti and adjacent properties in St Julians**
  Entry Numbers 02587-02589, published on the 24th of May
- **73-77, Triq il- Paroċċa in Mqabba**
  Entry numbers 02590-02591, published on the 24th of May
- **Manresa Retreat House in Rabat, Għawdex**
  Entry Number 02592, published on the 24th of May
- **15, Triq il-Wileġ in San Lawrenz, Għawdex**
  Entry Number 02593, published on the 24th of May
- **Abattoir Water tower, Gate and Visual Link between them, Marsa**
  Entry Numbers 02594-02596, published on the 24th of May
- **Villa Cal Rose and Casa Guardamangia, Pietà**
  Entry Numbers 02597-02598, published on the 24th of May
- **Dovecote and surrounding gardens, Triq iċ-Ċavi in Mqabba**
  Entry Number 02599, published on the 24th of May
- **Dar il-Bebbux in Għaxaq**
  Entry Number 02660, published on the 24th of May

All the miscellaneous properties which have been included in the inventory have either been scheduled or proposed for scheduling in the last five (5) years, on the recommendation of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, or have had their scheduling modified after consultation with the Superintendence.

The Superintendence has expanded the immovable domain of the National Inventory through 2024 by a total of three hundred and sixty-nine (369) properties. However, the number of inspections which were carried out for inventory purposes in the last years is much higher than the number of inclusions. In 2024 alone, the Superintendence carried out two hundred and twenty-three (223) inspections with the purpose to document properties which have a potential for inclusion in the National Inventory. Over six hundred (600) other inspections were carried out in 2022 and 2023. Around forty percent (40%) of the inspected properties have been included in the National Inventory, which will increase by a further ten percent (10%) once the thematic exercises commenced in 2024 will be concluded. This low ratio of inclusions to inspections is largely due to the Religious Monuments theme, where the Superintendence opted to document most of these cultural assets, irrespective of whether they will be eventually included in the National Inventory or not.

In addition to the data generated through desktop studies and inspections carried out, the Superintendence has also concluded the data acquisition of two hundred and twenty (220) individual Second World War Defence Posts and related structures in an agreement between the authority and Battlefront Malta. Following the acquisition, the two entities have been in regular contact to process the data in preparation for publication on the authority's GIS Interface and enrich it with further attributes and additional sites. In the coming months, the Superintendence will be publishing the entirety of the data set on its website and proceed to identify those defence posts which merit inclusion in the National Inventory.

Scheduling

In conjunction to compiling the National Inventory, the Superintendence also engages in the Scheduling process as governed by the Planning Act and as empowered through the Cultural Heritage Act. The Superintendence has a dual role in scheduling in that it proposes properties for scheduling on its own initiative and takes a consultee role, when replying to consultation requests by the Planning Authority for those cases initiated by the latter, and in the management of post scheduling procedures, for which the Authority is responsible. Carried forward from last year are twenty-three (23) pending recommendations for scheduling, which the Superintendence has submitted over the past few years to the Planning Authority (out of the forty-four (44) properties which the Superintendence compiled out of its own research and third party proposals submitted to the Planning Authority for consideration). In addition, during 2024 Palazzo Marnisi was proposed for scheduling by the Superintendence following a Conservation and Protection Order and its inclusion in the National Inventory early in the year. This request resulted in the scheduling by the Planning Authority on the 18th of October. The Superintendence was also involved in the scheduling proposal put forward by the Planning Authority for the scheduling of eleven (11) British period Batteries, which were scheduled and published on the 25th of October. Here, the Superintendence put forward a proposal for the scheduling of seven (7) additional Batteries as part of its consultation, which were added to the twenty-three (23) pending recommendations previously mentioned. The Superintendence was also present for the Executive Council meeting, in which the scheduling of Villa St Ignatius was approved, following a decision by the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (EPRT). The Superintendence had issued a Conservation and Protection Order on the property in December 2017 and January 2018, as well as recommended its scheduling in December 2017. This scheduling was published on the 20th of December 2024. The Superintendence has compiled a proposal and intends to recommend thirteen (13) additional properties for scheduling consideration in 2025.

Inventory of Movables

The Superintendence's efforts to compile the National Inventory also extends into the domain of movable objects and artifacts, with a primary focus in the last years on the collection housed within its repository. In close collaboration with the Archaeological Research and Conservation team, newly discovered artefacts being processed and conserved in the Laboratory of the Superintendence, were documented and included as new entries in the National Inventory, whilst further research was undertaken on previously inventoried objects. Newly listed artefacts ranged from ceramics, glass, metal object, decorative arts, stone features, and organic material such as wood, animal remains and fossils. The Superintendence has a repository that includes cultural material discovered in the last thirty (30) years, all of which are obtained from secure contexts. As part of the inventorying process, each item is given a unique number, photographed, measured, and a number of other attributes intended to properly and aptly describe each item, is filled in.



SCH officer inventorising cultural material as part of the National Inventory Process.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

As a result of looting a significant amount of unprovenanced underwater material exists. The Underwater Cultural Heritage Team is presently reassessing and establishing detailed documentation of the material to create a comprehensive database. The material is being cleaned, photographed and documented in the National Inventory for reference and comparative purposes. The preservation state is being assessed to determine which artefacts are at high risk of deterioration and require conservation. The conservation plan will proceed in the latter part of 2025 and into 2026, where desalination and preservation of the material will take place at the SCH Conservation Lab and in collaboration with the Heritage Malta Conservation Lab for Underwater Archaeology. The material primarily stems from looted material which was confiscated by the Malta Police Force and returned to SCH and although the exact location of recovery is unknown, the material includes Punic, Roman and modern material.

A total of **seven hundred and fifty (750)** individual entries were recorded during 2024, which include one hundred and twenty-one (121) updated entries. Priority was given to artefacts which will feature in the Superintendence's twentieth year publication outlining the more important archaeology discoveries made in the first twenty (20) years of the Superintendence. These artefacts have been brought to the laboratory in Valletta for documentation, but others were recorded in the off-site repository. The inventorying of these movable objects is being undertaken in collaboration with officers from other sections of the Superintendence, bringing together people with different specialisations and expertise within the Superintendence.

The remit of the National Inventory is far and wide reaching as defined in the Cultural Heritage Act, and this aspect of movable cultural heritage had so far remained untapped. Apart from the above exercise, it is also being extended to include stolen goods which are being returned to the Superintendence by the Malta Police Force on the termination of the associated criminal procedures; and finds as reported by citizens. Central to this task will be the acquisition of a Collections Management System which will improve the management of the inventory and its accessibility in the future which can be extended to different stakeholders.

Registry

The Superintendence's Registry houses documents and data covering the periods of both the Museums Department and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, with the earliest volumes dating back to 1934. These documents record the managing of the Museums Department and the Superintendence and cover the recording of important archaeological discoveries and historical sites, the management of sites and musuems, research and conservation projects, as well as the more mundane aspects in running state entities. These records thus charter the development of Cultural Heritage Management in the Maltese Islands from 1934 to date. These volumes are an important resource for the different sections of the Superintendence in the carrying out of their tasks and are also open to independent researchers by appointment. The Registry and Archive are crucial pillars of information that must be preserved.

Over the last few years, over seven thousand and five hundred (7,500) files in the Registry have been reorganised and filtered, and the digitisation of all documentation has been an ongoing effort to allow for efficient access in future. This exercise has provided opportunities for interns who assist staff assigned to this section. Two (2) students reading for a degree in history carried out their work placement at the Superintendence's Registry and contributed a total of seventy (70) hours towards this digitisation process. In parallel to the digitisation of paper files, photographs, slides and reels relating to archaeological excavations are also being digitised. This process also includes a spatial element, where the locations of past discoveries are being plotted on the authority's internal and external GIS portal, enriching the information available to staff and the public. This includes any sites or finds that

were discovered not only on land, but also during underwater archaeological investigations both near the coast and in open areas within Maltese territorial waters. The Superintendence aims to take this spatial cataloguing further, plotting files from the Museums Department which are related to a specific location. The officers of the Superintendence continuously make use of the Registry and Archives in their research and engagement with research, conservation and planning proposals.

Geomatics

The resources that the SCH invested in since 2021, in adopting GIS as an important tool in its data management (when the first Enterprise Agreement was signed with ESRI local supplier) keep bearing fruit. After having been invited to be one of five (5) local Government Entities to present during the first MITA & ESRI User Conference Meeting, which was held in November 2023, the Superintendence was asked to form part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Project, which was launched during the Public Service Expo in May of 2024. The aim of this project is to have a single national Geoportal housing spatial data from a number of Government entities. The Superintendence provided two (2) data sets to be made available through the new NSDI portal and in the run up to the launch of the NSDI, the Superintendence attended a number of preparatory meetings led by MITA. The Superintendence has also been invited to form part of the Malta Geo Hub - Geospatial Committee which will seek to take this project beyond the implementation phase and establish spatial data policy at a national level.

The SCH was also invited to take part in the TAIEX TSI 3rd International Mediterranean Coastal Erosion and Climate Change Adaptation Conference, where a short presentation was delivered on the use of GIS to identify and record sites and monuments which may be threatened by coastal erosion. The Superintendence has also continued to attend meetings of the National Geospatial Committee, of which it is a member. The said committee is tasked with establishing a national strategy on geospatial data to further ensure that all spatial systems and data being created across entities are fully interoperable and follow an aligned policy system as well as ensure the provision of training in GIS at a national level.

Throughout the year, following work undertaken in 2023 to streamline work processes using the GIS platform, further focus was put into transferring all spatial data being produced by the entity onto GIS. This allowed for faster and more accurate sharing of data between the different sections within the SCH, in so doing creating an overall more efficient system. Through the resources made available by the Enterprise Agreement signed by central government, three officers continued to receive further training in GIS to expand the knowledge and capabilities available to the entity. GIS is also playing an important role in several publications which are being prepared by SCH, including collaborative publications and projects with other entities. The publicly available data on the SCH GIS Interface also continued to be updated regularly with additions of sites and properties to the National Inventory, as well as new archaeological discoveries made throughout the year.

In October 2024, a new team was set up for Geomatics, made up of two (2) full-time officers. This will ensure further focus on GIS, not only making sure that all spatial data is being properly managed and recorded but also working on data analysis, compiling of statistics, and generation of new spatial data. The Geomatics team will also be responsible for furthering the GIS skills and knowledge of the entity by organising training for officers with differing levels of experience, made possible with the aid of the resources provided through the Enterprise Agreement. A management plan has been drawn up by the new team outlining a number of projects which will be undertaken in the next two (2) years, always aiming to advance spatial data quality and accessibility. The formation of the Geomatics team reflects the growing importance of spatial data within the SCH, reflecting trends in both national and international entities dealing with cultural heritage and the overall Government's direction in advancing use of GIS within its entities.



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



Movable Heritage Control

03

Movement of Goods

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage regulates the movement of cultural goods being imported or exported between Malta and EU Member States, as well as to or from non-EU countries. These cases are referred to the Superintendence by the Malta Customs Department, private shipping companies, or MaltaPost.

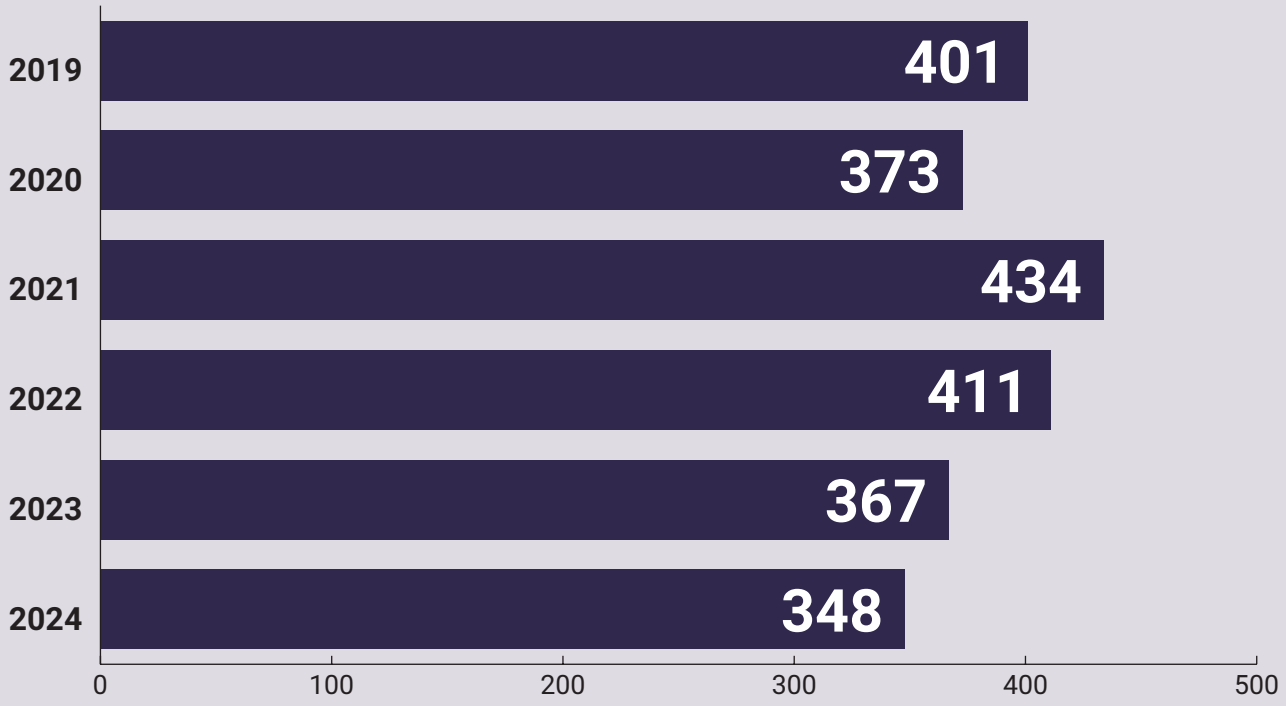
This work is primarily undertaken by three (3) SCH officers assigned to tasks related to movable heritage, supported by additional SCH officers as needed. In the last quarter of the year, an assistant executive officer has also joined the team.

Certification for the Movement of Goods (personal items excluding cultural heritage objects)

Following established practice, the Superintendence also reviews the export and movement of "personal items" to ensure they do not include cultural heritage objects. In 2020, the Superintendence introduced processing fees for applications related to the permanent export of non-cultural personal effects, with a standard fee of thirty-five euro (€35) and a fee of sixt-five euro (€65) for express service.

In the course of 2024, the Superintendence reviewed **three hundred and forty-eight (348)** cases of export and movement, in which cases the exporter had declared that no items of cultural heritage value were being exported. The number of cases marked a slight decrease on the previous year, amounting to - nineteen (19) cases less than in 2023 (367); sixty-three (63) cases less than 2022 (411); eighty-six (86) cases less than 2021 (434); twenty-five (25) cases less than 2020 (373); and fifty-three (53) cases less than those processed in 2019 (401).

Figure 1: Movement of personal items (non-cultural goods) between 2019 and 2024



Cultural Heritage Items Leaving the National Territory

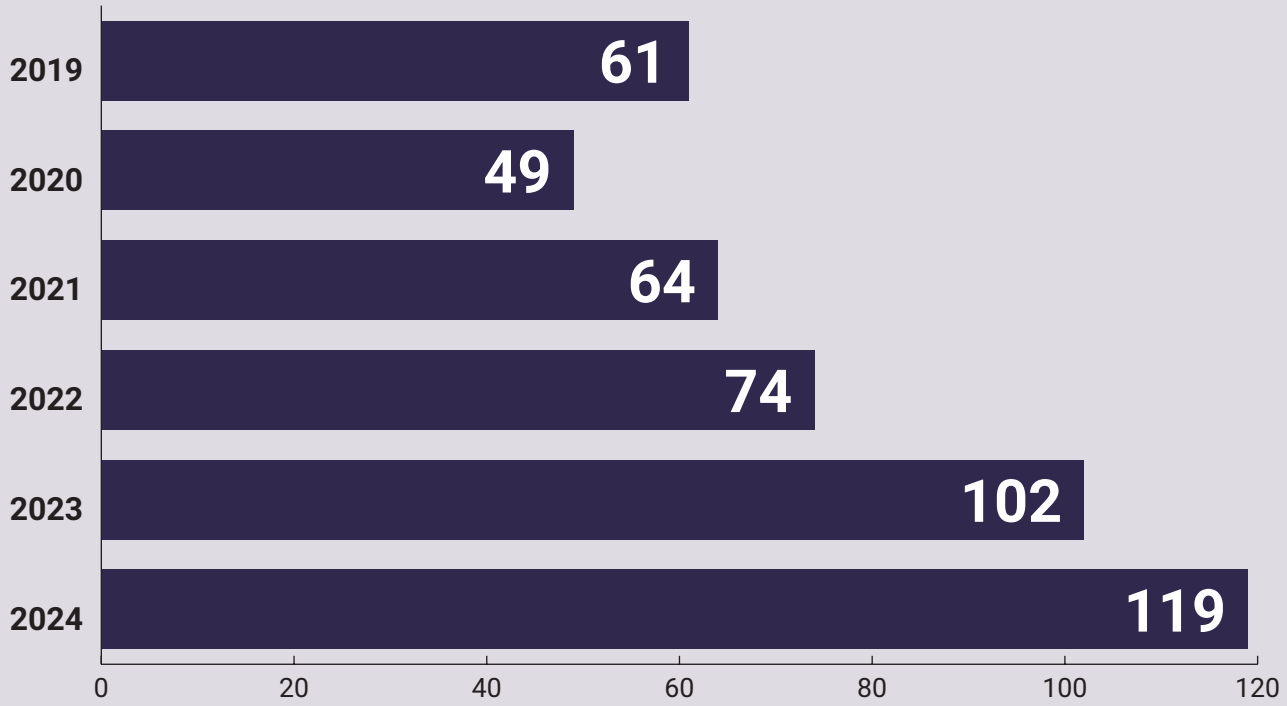
As stated at law, the export of cultural heritage items from Malta requires permission from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

April 2023 saw to the introduction of a reviewed procedure whereby such requests are subject to established fees in terms of export or re-export of cultural heritage items. An administrative charge of fifty-five euro (€55.00) upon registration and receipt of the requested documentation applies for **all cultural heritage items over fifty (50) years old proposed for export (outside EU).** Subsequently, the payment of a fifteen percent (15%) *ad valorem* fee is applicable if the export or re-export of cultural heritage items is permitted. The latter fifteen percent (15%) *ad valorem* fee is not applicable if a request for export or re-export is refused.

In the course of 2024, the Superintendence issued a total of **one hundred and nineteen (119)** permits for the export of cultural heritage items. Of these **one hundred and nineteen (119)** permits, **thirty-six (36)** cases were for the export of cultural heritage items (over a hundred cultural heritage items of which included collections of silverware, prints, furniture, paintings and military armour) and **eighty-three (83)** cases were for the export of contemporary or decorative art, over **two hundred and ninety-eight (298)** modern cultural items. Few of the cases dealt with required an inspection of the items since adequate information for assessment had been made available to the Superintendence.

In November, a new procedure was introduced for handling items of collector's significance proposed for export. This aimed to ensure that such items were not processed as non-cultural personal effects and that certification for cultural goods was issued only based on their merit. **Two (2)** cases containing various goods of this nature were registered between November and December 2024.

Figure 2: Permits for Permanent Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2019 and 2024

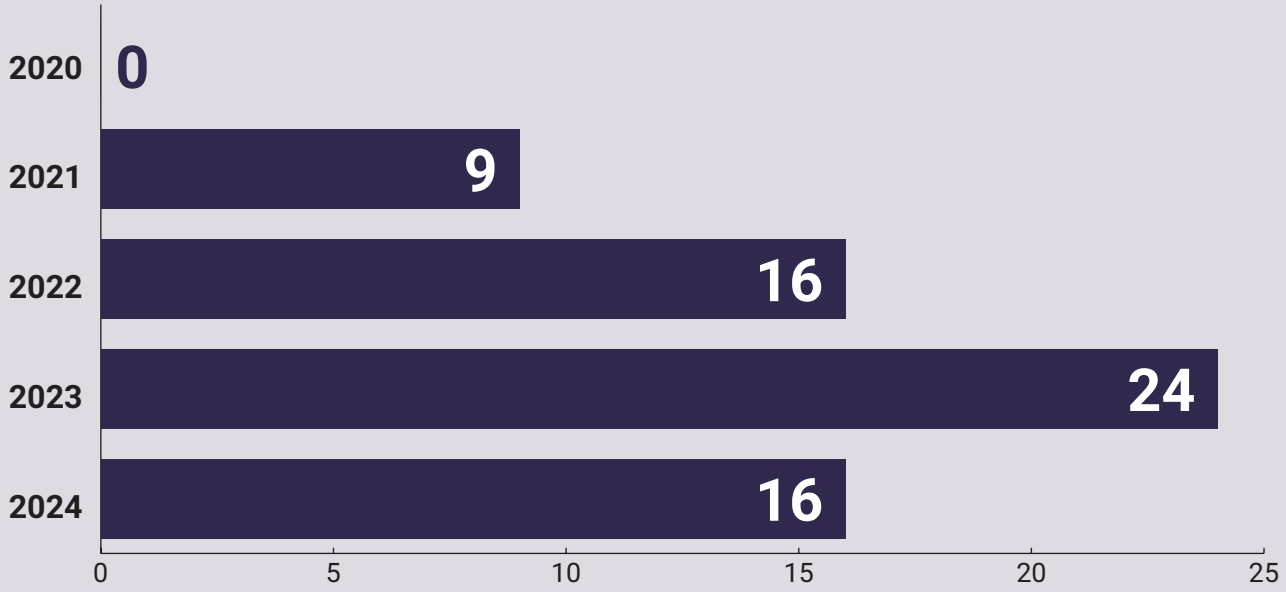


The one hundred and nineteen (119) permissions granted in 2024 marked an increase over permissions as issued in 2023 **(102 cases)**, 2022 **(74 cases)**, 2021 **(64 cases)**, 2020 **(49 cases)**, and in 2019 **(61 cases).** A total of five hundred and fifty euro (€550) in administrative charges was collected for the export of cultural goods over fifty (50) years old, followed by the total sum of **one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine euro (€1,759)** *ad valorem* fees for cases which were granted a permit for permanent export. All associated fees were waived for the permanent export of items of artefact or ecofact samples intended for destructive scientific analysis.

Temporary Movement and Export of Cultural Goods

The Superintendence also reviews and regulates applications for the temporary export of cultural goods out of the Maltese territory for purposes of restoration, exhibition, study or analysis. A total of **sixteen (16)** permits involving the temporary movement/export of various cultural heritage items were issued in 2024, marking a slight decrease on the **twenty-four (24)** permits issued in 2023, equal to the **sixteen (16)** permits issued in 2022, an increase on the **nine (9)** permits issued in 2021, and the previous **zero (0)** permits issued in 2020.

Figure 3: Permits for Temporary Movement or Export of Art or Antiques between 2020 and 2024



Inspection and Certification of Cultural Items Imported from Outside the European Union

As stated at law, the Superintendence is also called upon by Customs to inspect and certify cultural items that are imported from outside the European Union. This process is initiated by the importer to comply with Malta Customs' procedures. A five percent (5%) *ad valorem* fee is collected as per S.L 35.03 and L.N.4 of 1968, as amended by L.N.104 of 1981 and L.N.407 of 2007. The *ad valorem* fee of five per cent (5%) of the cultural goods' value as accepted by the Superintendence may be waived when the nature of import involves educational, restoration and/or public exhibition purposes.

In 2024, inspected items included a diverse range of antique furniture, numismatic collections, silverware, ceramics, etchings, military antiques, memorabilia, paintings, archaeological artifacts, and glassware.

In 2024, the Superintendence inspected and certified the import of **four hundred and fifty-four (454)** cases involving cultural items comprising over one thousand (1,000) individual objects. This represents a significant increase compared to the **four hundred and thirty-seven (437)** consignments inspected in 2023 and an even greater rise from previous years - **two hundred and thirty-eight (238)** consignments in 2022; **fifty-two (52)** in 2021; **twenty-seven (27)** in 2020; and **twenty-five (25)** in 2019. The increase is notably influenced by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union since imports from the UK are now subject to the same procedures as other non-EU countries.

Cases registered in 2024 included more than ninety (90) lots of contemporary cultural goods, over eighty (80) lots of cultural items exceeding fifty (50) years in age, over two hundred and forty (240) consignments of items over one hundred (100) years old, and five (5) consignments containing cultural items with an age ranging between fifty (50) to over one hundred (100) years. These inspections of imported items generated revenue of **sixty-seven thousand nine hundred and thirty-eight euro and eighty cents (€67,938.8).** This marks a slight decrease compared to the **seventy-nine thousand six hundred euro and ninety cents (€79,600.9)** generated in 2023, and the **seventy-two thousand eight hundred and nine euro (€72,809)** generated from inspecting imported cultural goods in 2022, and a substantial increase in comparison to the **twenty thousand three hundred and seventy-seven euro and seventy cents (€20,377.7)** generated in 2021, the **four thousand six hundred and forty euro and sixty cents (€4,640.60)** collected for import inspections in 2020 and the **twenty three thousand two hundred and twenty-eight euro and fifty cents (€23,228.50)** collected for import inspections in 2019.

These unexpected revenue spikes reflect the exceptional import of high-value and prestigious items during a given year.

Figure 4: Certifications issued for imported cultural goods between 2018 and 2024

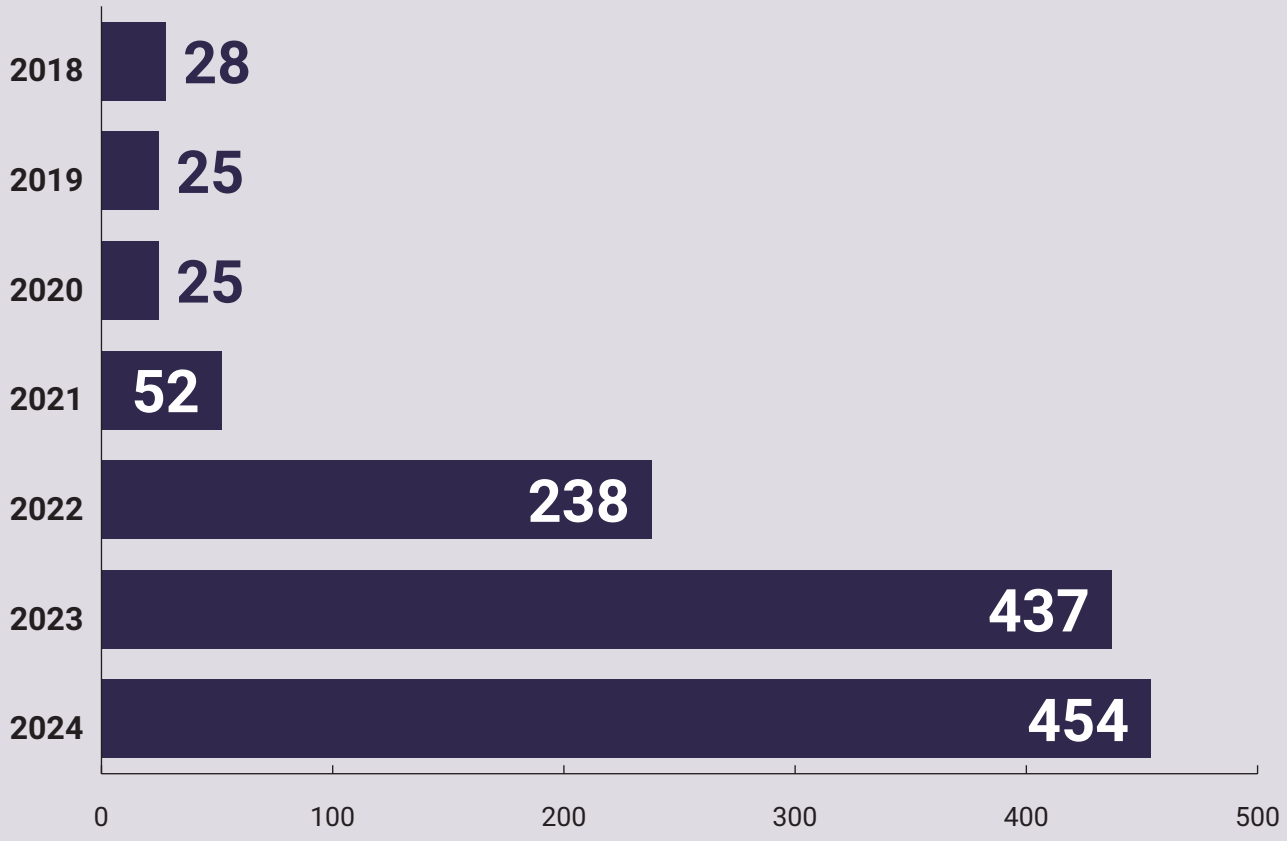
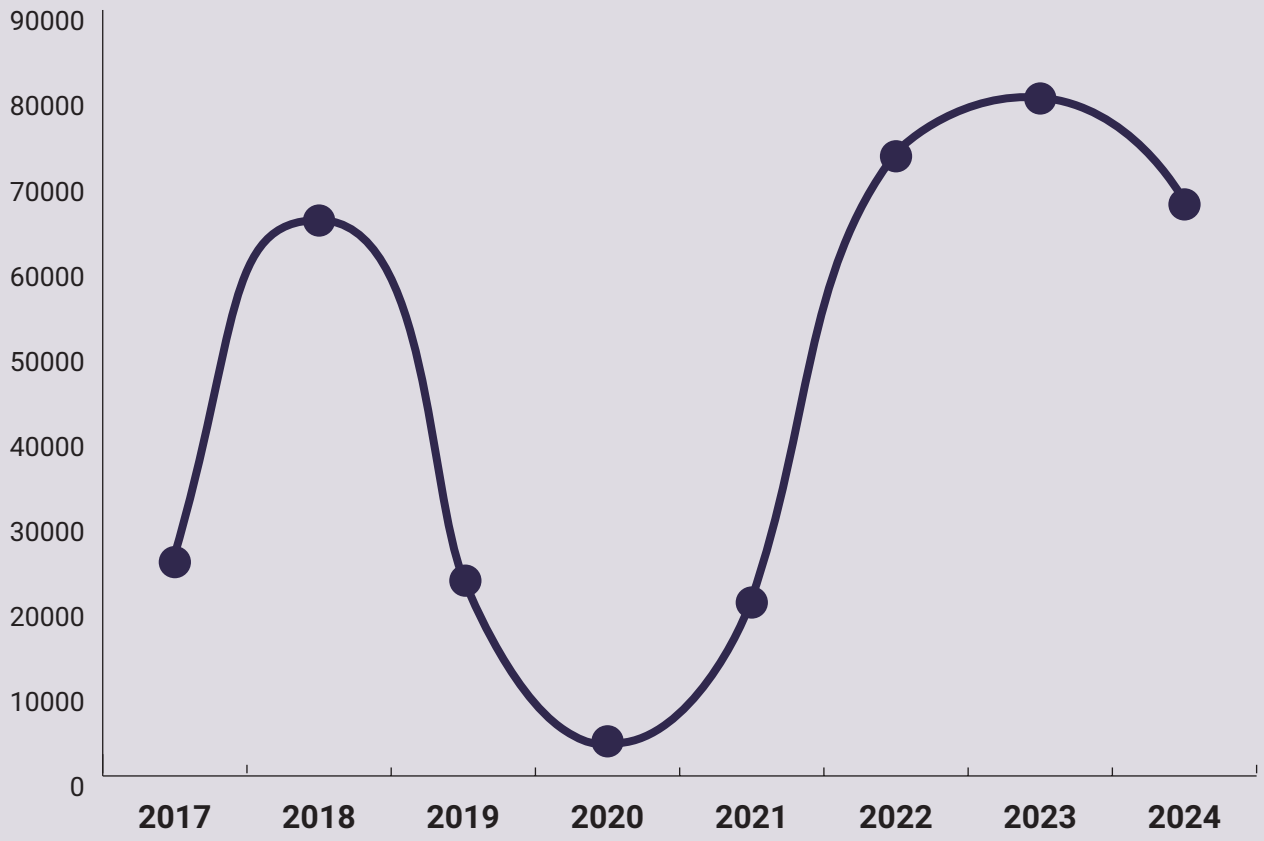


Figure 5: Revenue generated from certification inspections between 2017 and 2024



Liaison with national and international agencies in enforcing movement of cultural items

In 2024, the Superintendence continued to attend Expert Group meetings and Project Groups organized by TAXUD, the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council between all Member States on Customs issues related to cultural goods and governing EU policy. During these meetings, Member States discuss pressing issues including the return of cultural objects under directive 2014/60/EU, the preparation for the implementation of the Import Regulation 880/2019, and the approaching introduction of an EU-wide registration system.

The Superintendence retained access to the EU's Commission International Market Information System known as the IMI portal, which allows for direct and bilateral exchanges between Member States. The system is used when an authority or regulatory entity has reason to believe that a return of a cultural item is possible through this administrative procedure. The information as made available to the respective authorities must be sufficient for the assigned officials to identify the items concerned. The Superintendence engaged further in workshops and meetings featuring further discussion on organised crime and counterterrorism and also addressing the issue of illicit trade in cultural goods.



04

Heritage Advice on Building Development

Development Consultations: Land-Use and Development Applications

Introduction

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, through its Heritage Planning Consultation Unit (HPCU), continued to serve as the designated statutory external consultee to the Planning Authority on land use and development planning applications. The Superintendence is consulted on all full development planning applications submitted to the Planning Authority, as well as on applications for minor amendments, summary planning processes, development notification orders, dangerous structures, regularisation, and planning control. These consultations ensure that potential impacts on cultural heritage are carefully considered.

Additionally, the Superintendence provides input on roadworks permit applications submitted to Transport Malta and reviews Heritage Impact Assessments and cultural heritage survey reports prepared as part of Environmental Impact Assessments, in collaboration with the Environment and Resources Authority. A detailed classification of development applications by type and quantity is provided in Table 4.

Administrative Changes

Two (2) new executive officers were recruited externally and joined the Heritage Planning Consultation Unit (HPCU). The newly recruited officers underwent a comprehensive induction program, which included lectures, workshops, and job-shadowing. Consequently, the overall staff complement of the HPCU remains unchanged from the previous year.

Overview of development application trends

In 2024, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a total of **twelve thousand and nine (12,009)** consultation requests from the Planning Authority concerning development planning applications (PA applications). These included **six thousand four hundred and ninety-six (6,496)** first consultations (including Summary applications), **three thousand two hundred and sixteen (3,216)** re-consultations (including direct consultations from the Planning Commission), **one thousand and eighty-four (1,084)** minor amendment consultations, and **one thousand one hundred and twelve (1,112)** requests by the Planning Authority requiring applicants to seek clearance letters (or otherwise) from the Superintendence prior to decision-making. This total excludes other types of development applications, such as Development Notification Orders, Planning Control Applications, Dangerous Structures, Regularisations, and others. The figure represents a sixteen and a half percent (16.5%) increase compared to 2023, when ten thousand three hundred and seven (10,307) planning consultations were recorded.

In addition to development planning applications, the Superintendence also reviewed the majority of roadworks permit applications (RWP1s) submitted to Transport Malta. The number of these applications decreased slightly from two thousand six hundred and thirty-three (2,633) in 2023 to **two thousand five hundred (2,500)** in 2024.

Of the six thousand four hundred and ninety-six (6,496) first consultations, two thousand six hundred and sixty-seven (2,667) applications were addressed at the filtering stage, representing forty-one percent (41%) of all new consultations received. Notable increases were observed in consultations related to minor amendments, post-decision requirements, Development Notification Orders, and Dangerous Structures. Combined with the rise in re-consultations, this trend underscores a robust and enhanced collaboration between the Planning Authority and the Superintendence in assessing cases that impact cultural heritage.

Heritage Planning Consultation Data

All official planning consultation is carried out via EApps. A significant amount of correspondence is

still carried out by e-mail. However, it is difficult to keep exact track of quantities, as e-mails are sent to multiple officers and generic e-mail addresses, often in copy of each other. Thus, the figures below refer only to official correspondence logged on E-Apps.

Table 4: Different types of development-related consultation requests received in 2024

Type of consultation received	2021	2022	2023	2024
▸ *Planning Applications (PAs)*				
Planning Directorate Consultation (Inclusive of Summary Applications)	6,662	6,376	6,213	6,496
Screening Consultation (Major Projects)	69	62	44	59
Planning Directorate Re-Consultation	2,662	2,548	3,167	3,216
Minor Amendment Consultation	686	866	927	1,084
DNO - Development Notification Order	96	122	229	80
DS - Dangerous Structures	9	32	42	63
PC - Planning Control	46	35	41	22
EIA – Environment Impact Assessment	22	9	6	3
SEA – Strategic Environment Assessment	-	-	1	-
Heritage Impact Assessments (UNESCO World Heritage Sites)	-	-	2	2 Concluded, 4 Ongoing
▸ *Consultation through Transport Malta electronic online system and through e-mail*				
RWP - Road Work Permit	1,759	2,399	2,633	2,500

Major Projects and Best Practice Cases

Major projects and cultural heritage sensitive development applications are a critical part of the consultations that the Planning Authority refer to the Superintendence. Such projects usually involve a much heavier interaction in terms of time, thought and resources, and include site inspections, research, assessments, and various meetings with stakeholders and the architect/applicant. Below is a list of the main major projects or landmark cases the Superintendence engaged with during the past year.

PA 731/20 – Site at Triq Nazzjonali, Floriana

This is an ongoing application submitted by Infrastructure Malta and which the Superintendence has engaged heavily with. The site is just outside the Urban Conservation Area of Floriana and falls within an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) associated with the Harbour Fortifications. The proposed works aim to improve pedestrian flow through the construction of a subway, which would integrate a Grade Two (2) scheduled bus station (recognised for its architectural significance). The

proposal is within a historic sensitive space in view that is partly located within the scheduled glacis of the Floriana fortifications as well as its overlapping with the route of the underground 1615 Wignacourt Aqueduct. Following extensive discussions with the architects, this SCH acknowledges that the final proposal demonstrates an acceptable solution to integrate sensitively the scheduled bus station and its iconic ancillary structures - notably the bus shelter canopy and stairs. Archaeological monitoring was recommended to ensure that any ground disturbance resulting in the discovery of archaeological features is documented, and appropriate measures are taken for their protection and conservation.



Modernist scheduled bus station at Il-Bombi, *Floriana.*
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 8629/21 – Farmhouse, Treqjet Wied Ta' Mazza, iċ-Ċirku, Ta' Latnija, Żabbar

This ODZ site is located in the limits of Żabbar. The property incorporates the 'iċ-Ċirku Site of Archaeological Importance', an archaeologically sensitive area known as *Tal-Bidni*. The original proposal involved the restoration of an existing farmhouse, along with alterations to convert it into a dwelling. A site inspection conducted by SCH officers confirmed the building's significant vernacular value. The initial application proposed extensive demolition, a reconfiguration of internal spaces, and the addition of new structures. Following concerns raised by the Superintendence, the proposal was revised to preserve a greater portion of the historical fabric of the building with a limited extension. The revised design ensures the adaptive reuse of the building for contemporary residential use while safeguarding and enhancing its heritage value. Importantly, the development does not extend beyond the existing built footprint and does not encroach upon the Class B archaeological site.



Farmhouse at Tal-Bidni, *Żabbar.*
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 5139/22 – Site at, Triq Sir Temi Zammit, Mġarr, Malta

Located in the highly sensitive Area of Archaeological Importance of Mġarr, the application proposed unacceptable interventions and the partial demolition of a historic vernacular complex to be converted into an apartment block. Although the surrounding context was noted to be committed to a degree, the vernacular structures held considerable intrinsic value, warranting preservation. After thorough inspection and consultation, the Superintendence raised several objections, recommending the preservation and integration of the vernacular complex into a more suitable proposal. Ultimately, the Planning Authority refused the application, thereby safeguarding the vernacular complex and underscoring the intrinsic value of such structures, even within a partially compromised context.

PA 5950/22 – Triq l-Orsolini c/w Triq J Borg, Pietà

This proposal was initially requesting the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a seven-storey block immediately opposite, and within four (4) metres of, the Grade Two (2) scheduled Church and Convent of the Blessed Virgin of Loreto. While the existing building was of limited value, the Superintendence was immediately concerned

about the proposal's impact on the scheduled property as evident from the photomontages. The Superintendence advocated for a significant reduction in height resulting in a substantially downscaled proposal, three (3) floors and an overlying recessed level, which was considered to provide an acceptable transition with the scheduled complex.

PA 7685/22 – Triq l-Isperanza, Mosta

The building in question was a traditional palazzo-like townhouse which included various traditional features such as a central courtyard, masonry arches, timber beams and *"xorok"*. Its historical significance is also marked by its inclusion in the 1899 Ordnance Survey. The original proposal sought to retain the façade and entrance hall of the original building with the demolition of the rest of the internal spaces, excavation for a basement and the construction of five overlying floors. The Superintendence worked closely with the architect leading to a revised proposal that safeguarded the historical values of the building whilst permitting contemporary residential use, retaining the façade and all historic internal spaces, and ensuring a respectful extension.



Townhouse in Triq l-Isperanza, Mosta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 799/23 – Triq id-Dejqa, Bormla

The application sought to renovate the existing townhouse (probably late Eighteenth Century). The planned interventions were minimal, ensuring the property could be adapted for contemporary use while respecting its original architecture. As a result, the building's historical integrity has been preserved. During the consultation process, it was discovered that one room contained fine late Nineteenth Century murals. Following the suggestions and recommendations of the Superintendence, these murals were preserved and restored.



One of the rooms with late 19th century murals.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 1071/23 – Ursuline Institute, Triq Wiġi Rosato, Triq il-Kunċizzjoni, Bormla

The proposal sought to convert the existing institutional building into a boutique hotel. The building was an amalgamation of two properties, with parts of it having been rebuilt during the post-war era, as indicated by the contemporary street alignment. It has also been identified as a landmark statement within the Urban Conservation Area of Bormla. During the consultation process, the building was inspected by SCH officers, and following a meeting with the architect and applicant, the concerns raised by the Superintendence were addressed. The suggestions made were incorporated into the proposal, ensuring that the cultural heritage value of the building and its surroundings was respected.

PA 2369/23 – Triq il-Kunsill Popolari c/w 11, Triq il-Papa Alessandru VII, Birgu

This proposal sought to renovate what is believed to be the building that once housed the Universitas of Birgu during the Knights' period. Located within the late-medieval Collachio of Birgu, the property was regarded as having high architectural and historical value, a factor made evident during the site inspections conducted by officers from the Superintendence. These inspections also revealed that one particular room, located on the left-hand side of the courtyard, predates the building and is very likely to date to the Medieval Period. Due to the sensitivity of both the building and its surrounding area, the consultation process for this application was extensive. The input from the Superintendence was carefully considered, resulting in the preservation of significant fabric, and enhancing the legibility of the property's important historical phase.

PA 3122/23 – Site at Triq tad-Dahar, Mellieħa

Situated within a pristine cultural landscape, the proposal aimed to rehabilitate and restore several military buildings from the British Period. Previously used as a rifle range, the complex had served various purposes, including as a British observation post and later as an American tropospheric scatter relay station. While supportive of the rehabilitation of the existing military structures, the Superintendence highlighted the uniqueness and significance of several structures slated for demolition, such as a shield wall that possibly had a noise reduction purpose. Following considerable input, the Superintendence affirmed the importance and historical significance of the existing structures, including those proposed for demolition. A revised proposal that retained and restored all significant structures was eventually approved by the Planning Authority, thereby preserving, and rehabilitating a unique example of Malta's military history.

PA 4651/23 – A-Station, Il-Moll tal-Knisja, Triq Fra Diegu, Il-Moll tal-Braken, Il-Moll tal-Pont, Marsa

The Grade Two (2) scheduled site forms part of the former historic Marsa 'A' Power Station (now decommissioned), which was installed in the galleries excavated in solid rock at the base of Jesuits' Hill and inaugurated on December 5th, 1953. This site has considerable cultural heritage significance and industrial heritage value, together with related surviving industrial infrastructure machinery and fittings. This project of national importance involved the installation, commissioning, and operation of a battery energy storage systems (BESS) that can capture electricity generated from renewable energy sources within the vaults of the former Marsa 'A' Power Station. The Superintendence engaged with the proposal at pre-submission stage and upon submission of planning application covering part of the project, while another proposal covering the second phase is still ongoing. The project is a fine example of the re-adaptation and re-use of historic sites for practical and compatible purposes. The Superintendence's engagement aided in the finalisation and refinement of the proposal, ensuring the preservation and safeguard of the historic site and its related industrial heritage.



Marsa rock-cut powerstation.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 7048/23 – Triq Sir Adrian Dingli, Sliema

The property is a fine townhouse, dating to the 1930s and scheduled at Grade Two (2). The application proposed extensive alterations to the façade, such as would not usually be permitted on a scheduled property. Nevertheless, architect submitted a historical elevation drawing by Gustavo Romeo Vincenti, indicating the architect's original intent. Inspection

of the property also indicated that later works had significantly altered the original architectural vision. After considerable engagement, the Superintendence concluded that the later interventions on the façade had lesser value and had impacted negatively on the aesthetic and architectural values of Gustavo R. Vincenti's superior design. In view of the specific circumstances of this case, the Superintendence did not object to the proposed reconstruction of part of the façade, as informed by the historical elevation drawing. This decision was deemed compatible with Article 11 of the Venice Charter, which approves such alterations "in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest and the material which is brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value...".

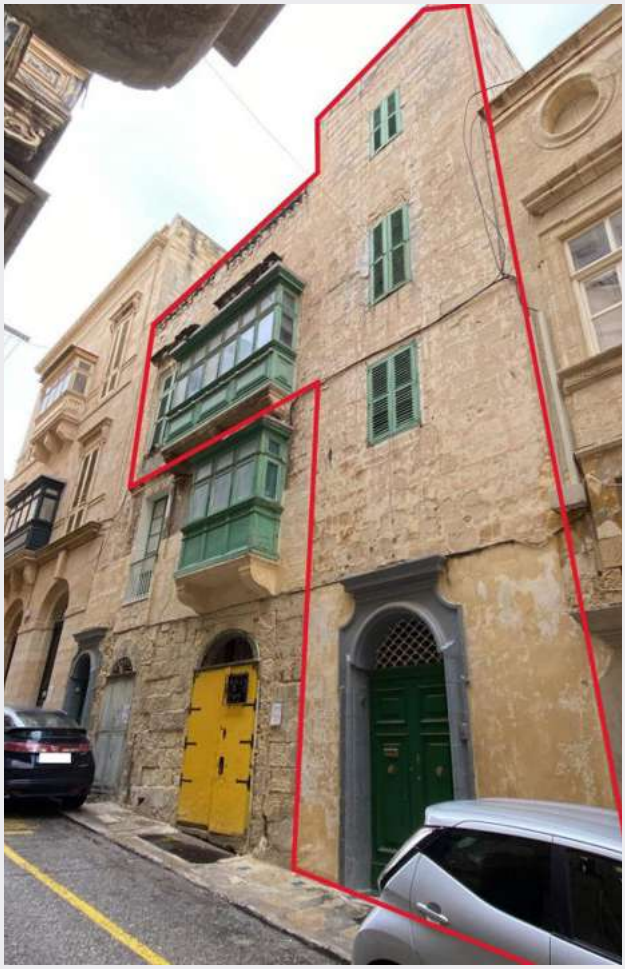


Townhouse in Sliema.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 1355/24 – Triq Sant' Orsla, Valletta

The application concerned internal alterations and additions to a townhouse in Valletta, built reflecting traditional techniques and bearing typical features. The initial proposal would have subverted the legibility and formality of the existing spaces. The Superintendence worked closely with the architect to find a successful compromise that respected the internal articulation and existing fabric. The roof volume was carefully calibrated to maintain the existing stepping of the building, resulting in a moderate addition that harmoniously fits within the existing streetscape.



Townhouse in Valletta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

PA 1484/24 – Site at Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk, Triq il-Power Station, Marsaxlokk

This application by ERA proposed the construction of a marine revetment in an ecological sensitive area known as Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk which is characterised by its shallow waters to permit its environmental restoration. The site is also historically associated with salt production as per maps dating towards the end of the Nineteenth (19th) Century

and old photos from the first half of the Twentieth (20th) Century. This specific coastal location, immediately adjacent to il-Magħluq, is known for its archaeological sensitivity, with recorded underwater cultural heritage remains within this part of the bay extending towards the shore.The area associated with the proposed revetment overlaps with the location of recorded ancient archaeological structures on the seabed, extending towards the shore, including large ashlar masonry blocks arranged in a regular pattern.Following the conclusion of an archaeological investigation of the Ballut area, both at sea and on land, SCH found the proposed revetment acceptable subject to archaeological monitoring during works whilst preserving the archaeological features.

PA 1596/24 - Triq id-Duluri, Marsalforn, Żebbuġ, Għawdex

The application proposed the demolition of the existing property and the construction of a six-storey building. While it was determined that the current building was not worthy of preservation and that the surrounding area was subject to third-party commitments, traditional elements contributing to the cultural and urban context of the area remained intact. The proposed design, however, would have compromised the legibility of this context. As a result, the Superintendence successfully recommended revisions to the design of the façade to be more in harmony with the traditional and architectural features of the area, limiting the development's impact on the surviving streetscape.

PA 4117/24 – Villa Bighi Promenade, Triq Marina, Kalkara

The proposed application area falls within the Grade Two (2) scheduled zone of Bighi Hospital, situated within the Urban Conservation Area of Kalkara and the Area of High Landscape Value within the Harbour Fortifications. The application involved stabilisation of rock faces and restoration/conservation of overlying historic walls. The Superintendence actively collaborated with various stakeholders to facilitate swift safeguarding measures that aligned with the cultural heritage values of the area. Particular attention was given to the treatment of the wall face as visible from the seaward side, to preserve the visual integrity of the landscape.

Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (CHAC)

The Superintendence refers for discussion complex development-related cases to the CHAC. The CHAC is an internal committee within the Superintendence and makes recommendations to the Superintendence on development-related issues and scheduling/ de-scheduling requests. During 2024, the CHAC held **thirty-five (35)** meetings and made **one hundred and twenty-four (124)** recommendations on development applications and de/scheduling request proposals. The planning applications referred to the CHAC by the Superintendence were mainly projects having a major impact on cultural heritage - major projects; impact on scheduled buildings; demolition; extensive alterations and additions; adverse visual impact; and development applications impacting on World Heritage Sites.

National World Heritage Technical Committee

The National World Heritage Technical Committee (NWHTC) has been instituted in 2022 as a result of recent changes to the Cultural Heritage Act. The NWHTC is chaired by His Excellency, the Maltese Ambassador to the UNESCO, and includes representatives and technical experts from the Ministry of Culture, the Superintendence, the Planning Authority, and ICOMOS (Malta). The Superintendence has regularly referred development-related cases that may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of ascribed and candidate sites on the World Heritage List to the NWHTC for discussion. This new process is proving a success, and a number of high-profile development applications were subjected to a Heritage Impact Assessment or significantly revised, re-dimensioned or refused by the Planning Authority, on the strength of the recommendations of the NWHTC in conjunction with the Superintendence.

Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (Planning Appeals)

As a statutory consultee in the planning process the Superintendence regularly receives notification that an appeal has been lodged to the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (EPRT). The Superintendence has the right to participate as an interested entity in these third party appeals in line with the provisions of Article 21 of Cap 551 and has exercised this right in **thirty-eight (38)** new cases during 2023. The Tribunal also requested the Superintendent's attendance as witness in several cases.

Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB)

Starting 2021, the Superintendence began collaborating with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) by attending joint inspections and sessions of the Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB) to discuss those cases whereby Access-for-All requirements may have an impact on cultural heritage buildings and features. The results of this new initiative are exceptionally good with most cases resolved by directing architects and applicants towards solutions that are acceptable to both the CRPD/TORB and the Superintendence. The success of this initiative augurs well for the continued collaboration between these two entities.



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

05

Built Heritage Monitoring



Introduction

The Built Heritage Monitoring Unit (BHMU) within the Superintendence continued with its role of monitoring the conservation and restoration of the built heritage in line with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act. The two (2) senior officers within the unit assumed new duties as Head of Division and Assistant Head of Division respectively, as a result of a restructuring process within the unit. The BHMU consists of seven (7) professional officers, all specialised and conversant in the built heritage and cultural heritage conservation practices.

The main functions of the BHMU are:

Assessment of Planning Applications

The BHMU provides expert support to the Heritage Planning Consultations unit in evaluating planning applications for proposed developments that may impact built heritage. Restoration and Works Method Statements (RMSs/WMSs) submitted for projects involving the restoration of heritage buildings, new construction, modifications, or changes of use affecting historically significant assets, are carefully assessed and reviewed. This ensures that any proposed development preserves the architectural and cultural integrity of heritage sites. The unit recommends modifications or guidelines as needed to safeguard historical value during development. Additionally, it proposes tailored conditions and appropriate bank guarantees, recommending their imposition on a case-by-case basis to ensure adherence to preservation standards.

Monitoring Restoration Projects

The BHMU is responsible for overseeing the commencement and full execution of approved restoration projects, ensuring that they adhere to the principles and guidelines set by the Superintendence. The unit monitors the use of suitable materials, techniques, and interventions to maintain the authenticity and integrity of heritage buildings. It ensures that all restoration efforts are thoroughly documented and assessed for their long-term impact on the historical value of the site.

Managing Daily Requests for Development and Interventions

This unit provides professional assistance to architects and applicants during restoration. It also processes daily requests related to any type of development or intervention that impacts heritage sites. These requests can range from minor alterations to major construction works that may affect the built fabric. The unit ensures that all changes comply with preservation standards, issuing permits or guidelines as necessary to manage or mitigate the impact of such development.

Review of Restoration Method Statements/Works Method Statements

In 2024, the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit (BHMU) assessed **one thousand nine hundred (1,900)** Restoration and Work Method Statements (RMSs and WMSs), a significant increase of **thirty-seven percent (37%)** compared to the **one thousand three hundred and eighty-two (1,382)** statements reviewed in 2023. Additionally, the BHMU conducted **two thousand four hundred and ninety-one (2,491)** inspections to oversee restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings, including major projects.

The Superintendence processed **six hundred and thirty-eight (638)** cases involving recommendations to the Planning Authority regarding the release or withholding of restoration compliance bank guarantees and Irrestawra Darek grants associated with restoration works. This marks a remarkable three hundred and **fifty-four perdentage (354%) increase** from the one hundred and eighty (180) cases handled in 2023. This growth reflects both a rising interest in development applications concerning heritage buildings and the Superintendence's enhanced efforts

to ensure best practices in the rehabilitation and restoration of these culturally significant structures.

Irrestawra Darek Grant Scheme

In recent years, the built heritage team at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) has actively monitored sites participating in the Planning Authority's *Irrestawra Darek* grant scheme. This initiative extends beyond façade restoration, aiming to preserve cultural identity by assisting owners in restoring vernacular homes, townhouses, scheduled monuments, and historic structures.

The Planning Authority collaborates closely with the SCH, issuing approved documents after consultations to ensure heritage conservation standards are met. This includes applications for Dangerous Structure (D/S), Development Notification Orders (DNO), and development permits. The Built Heritage Monitoring Unit oversees both façade restoration and internal and external structural maintenance, ensuring all work adheres to the approved Restoration Method Statement (RMS) and Works Method Statement (WMS).

From planning applications to restoration permits, the SCH plays a crucial role in achieving successful outcomes. Monitoring officers oversee structural maintenance, focusing on critical elements like ceilings and load-bearing structures. They also provide expert guidance to the public, contractors, and architects, recommending effective restoration and conservation methods. By preserving historical integrity and supporting restoration projects, the BHMU enriches the community's cultural landscape for future generations.









Restoration carried out under the Irrestawra Darek *grant scheme.*

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Table 5: Statistics covering 2019 - 2024 in relation to built heritage restoration

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Review of Restoration and Works Method Statement (RMSs + WMSs)	1323	1601	1327	1205	1382	1900
Built heritage monitoring site inspections	1091	2102	1819	2350	2653	2491
Release of Bank Guarantee and Irrestawra Darek Grants	335	226	384	243	180	638

Surveillance and Enforcement

As part of its regulatory function and in keeping with its role at law, the Superintendence is also responsible to carry out surveillance to ensure the protection of the cultural heritage which may come about:

- by officials of the Superintendence during the implementation of their duties;
- further to accidental archaeological discoveries made during works carried out that may impact on the cultural heritage; and
- in response to third party reports from the public or police informing of vandalism, damage (or threat of damage) to the cultural heritage.

Any of the above situations necessitate a site inspection and may require direct enforcement by the Superintendence. Where necessary, the Superintendence issues a 'Conservation and Protection Order' or a 'notification to stop works'. Subsequent imposition of conditions or measures to safeguard the cultural heritage may follow. Depending on the nature and circumstances of the infringement the Superintendence may liaise with the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority, or request police action.

During the year, the owners successfully complied with a Conservation and Protection Order, which required the removal of dumped materials posing a fire hazard and the securing of the entrances to protect the historically significant Palazzo Marnisi in Marsaxlokk from squatters and trespassers jeopardising its integrity.

The BHMU handled **thirty-six (36)** cases in support of the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority and carried out a further **seven (7)** cases of enforcement action and/or direct suspension of works (excluding routine suspensions during restoration monitoring) on its own steam. Most of these cases have been concluded satisfactorily except for a few cases where the remedial measures are still ongoing. Several emergencies and infringements were avoided by early detection by the Superintendence's vigilance, pre-empting damage.

Major Restoration Monitoring

The restoration cases at Table 6 are a selection that were monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit during 2024.

Table 6: Selection of major restoration cases monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit in 2024

Site	Locality
Wignacourt Aqueduct	Attard
Notre Dame Wall and Gate, Cottonera Lines	Birgu
Fort St Angelo Bridge	Birgu
St Helen's Curtain Wall and Gate, Santa Margherita Lines	Bormla
St Nicholas Curtain Wall, Cottonera Lines	Bormla
St Paul's Filial Church	Bormla
Micas – Ospizio Complex	Floriana
Vilhena Fountain	Floriana
St Publius Parish Church	Floriana
Parish Church of St Cajetan	Ħamrun
Parish Church of the Immaculate Conception	Ħamrun
Fort Ricasoli	Kalkara
Old Parish Church of Tas-Salvatur	Lija
Villa Gourgion	Lija
Parish Church of St Leonard	Kirkop
Holy Trinity Parish Church	Marsa
Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin	Mosta
Parish Church of the Assumption of the Virgin	Mqabba
St Joseph Parish Church	Msida
Parish Church of the Nativity of the Virgin	Naxxar
Monumental Cemetery of Santa Maria Addolorata	Paola
Collegiate Parish Church of St George	Qormi
Parish Church of St Sebastian	Qormi
Parish Church of the Assumption of the Virgin	Qrendi

Site	Locality
Villa Luginsland	Rabat, Malta
The Collegiate Basilica of St Paul	Rabat, Malta
St Agatha's Tower	Mellieħa
Balluta Buildings	San Ġiljan
Casa Leoni	Santa Venera
Romeo Romano Gardens	Santa Venera
Wignacourt Aqueduct Tower	Santa Venera
St Margaret Parish Church	Sannat
Parish Church of St Nicholas	Siġġiewi
Parish Church of the Annunciation	Tarxien
St John's Co-Cathedral	Valletta
St Mary of Jesus Church	Valletta
St Francis Church	Valletta
St Barbara Church	Valletta
Jesuits' Church	Valletta
Porto Salvo Church	Valletta
St Roque Church	Valletta
St Augustine Church	Valletta
Parish Church of the Assumption of the Virgin	Żebbuġ, Għawdex
St Catherine Parish Church	Żejtun
Filial Church of St Mary	Żejtun
St Bartholomew Filial Church	Żurrieq
Various niches around Malta and Għawdex	

Best Practice Cases (Restoration Monitoring)

The Superintendence would like to highlight the following examples of best practice restoration which were carried out under the monitoring of the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit.

Niche of Saint Paul, Telgħa tas-Saqqajja, Rabat, Malta

The present-day niche of St. Paul, located atop Saqqajja Hill, dates back to the Eithennth (18th) Century and exemplifies the late Baroque architectural style. Contiguous with the Saqqajja fountain, which also originates from the Order of St. John period, the niche features a half-figure effigy of St. Paul set above a trophy of arms commemorating the Order's influence. Initially associated with Msgr. Giuseppe De Piro, the niche later passed to the Apap Bologna family and was formally donated by Noble Alexander Apap Bologna to the Fraternity of Saint Joseph in Rabat on November 3rd, 1974. The niche had suffered significant deterioration due to water ingress, rising damp, pollution, weathering, flaking paint, and earlier cement render interventions. Black crust deposits were also evident on the finials of the pedestals. Cementitious repairs were carefully removed by hand to assess the stone's condition accurately. Structural consolidation was carried out, and specialised cleaning techniques were employed. While most original architectural features were preserved, severely damaged masonry blocks were faithfully replicated. Open joints were re-pointed using hydraulic lime-based mortar, and damaged areas were repaired with plastic repair techniques. The timber apertures and wrought iron grills were meticulously restored. A lime-based reddish wash was applied to the side pedestals and the scrolled pediment, enhancing the structure's visual coherence. The high-relief sculpture of St. Paul was cleaned and conserved. Layers of paint were removed, uncovering an original blue wash with a red and yellow border, which was reintegrated using *"tratteggio"* retouching. The restoration process, closely monitored by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, adhered to the latest conservation practices, preserving the niche's cultural and historical integrity.



St Paul Niche after restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Detail of restoration works showing recovery of lost decoration on St Paul Niche.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Pinto's Clock, Grandmasters' Palace, Valletta

The restoration of the Pinto Clock at the Palace of the Grandmasters, undertaken by Heritage Malta and supervised by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, involved extensive efforts to preserve its historical

and functional significance. The project focused on conserving the clock's dials, including the Lunar and Calendar dials, which required detailed treatment to maintain legibility and integrity. The central time dial, severely cracked, underwent specialized intervention. The time movement and chiming mechanisms were thoroughly overhauled, including the restoration of the four *"jacquemarts"* (the mechanical figures that strike the hours) and the three hemispherical bells. The bells were dismantled to allow replacement of the deteriorated ceiling beneath them. Additionally, a timber cabin impacting the *"jacquemarts'"* skyline backdrop was removed, restoring the clock tower's aesthetic integrity. These comprehensive efforts preserved the Pinto Clock's historical value while ensuring its functionality, safeguarding its role as a cultural landmark at the Palace of the Grandmasters for future generations.

Residence at it-Telgħa tas-Saqqajja, Rabat, Malta

The restoration works focused on the façade of a Grade One (1) scheduled townhouse at it-Telgħa tas-Saqqajja in Rabat, a structure of significant historical and architectural importance. While generally in good condition, localised deterioration required attention, particularly in the lower sections of the façade, where alveolar erosion, a common issue caused by environmental factors, was prevalent. The rooftop balustrades also exhibited damage due to prolonged exposure and weathering. The interventions aimed to preserve the townhouse's structural and aesthetic integrity while respecting its historical fabric. Cleaning was minimal and targeted, performed only where necessary to retain the original patina and character of the stone. In areas with significant wear, open joints were re-pointed with a compatible mortar mix to ensure structural stability without compromising authenticity. Plastic repairs were a key focus, especially for the deteriorated mouldings beneath the cornice, which are vital decorative elements of the façade. These were restored using modern conservation techniques to preserve their original form and detail. Repairs were also conducted on the rooftop balustrades to ensure their stability and alignment with the building's aesthetic coherence. Throughout the project, a meticulous and reversible approach was employed, adhering to conservation principles. Every effort was made to safeguard the townhouse's architectural and cultural integrity while addressing its functional needs. The restoration not only stabilised and prolonged the building's lifespan but also preserved its historical character, ensuring its legacy and visual appeal endure for future generations.



Residence at Telgħa tas-Saqqajja, after restoration.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Detail of restoration at residence, Telgħa tas-Saqqajja.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Balluta Buildings, San Ġiljan

These buildings are distinguished not only by their intricate detailing but also as a testament to Malta's incorporation of European architectural movements during that period. The ongoing restoration efforts, supervised by the Superintendence are pivotal in ensuring the preservation of this significant architectural landmark for future generations. The comprehensive cleaning and structural interventions address the cumulative effects of time, including the accumulation of dirt, pollution, and the deterioration of both the stonework and the steel structural elements. The SCH has been meticulously overseeing the restoration process, ensuring that the work is executed with precision and in full accordance with the original design and approved documentation.



Newly cleaned decorative element on the main façade.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Villa Luginsland, Rabat, Malta

Villa Luginsland, designed by architect Francesco Zammit and completed in 1887, served as the residence of Baron Maximilian Von Tucker. Constructed in two (2) phases, the main house was built in 1886, followed by the walled garden and associated structures in 1892. The villa's interiors feature hand-painted murals by renowned Maltese artist Giuseppe Cali, enhancing its artistic and cultural importance. The ongoing restoration, monitored by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, focuses on the main villa and two garden structures. Movement cracks identified within the villa prompted structural reinforcements, including wall ties to ensure stability. Conservation work includes replacing damaged stones, applying plastic repairs, surface cleaning, and re-pointing stonework. The restoration also prioritises the façade's mouldings and decorative motifs, preserving the villa's architectural integrity and historical significance.



Villa Luginsland before restoration.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Detail of restored decoration at Villa Luginsland.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Vilhena Fountain, Floriana

The restoration of the historic Vilhena Lion in Floriana was a meticulous and delicate process, emphasising the importance of preserving both the cultural and functional aspects of this significant monument. Led by the Public Works Department (PWD) and overseen by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the project ensured the site's historical integrity was maintained. The restoration focused on balancing the preservation of original features with upgrading outdated infrastructure. Redundant mechanical and electrical systems were removed to make way for advanced systems, including stand-by pumps and a wind sensor, essential for the monument's maintenance and protection. Original features were treated with great care, with fragile elements preserved in situ to retain the Vilhena Lion's authenticity. The project seamlessly integrated modern technological advancements with the monument's heritage, ensuring its preservation for future generations while honouring its historical significance.



Marble sculpture of rampant lion holding Grand Master's Vilhena coat of arm in Floriana.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Ġnien il-Kmand, Żejtun

The gated façade and garden, a Grade One (1) scheduled monument, exemplify early Nineteenth (19th) Century civil architecture. Commissioned by British Civil Commander Sir Alexander Ball and designed by architect Michele Cachia, the garden served the Maltese *"casale luogotenenti",* local commanders of rural villages. Key features include a stone emblem bearing King George III's Royal Cypher and a marble plaque explaining the garden's purpose. Restoration focused on the façade, beginning with the manual removal of render from the lower section to assess and clean the stonework. The upper portion, in better condition, was cleaned using dry and wet brushing to remove biological growth. Open joints were re-pointed with hydraulic lime mortar, ensuring structural stability. The lower façade was repainted with a lime-based wash to replicate its original colour. The stone emblem of King George III, eroded and missing elements, underwent conservation. Deteriorated areas were consolidated, and missing details were faithfully replicated using new globigerina limestone. Damaged decorative masonry was also restored through new stone insertions. All interventions were supervised by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, preserving the structure's historical and architectural integrity.



Ġnien il-Kmand, before restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Ġnien il-Kmand, after restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Dome of Collegiate Basilica of St Paul, Rabat, Malta

The restoration of the monumental dome of St. Paul's Collegiate Basilica in Rabat, Malta, designed by architect Robert V. Galea and completed nearly a century ago, is being conducted with the utmost care. Overseen by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the project adheres to the highest preservation standards. This dome is a significant architectural and historical landmark, serving as a pioneering reference in Twentieth (20th Century Maltese dome construction. The dome's sixteen-sided drum, adorned with coupled composite pilasters, exemplifies Galea's innovative approach influenced by Eighteenth 18th Century Baroque design introduced by Lorenzo Gafà. As an early Twentieth (20th) Century architectural milestone, its restoration is vital to preserving the legacy of Maltese dome design. Restoration efforts focus on structural integrity and aesthetics, including pollutant removal, repointing defective joints, and consolidating stonework for long-term stability. Minor stone replacements were made to maintain the dome's original fabric. These interventions address natural wear while preserving its historical significance. This meticulous restoration ensures St. Paul's dome remains a monumental testament to Galea's achievements and a key milestone in Maltese ecclesiastical architecture.



Dome of St Paul's Basilica under restoration.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Architectural detail from the Dome of St Paul's Basilica.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Old Parish Church of Tas-Salvatur, Lija

The Old Church dedicated to Our Saviour *(Tas-Salvatur),* served as Lija's parish church for nearly a century, from 1594 to the late Seventeenth (17th) Century. Like other early Sixteenth (16th) Century Maltese churches, its original design featured a long rectangular nave with a fine barrel vault supported by arched ribs. Towards the end of the Sixteenth (16th) Century, the church was significantly expanded with the addition of a crossing, two transepts, a sanctuary, and a dome gracefully rising from a drum pierced by four windows. Externally, the church underwent restoration by the Restoration and Preservation Department, under the supervision of the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The project focused on cleaning and re-pointing the external façades to remove surface dirt and restore the stonework's structural integrity. Broken elements were repaired or replaced, and traces of paint on the two Renaissance portals were carefully analysed. These interventions aimed to preserve the church's historical and architectural significance while ensuring its long-term stability and aesthetic integrity.



Façade of the Old Parish Church Tas-Salvatur, *Lija.*
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Wignacourt Aqueduct Tower, Santa Venera

The Wignacourt Aqueduct Tower, locally known as *it-Turretta* or the 'Turret,' is an early Seventeenth (17th) Century water inspection tower forming part of the Wignacourt Aqueduct. Built during the reign of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, the aqueduct carried water from springs in Dingli and Rabat to Valletta and remained operational until the early Twentieth (20th) Century. The 'Turret', a Grade One (1) scheduled monument, consists of two (2) floors with a sloping lower base and is connected to the aqueduct's arches. Its design bears similarities to the later de Redin coastal towers. Recently, the Wignacourt Aqueduct Tower underwent restoration under the supervision of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The works included light cleaning of the stone surface, carried out with care to preserve the original patina as much as technically possible. Additionally, the project involved consolidating friable areas, re-pointing the façades, plastering the passageway at ground-floor level, and replacing apertures.



Wignacourt Aqueduct Water Tower after restoration.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

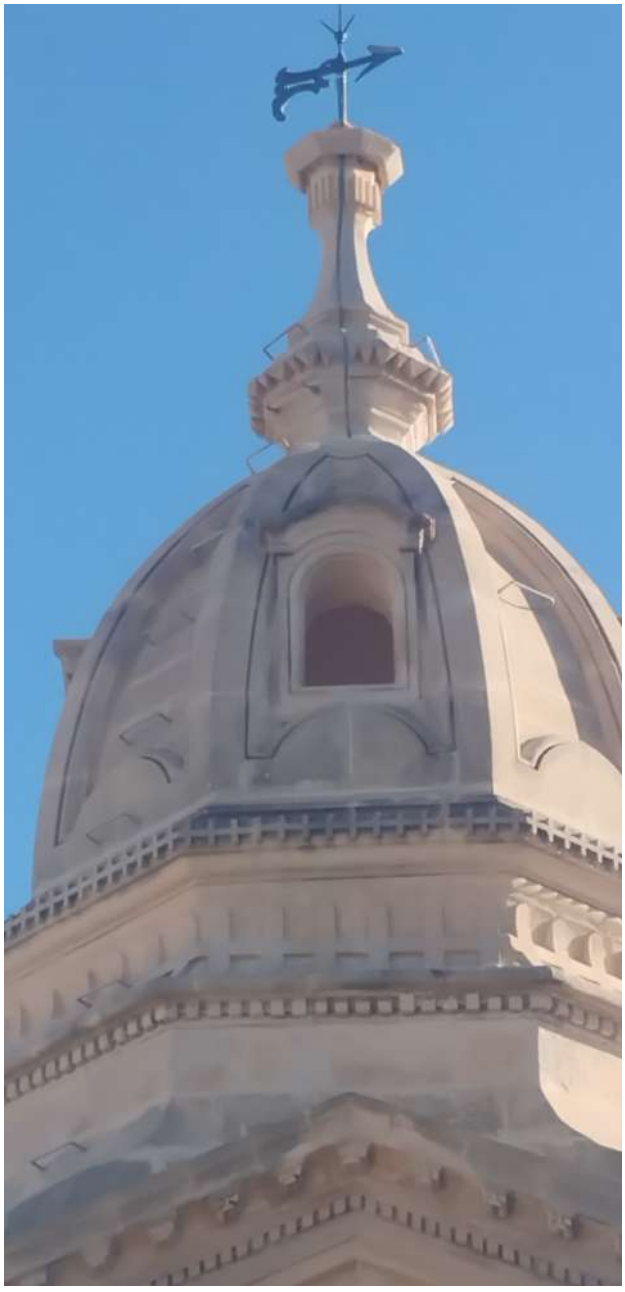
Monumental Cemetery of Santa Maria Addolorata, Paola

The restoration of Emmanuele Luigi Galizia's monumental cemetery of Santa Maria Addolorata

is an ongoing project, with significant progress made this year. One of the major milestones in this restoration is the recent completion of the works involving the Church of the Virgin of Sorrows in the centre of the cemetery. The restoration works undertaken under the private management of the monumental cemetery have involved a thorough and meticulous approach to both the exterior and interior of the edifice. The restoration efforts included the careful repair of the chapel's ceilings, ensuring the structural integrity and aesthetic beauty of these areas. The intricate tracery in limestone was also restored, preserving the craftsmanship and historical value of the building. Additionally, all missing finials were faithfully replicated to match the original design, further enhancing the architectural finesse of Galizia. These restoration works are part of the broader ongoing efforts to preserve and maintain the cemetery, ensuring that its historical and cultural significance is preserved for future generations while serving its daily role as Malta's main burial site.

Holy Trinity Parish Church, Marsa

Designed by Giovanni Domenico Debono and completed in 1912, the Holy Trinity Parish Church in Marsa is a monumental work of architectural distinction. Recently, it underwent extensive restoration managed by the Restoration and Preservation Department (RPD) and monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Unit of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH). The project aimed to preserve and enhance the church's architectural and artistic integrity while addressing the effects of natural deterioration in its heavily polluted environment. Restoration efforts included the removal of accumulated pollutants, repointing loose joints, and consolidating stonework to ensure long-term stability. Minor stone replacements were undertaken where necessary to retain the church's original fabric. The Art Nouveau windvanes on the belfries were meticulously restored to maintain their historical design and functionality. Additional measures included repainting the bells' headstocks and fittings to restore both aesthetic appeal and functionality, along with installing bird spikes to prevent further damage from roosting. Every intervention was carried out with precision and care, ensuring the church's cultural and historical significance is preserved for future generations.



Belfry Cupola of the Holy Trinity Church, Marsa after restoration.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Detail of restored pilaster, Holy Trinity Church, Marsa.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Former RAF Nissen Hut at Aerodrome, Mqabba and Sea-Plan Hanger in Triq it-Trunċiera, Marsaxlokk

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage is increasing its efforts in directing and guiding restoration of historic industrial and military heritage of the Twentieth (20th) Century. This is quite a specific type of heritage usually involving steel structures and metal elements. It is critical that former British military facilities, including Nissen huts and hangars, situated at historic military strategic locations across the islands are preserved. Such recent efforts were carried out on a Nissen Hut at the Aerodrome in Mqabba and the Sea-Plane Hangar in Marsaxlokk, where initial conditional visual surveys were carried out by the Superintendence pinpointing areas needing restoration, conservation, or replacement, to ensure that the historic fabric remains intact. More detailed documentation was subsequently submitted by the projects' architects for review and acceptance of the Superintendence. This approach ensured the preservation of most of the historic fabric including the steel superstructure during the restoration works which were also monitored closely by the Superintendence.



Nissen Hut, Mqabba.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Seaplane Hanger, Marsaxlokk.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



Guardianship of Museums and Sites

06

Guardianship Deeds of Heritage Buildings and Archaeological Sites

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage closed one (1) Guardianship Deed with cultural heritage NGO *Din l-Art Ħelwa (DLĦ)* in 2024. The signing of this Deed secures, for the first time, a decade-long commitment for the maintenance and protection of the *Kappella ta' San Mikiel is-Sanċir* in the limits of Rabat, Malta.

Table 7 indicates the status of the signed Guardianship Deeds up to the end of 2024, including the newly signed Deed with DLĦ.

Table 7: List of signed guardianship deeds as at end 2024

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Year of Signature
Kappella ta' San Mikiel is-Sanċir	Rabat, Malta	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2024
Santa Maria Battery	Għajnsielem (Comino)	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Santa Marija Tower	Għajnsielem (Comino)	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Għallis Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
It-Torri l-Aħmar	Mellieħa	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Torri Mamo	Marsaskala	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Torri ta' Wigancourt	San Pawl il-Baħar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Msida Bastion Cemetery	Floriana	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Qalet Marku Tower	Naxxar	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Dwejra Tower	San Lawrenz	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013 and 2023
Church of Our Lady of Victory	Valletta	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2011/ Renewed 2023
It-Torri ta' Xutu	Qrendi	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2013 / Renewed 2023
Madliena Tower and adjacent structures, Room off Mediterranean Street and Bridge and Weir	Pembroke	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Tower at Triq il-Wiesgħa	Xgħajra	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Pillboxes AB1, R15 and RAO	Naxxar, Mellieħa, Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Notre Dame Gate	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
St Thomas Tower	Marsaskala	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
Fort Rinella	Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016

Status of Guardianship Deeds

This year, the Superintendence worked closely with Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna (FWA) on Guardianship Deeds for two (2) cultural heritage sites: the Lascaris War Headquarters complex in Valletta and Couvre Porte in Vittoriosa. While both Deeds were initially proposed as renewals, the Superintendence has undertaken the drafting of a new Deed for the Lascaris War Headquarters to accommodate potential additions.

The updated Deed for the Lascaris complex, originally encompassing the Saluting Battery, underground structures, and Saint Peter and Saint Paul's Counterguard, is expected to include a WWII Hut and the original entrance to the Saluting Battery. Discussions with the Lands Authority have also raised the possibility of incorporating three additional structures located below the Saluting Battery. The Superintendence is currently awaiting further feedback on this matter.

On the other hand, the Couvre Porte Guardianship Deed is planned to proceed as a renewal. The Superintendence aims to conclude both Guardianship Deeds in 2025.

Additionally, in 2024, the Superintendence engaged with XirCammini to discuss the potential for a Guardianship Deed over a cultural heritage site. Given the preliminary nature of the meeting, the Superintendence advised the NGO to first register as a cultural heritage organisation and to identify a potential site to initiate the process.

Table 8 indicates pending Guardianship Deeds which are currently in progress, whilst Table 9 indicates requests for Guardianship Deeds made with the Lands Authority, for which feedback is still pending.

Table 8: List of pending Guardianship Deeds as at end 2024

Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Status
Lascaris War Headquarters Complex	Valletta	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	Signed 2009 / New Deed with additions in progress
Couvre Porte Barracks (10 rooms at lower level) and underlying WWII shelter	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2011/ Renewal in progress

Table 9: List of requests made to the Lands Authority for which feedback is still pending

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Australian Bungalow
Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	Renewal & additions	Saluting Battery & Lascaris War HQ Complex, Valletta
Heritage Malta	New request	Tarxien Temples Complex
Heritage Malta	New request	Fort Delimara - Fort and Ditches
Heritage Malta	New request	Roman Baths
Heritage Malta	New request	Auberge de Provence (National Museum of Archaeology)

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Heritage Malta	New request	*Għar Dalam*
Heritage Malta	New request	*Tas-Silġ* Archaeological Complex
Heritage Malta	New request	Vilhena Palace (National Museum of Natural History)
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ta' Ħaġrat* Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ta' Skorba* Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ħal Saflieni* Hypogeum
Heritage Malta	New request	Kordin III Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ħaġar Qim* Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Mnajdra* Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Domus* Romana
Heritage Malta	New request	St Paul's Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	St Augustine's Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	*Abbatija tad-Dejr* Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	Palace State Rooms (Grandmaster's Palace)
Heritage Malta	New request	Palace Armoury (Grandmaster's Palace)
Heritage Malta	New request	Vendome Bastion (War Museum)
Heritage Malta	New request	Inquisitor's Palace
Heritage Malta	New request	Fort St Angelo
Heritage Malta	New request	Ex-Naval Bakery (Malta Maritime Museum)
Heritage Malta	New request	Għawdex Museum of Archaeology
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ġgantija* Temples Complex
Heritage Malta	New request	*Gran Castello* Historic House
Heritage Malta	New request	Old Prison
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ħaġra ta' Sansuna*
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ta' Kola* Windmill
Heritage Malta	New request	Old Armoury, Nature Museum and offices

Name of Entity	Application type	Name of Cultural Property
Heritage Malta	New request	Fougasse
Heritage Malta	New request	*Madonna del Pilar* Chapel
Heritage Malta	New request	*Borġ in-Nadur* Temples
Heritage Malta	New request	*Ta' Bistra* Catacombs
Heritage Malta	New request	Auberge d'Italie (MUŻA)
Ramblers Association of Malta	New request	*Il-Mitħna l-Qadima* / Jesus of Nazareth Windmill
Gabriel Caruana Foundation	New request	*Ta' Ganu* Windmill / *Il-Mithna tal-Maħlut*
Heritage Malta	New request	*Torri tal-Kaptan*
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	Qbajjar Battery / *It-Torri tal-Qolla l-Bajda*
Heritage Malta	New request	*Torri San Luċjan*
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	*Razzett tax-Xitan*
Din l-Art Ħelwa	New request	*Il-Palazz l-Aħmar* / *Wied Musa* Battery



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI

SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



07

Policy, EU & International Affairs and Underwater

Advice to Government, Entities and International Bodies

Policy Advice

Within its role as regulator for cultural heritage, the Superintendence provided feedback throughout 2024 to several Governmental entities as well as international bodies on policies, strategies, and other documents. The Superintendence ensured that cultural heritage matters were at the forefront of these policies, and to ensure an aligned vision to national and EU strategies. In total, SCH was consulted on **thirty-two (32)** occurrences and can be grouped into the categories delineated hereinafter.

The Superintendence was consulted on **eight (8)** environmental reports, draft policies and strategies, namely the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy', the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol National Report, and other recommendations. In doing so, the Superintendence ensured that the safeguarding of cultural heritage was incorporated within these measures and procedures. The related documents or policies are as follows:

Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy - Draft Report

- Manual for the Permit Granting Process for Projects of Common Interest
- ICZM Protocol National Report 2022-2023 Consultations
- Public Consultation on the Environmental Permitting (Procedure for Applications and their Determination) Regulations
- Strategic Environmental Assessment for Malta's National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy - Draft Policy Update
- Climate Match 'Climate Adaptation in Policy and Planning with integrated governance and knowledge for a climate-resilient future in Malta' CAPPING Interview 2024-2026
- Questionnaire for the Members of The Expert Group on Submarine Cable Infrastructures Under Recommendation (EU) 2024/779
- State of Environment Report
- The Superintendence was also consulted on matters related to the import, export, and movement, of cultural heritage on five (5) different occurrences:

Questionnaire from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media regarding Information on national legislation relating to the export of cultural property and its protection - NV 16/2024

- EU Customs Reform Package
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Eu Action Plan against Trafficking in Cultural Goods
- CU 202483 UNODC Questionnaire on Criminal Justice Responses to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences
- MT Reply on the Law Enforcement Working Party (Police and Customs)'s discussion paper on the 'Fight against Trafficking in Cultural Goods: Cooperation of law enforcement authorities (police and customs)' (14771/24)

The Superintendence was also involved in draft policies, working groups or reports that related to cultural heritage in general:

- The Social Development and Identity Working Committee
- Horizon Europe Co-fund Partnership on Resilient Cultural Heritage
- Existing indicators on CH related to COP28 Decision 2/CMA5, paragraphs 9 and 10
- Revised draft note on the handling of the external dimension of protection of cultural heritage within the RELEX Working Party
- MED9 'CULTURAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives' Concept Paper
- Consultation on the ARCHE Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

- WP on Enhancing Cooperation with Civil Society in the Context of Protection of Cultural Heritage

Finally, the Superintendence also contributed to general national and international policies or strategy which are not directly linked to cultural heritage:

- National AI Strategy and Vision Alignment
- Education Strategy 2024-2030
- Preparatory Process for the Summit of the Future
- OECD Public Integrity Indicators (PII) Initiative
- OECD Green Public Procurement
- Stakeholder Consultation on the EU Framework Programme for R & I 2028-2034
- Voluntary National Review SDG Goals Questionnaire
- CDCPP - Draft Convention on the co-production of series
- Pact for the Future Declaration on Future Generations, and the Global Digital Compact - DDL 09/12/2024
- Work Programme 2025 for Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society (Cluster 2 of the Horizon Europe structure)
- Malta-UAE Joint Commission-Draft of Agreed Minutes
- National Transport Masterplan 2030

International Cooperation

The Superintendence has collaborated with several international bodies within the cultural heritage sphere to ensure that the promotion of sound policies, standards and practices in the cultural heritage field were considered and adhered to within the local sector, as the regulatory body tasked with advising the Minister with regards to the cooperation with other governments and international organisations within the field of the protection of the cultural heritage. Several meetings and conferences were attended by SCH staff to achieve this in 2024, fostering co-operation and partnerships with several international and EU-level bodies. The Superintendence has attended conferences, meetings and workshops organised by the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage, and Landscape within the Council of Europe; the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Heritage Crime Task Force; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Heritage Centre, the International Council on Monuments and Sites; the International Union for Conservation of Nature; the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; the European Heritage Heads Forum; and the European Archaeological Council.

Projects

BCThubs Project

Currently in its second year, progress has been achieved within the project **Blue Cultural Technology Excellence Hubs in EU Widening Member States** (BCThubs), a Horizon Europe project awarded in 2023 through the European Union's Horizon 2021-2027 Research and Innovation Programme under the HORIZON-WIDERA2022-ACCESS-04-01 (Excellence Hubs). Several of the technological innovations highlighted within the project's initial brief have achieved maturation, with field testing slated for the year 2025.

As a Work Package Leader, the Superintendence is tasked with the establishment of the BCT Hubs within Greece, Bulgaria, and Malta, by developing robust stakeholder ecosystems, engaging future partners, and promoting the activities and research capabilities of the Hubs. Beyond the term of the project the objective will be to involve other countries to set up Hubs and provide cutting-edge scientific and innovative solutions and products in area of sustainable Blue Economy and Culture.

Throughout 2024, the Superintendence continued engaging several stakeholders within the public, NGO, research, and SME spheres. This campaign,

which was developed in 2023, has proven useful as a substantial amount of the identified stakeholders within the BCThubs project have now endorsed the project. The Superintendence has also attended several international conferences throughout 2024 to promote BCThubs and the local archaeological sector. The conferences attended in 2024 were the XXV Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology (SOMA) held in Croatia; the European Maritime Days (EMD) held in Denmark; and the 17th International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology (ISBSA) held in Italy. In each of these conferences, the Superintendence had a dedicated booth or poster, explaining the project goals. The Superintendence also contributed to two scholarly articles, which will be published in the SOMA and ISBSA conference proceedings in 2025.



The BCThubs project being presented within the XXV Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology (SOMA) held in Zadar, Croatia.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The first International BCThubs Conference was also organised in Volos, Greece in December 2024. Titled 'Widening the Big Blue Horizon: Introducing Innovative Technologies & Sustainable Strategies in UCH', this hybrid conference sought to bring together experts and stakeholders within the maritime sphere and aspired to be a space for constructive knowledge and experience exchanges on relevant topics such as the research, management, preservation and accessibility of underwater cultural heritage. The conference saw the contribution of forty-five (45) different scholars and practitioners, hailing from Greece, Malta, Bulgaria, Croatia, Portugal, Italy, Egypt, Australia, Lebanon, Kenya, France, Montenegro, the United Kingdom, and Poland. The Superintendence was actively contributing to the conference as part of its efforts within the project, with one Senior Executive Officer forming part of the Scientific Committee. Overall, this three-day conference was a success as it brought together various actors within the maritime sector.



Speakers and attendees from the first international BCThubs conference titled held in Volos, Greece in December 2024.
PHOTO SOURCE: BCTHUBS

Qala

The valorisation and study of an underwater archaeological site in Malta is also a key part of the project's goals. The site identified for this task is in Qala and comprises of four marble column fragments strewn along the seabed. To fulfil this task, two (2) staff members were provided with scuba training, a new DSLR camera and complimentary underwater housing were purchased, as well as an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV). The Underwater Heritage Team within the Superintendence set out to identify, document, and digitally preserve the site. The resultant work includes the creation of a 3D model of the site and further study of the surrounding area. The interactive Augmented Reality (AR) experience which will be created will offer an incredible and engaging opportunity for those who cannot visit the site underwater. Such AR applications overlay the archaeological and historical images or reconstructions on top of existing environments, immersing viewers into the site and offering a visual

of what the objects may have looked like upright in the past. Additionally, a comparative analysis will be done with other similar columns found at sites north of Malta, off the coast of Italy, to further understand the way in which the columns may have been deposited.

Art4Sea

The Underwater Heritage team at SCH, recently met **twenty-four (24)** international artists selected through an open call for the Art4Sea project. These individuals are being commissioned to create artwork that combines art, creativity, science, and technology to raise public awareness toward a greater respect for the marine environment. A site off the coast of Għawdex was selected along with two (2) other regions - Ustica in Italy, and Alonissos in Greece, as locations for the presentation of the artwork. In the case of Għawdex, the artwork will be submerged for divers to enjoy and to increase environmental awareness. The participants were trained on ocean conservation, sustainable practices in art, and digital technologies, and were asked to create digital and physical works that encompass ancient maritime traditions. SCH will be consulted along with other regulatory entities through official application channels to assess the placement of the artwork on the seabed, ensuring that potential cultural heritage in the area is not impacted negatively. The artwork will be positioned in June 2025 upon approval from all regulatory entities involved, following the receipt of the permit application.

Underwater Cultural Heritage

Introduction

As an archipelago, the history of Malta is intrinsically linked with the sea and maritime activity. This rich history is reflected in the underwater archaeological record, and it is vital to protect it for economic, academic, and environmental reasons. Ancient wrecks offer unique learning opportunities for archaeologists seeking to understand seafaring societies of the past while modern wrecks, like those from WWI & II, serve as important reminders of Malta's more recent history and identity. They can further represent war graves, important habitats for marine life, and dive sites of global repute. Beyond wrecks, Malta's underwater heritage also includes other types of sites like submerged landscapes, structures, harbour deposits, aircraft, and submarines if they have been partially or totally under water, periodically or continuously, for at least fifty years. It is the role of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to regulate activities associated with these sites and fulfil the duties of the State to ensure their protection and accessibility.

One of the functions of the Superintendence is to advise and coordinate with the Planning Authority and other pertinent bodies to ensure that cultural heritage is properly safeguarded from the threats posed by development. This applies to sites underwater, as it does for those on land. Within SCH, it is the role of the Underwater Heritage Team to mitigate the impact of activities like dredging, the construction of breakwaters, the installation of moorings, or the laying of sub-sea cables. There are several methods through which this is achieved. These primarily include issuing Terms of Reference (TORs), imposing monitoring requirements, maintaining a database of known sites, spatial planning using GIS, and inspections.

Underwater Monitoring

Due to the large scale of works taking place along Malta's coastline and just offshore, monitoring of coastal and underwater national projects is often extensive to ensure that archaeologically or historically sensitive areas are protected.

Inspections are carried out both on land and underwater and target specific sites where, for example, development is either planned or ongoing, members of the public have reported finds, an

unforeseen impact has occurred, or where the monitoring and documentation of already known sites is required. In this way, inspections serve and inform multiple SCH functions beyond only development-related mitigation. More broadly, they are a tool for the Superintendence to exercise the surveillance of cultural property underwater and to conduct research in the field to ensure objects or aspects of cultural heritage can be identified, cared for, and appreciated.

Dive inspections are typically scheduled on a bi-weekly basis and sites are selected from a list based on their level of priority and, in cases when weather is a factor, their location and accessibility.

Key National Projects

Examples of large-scale national projects with an underwater component which were initiated or continued in 2024 include works at Fort St. Angelo, Xatt Lascaris and Pinto Wharf 4/5 (PA01602/20) and at the Freeport (PA01189/23), all archaeologically sensitive areas.

Xatt Lascaris, Valletta

The upgrading and extension of the quay at Xatt Lascaris, Valletta has involved a significant number of dredging activities as shown in the below image. These works are subject to Terms of Reference issued by SCH Underwater Heritage Team mandating the presence of a monitor and the sieving of a percentage of the sediment removed from the seabed. The location where works are taking place has a high potential for uncovering archaeological material as it has been an area of notable maritime use especially after the construction of the Neptune fountain in 1615. This activity only increased with the construction of the customs wharf in the late Seventeenth (17th) Century and again with the completion of the still standing customs house in 1776 (AP, 2009). As a result, there is a high probability of encountering personal items or refuse that was lost or thrown overboard during both the Knights' and British periods. Additionally, a geotechnical evaluation has confirmed the presence of Quaternary deposits within the limits of disturbance. The Quaternary Period, our current period in geological time, is broadly understood as beginning **two point five eight (2.58) million** years ago and, from an archaeological perspective, it contains potentially valuable data for the reconstruction of past landscapes and environments. The information gathered from these sites can also further our understanding of climate change and its impact on the maritime industry and marine spatial planning.

Although dives were carried out in the area by SCH prior to the start of works, inspections are now taking place from land or on board the working platforms. These inspections and on-site meetings supplement the work of the approved monitor and ensure that there is clear communication between all parties and that the TORs are understood and followed.



Dredging taking place at Xatt Lascaris, Valletta.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Fort St. Angelo, Birgu

During works at Fort St. Angelo, where the vehicular and pedestrian bridge was being reconstructed, dredging of the seabed resulted in the discovery of a large metal structure that may have been a bridge gang plank from the early British period. This was lifted with a crane located on barge and transported to an area just outside of Fort Ricasoli, at a depth which would not impact marine vessel operations.



Crane lifting a metal structure during works at Fort St Angelo.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Marsaxlokk Breakwater

In other situations, it is more suitable to carry out site inspections underwater. An example which highlights this is a recent inspection of a breakwater in Marsaxlokk. The structure was already shortlisted for an inspection given the apparent scouring of the surrounding seabed. However, when works on the structure was proposed, the location was prioritised, and divers inspected the site immediately. The inspection shed light on how the structure was impacting the surrounding seabed and established that scouring was not exposing any archaeological material. Divers also located an uncharted modern shipwreck near the breakwater. Research would later reveal that the ship sank between 2009 and 2011 and therefore, was not considered underwater cultural heritage. As a result, it was not a factor when determining SCH's response to the proposal. It does, however, work in conjunction with the scouring assessment to show the importance of inspections and the impact they have in terms of providing rapid and reliable information in development related consultations.



Diving inspection in Marsaxlokk.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



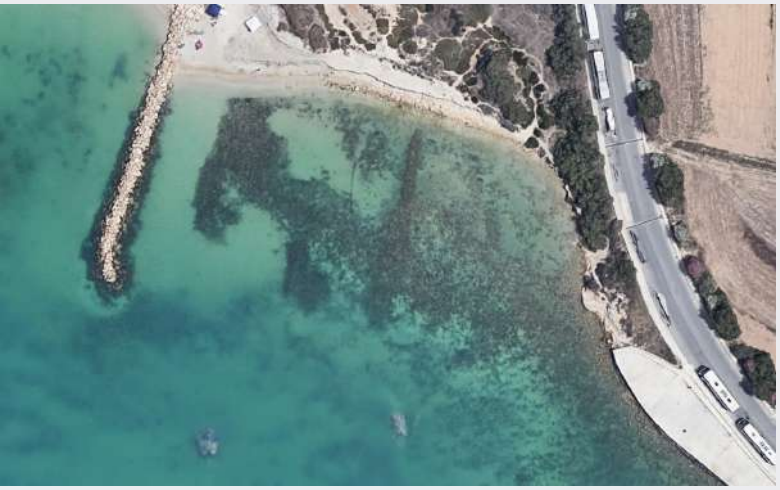
An uncharted modern wreck located during an inspection in Marsaxlokk.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Underwater Excavations

In accordance with the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, the in-situ preservation of sites is prioritised. However, when an underwater site is identified through inspection or other means, further investigations are often necessary. If an impact on a site has been deemed

unavoidable or required for a lack of other options in the face of infrastructure needs, excavations serve as a means to retrieve data and document a site before the incursion.

In 2024, this was the case for a series of underwater structures located in Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk. The structures abuts the rapidly eroding shoreline of a Natura2000 site where the construction of a revetment is required to prevent further environmental degradation. Prior to the application, which was submitted to SCH for consultation in March of 2024, the structures had already been subject to archaeological investigations. They were examined in 2013 as part of a study using archaeological sites as references for Holocene sea level change in Malta (Furlani *et al.*, 2013); inspected by the Superintendence in 2021 prior to the construction of a nearby groin; and in 2023, underwent detailed survey and mapping by the University of Malta's maritime program within the Department of Classics and Archaeology (Gambin, Rodríguez, and Gatt, 2023).



An aerial view of the submerged structures in Marsaxlokk.
PHOTO SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH

The excavation carried out by the Superintendence in 2024 focused on areas of the site that are to be impacted by the construction of the revetment. Initial plans have been amended to reduce the impact this construction will have on the underwater structures; however, a degree of impact is unavoidable. In these areas, SCH excavations have revealed details about construction techniques, types of artefacts that are present, the surrounding stratigraphy, and site formation processes. Excavations took place over a total area of thirteen metres squared (13m^2) and ranged from mostly superficial cleaning of structures, to excavating to depths of one hundred and twenty five centimetres (125cm) below seabed in some areas. Of particular note is the fragment of a louterion that was recovered during the excavations. It features a distinctive scale pattern and charioteer motif that help identify it as likely dating to the Late Classical Period (400-323 BCE); an interesting find given their ritual use on board ships and the proximity of the site to the temple at *Tas-Silġ*.



Louterion fragment recovered during excavations in Marsaxlokk.
PHOTO: SCH

Construction of the revetment is scheduled to start in April 2025. Further fieldwork will be carried out onsite prior to this date and will include photogrammetric mapping of the entire site and additional excavation units in areas that will be impacted by the revetment. The objective of these studies is to better understand changes in the stratigraphy of the site as well as the relationship between specific different structures. A preliminary report of works to date is available through the Planning Authority's e-Applications portal but a full report on works, including background and archival research, is still forthcoming.

Post-Excavation and Conservation of Underwater Artefacts

The process of desalination is crucial for the long-term stability of artefacts recovered from underwater contexts. As part of this process, material is kept in water that is cycled at regular intervals to ensure

that salts are adequately drawn out. Using distilled or deionised water for the last several cycles ensures the efficacy of this method and drastically reduces the potential for spalling or cracking when artefacts are finally allowed to dry fully for the first time. In 2024, artefacts from **eighteen (18)** different sites underwent this process at SCH facilities. Of these, **nine (9)** were completed in 2024 and another **two (2)** are expected to finish in the first quarter of 2025. At that point, they will be re-photographed, undergo cleaning and further conservation, and continue to inform post-excavation work being carried out for their corresponding sites.

GIS Platform for Underwater Site Consultations

A vital tool for the management of underwater sites is the SCH's GIS platform. This provides the SCH underwater heritage team with the data required to make informed decisions regarding the extent of monitoring required when works are taking place in Maltese territorial waters. There are currently one hundred and seventy (170) mapped underwater sites which include anchors, architectural/stone fragments, harbour deposits, pottery scatters, complete pottery vessels, structural remains, weapons, and wrecks. The data that populates this platform is drawn from a variety of sources and projects. The most significant of these include the University of Malta's Department of Classics and Archaeology, the Malta Shipwreck Survey Project, Heritage Malta, public reporting, and the SCH's own record keeping and activities. Together, this data serves as an indispensable tool that informs planning and consultations, management strategies, research, and data visualization.

In 2024, SCH began the process of plotting additional data beyond the locations of underwater sites and inspections. The new initiative aims to add polygons that correspond to areas of the seabed that have been surveyed using remote sensing technology. The associated survey results are either linked directly to the attributes of the polygon or information is provided as to where/how the data can be accessed. This includes side-scan, magnetometry, bathymetric, and sub-bottom profiler surveys. Managing the data in this way will enhance its organisation and access; ultimately improving the planning resources of the SCH and increasing the efficiency of responding to planning and other permit applications.

Data on underwater cultural heritage was also instrumental in assisting the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Sustainable Development (MEES), and Interconnect Malta Ltd. (ICM), with plans for the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (Floating Wind Farm Project). It was crucial to identify appropriate corridors in Maltese territorial waters that could be utilised for this project, that would minimise the impact on potential underwater cultural heritage. Using maps and visual spatial data from the SCH GIS portal, based on underwater surveys performed by the University of Malta and Heritage Malta, illustrated the significance of research and inventories on underwater cultural heritage. Once this project proceeds, the location and manner in which cables are laid on the seabed within these corridors will be monitored, to preserve cultural heritage and allow for sustainable development.

Underwater Permits

The Underwater Heritage Team at SCH receives requests for research, monitoring, and survey purposes from public and private entities and as the regulatory body, permits are issued accordingly. In 2024, **fourteen (14)** permits were issued with conditions, as required by the Cultural Heritage Act. Entities in receipt of such permits are required to share data, research reports, and object inventories with SCH within a specified period of time assigned in the permits for future reference. An application must be completed by those requesting a permit which outlines the purpose of the research, survey, or data collection. Should there be a requirement to export and test samples of material collected during research or surveys, approval is also obtained from the SCH Movables Department ensuring temporary and permanent export of cultural material is documented.

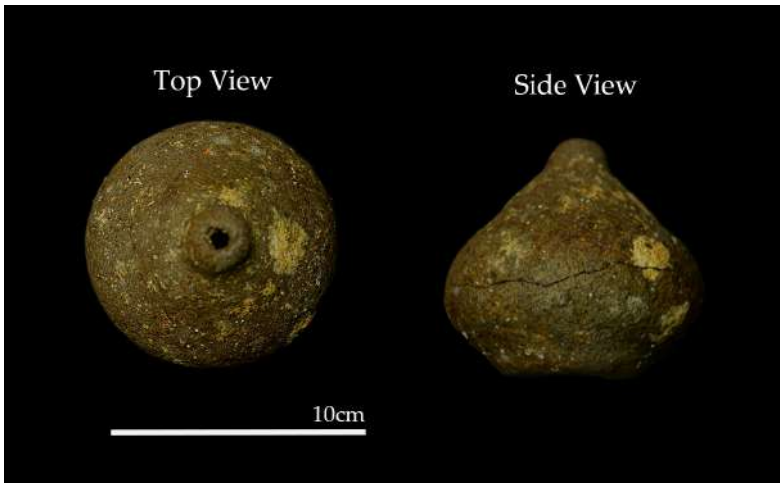
The permits issued include a focus on surveying areas around the Maltese Islands in relation to supporting future research, detection, and identification of cultural heritage; monitoring of existing and known sites to assess evidence of deterioration, damage due to climate change, wave action, and potential looting or other illegal activities; bathymetric surveys that may inadvertently encounter cultural heritage; and deployment of remote sensing technology.

Reporting of Discoveries or Illegal Activity

SCH is in the process of setting up an online form which will be easily visible on the SCH website for those who wish to report a discovery or illegal activity. At the present time, individuals can call or email SCH offices via a designated email to report underwater finds or any activity they deem illegal.

The reporting form will allow individuals to list the location and depth of objects as well as the condition of objects and related surroundings. Moreover, information is being provided to guide those who may see cultural heritage underwater, encouraging those diving, snorkelling or free diving to leave material in situ, take photographs and advise the SCH immediately. Online information will be available on the website, along with brochures which will be provided at Dive Centers, local NGO facilities involved in underwater activities and Tourist Hubs to engage the public in assisting SCH in protecting and preserving cultural heritage. The objective is to ensure cultural heritage remains where it was discovered and prevent the export of cultural heritage outside of the Maltese Islands.

There were **fifteen (15)** discoveries by local residents in 2024, underwater clean-up crews and visitors to Malta and Għawdex, which were reported within 24 hours of discovery ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage.



Items discovered underwater by third parties.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

For example, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) were informed by a local resident that an object which seemed to be an unexploded ordinance (UXO/bomb) was seen on the seabed near the shoreline in Xemxija Bay, Malta. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) platoon of the 3rd Regiment of the AFM were immediately deployed to inspect, secure and retrieve the UXO. Such objects, if fifty (50) years or older as per the Cultural Heritage Act, are considered cultural heritage and must be reported to the SCH. During retrieval, the AFM recognised that the object was in fact an amphora.



Unexploded ordinance (UXO/bomb) discovered in Xemxija Bay.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Staff from the Underwater Heritage Team at SCH collected the object and it is being desalinated in preparation for further conservation and study by SCH staff.



Members from the Armed Forces of Malta handing over the artefact to SCH for further conservation and study.

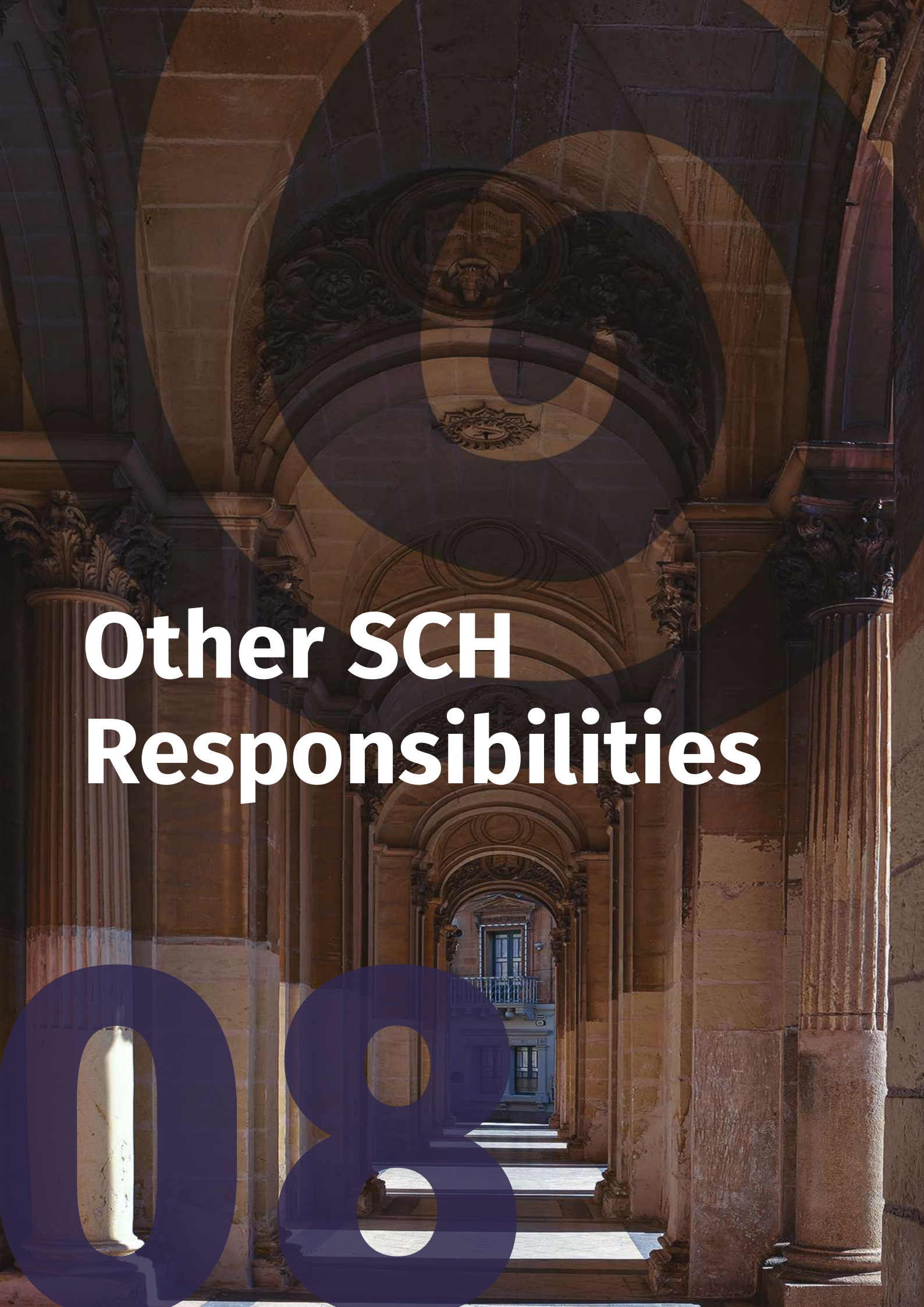
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Local NGOs working leading underwater clean-ups often inadvertently come across cultural heritage and they continue to contribute to detecting and reporting cultural heritage and collaborate with SCH by reporting discoveries. SCH continues to work closely with these groups to guide their volunteers on the process of reporting underwater discoveries and ensuring that any recovered materials are delivered to the SCH office with the required information needed to assess the site of discovery further. This ensures that any archaeologically or historically sensitive sites are inspected, excavated and monitored for long-term protection by SCH staff. Future workshops will be held to guide new volunteers on aspects of cultural heritage, legislation, and protection.



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Other SCH Responsibilities

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The Superintendent serves as an *ex-officio* member on the *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi* (BWR), the National Council for Cultural Heritage (NCCH), National Archives Council and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Board.

Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi

The *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi,* established in terms of Article 35 of the Cultural Heritage Act, is responsible for reviewing applications for the issuance of warrants to practice as a Conservator-Restorer and related practicing certificates in Malta. This includes assessing applicants' academic qualifications and practical training, as well as evaluating applications from experienced professionals. The Board also considers applications for Temporary Warrants and registers individuals with Heritage Skills.

Following the processing of applications, seven (7) applicants were granted the warrant to practice the profession of Conservator-Restorer in 2024; six (6) as per Article 29, and one (1) as per Article 30. In addition, following the issue of applications for the registration of persons having a Heritage Skill as per Article 32 (2) of the Cultural Heritage Act, forty-five (45) applicants, upon the successful consideration of the *Bord,* have been registered as having one (1) or more Heritage Skills.

National Council for Cultural Heritage

The National Council for Cultural Heritage, previously known as the Committee of Guarantee, was established under Article 12 of the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). Its primary role is to ensure and promote collaboration among various entities with direct or indirect responsibilities for the protection and management of cultural heritage.

National Archives Council

Established by Article 14 of the National Archives Act (2005), the Council is responsible for promoting the National Archives and other record-keeping entities. It ensures and facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders who have direct or indirect responsibilities for the protection and management of the archives sector. The Council also advises the Minister on matters related to the management of archives in Malta and draws attention to any urgent actions necessary for the better management of archives and records.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Board

Intangible cultural heritage includes practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills, as well as associated objects and cultural spaces, recognised by communities and individuals as part of their cultural heritage. Malta encourages the identification of these elements and has established a National Inventory to preserve traditions, activities, and practices of national importance. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Board, appointed by the Minister for Culture, evaluates submissions and authorises their inclusion in the Inventory. Malta currently lists twewlve (12) elements in its National Inventory and has nominated three (3) to UNESCO: *Il-Ftira* (added to UNESCO's Representative List in 2020), *L-Għana,* and *il-Festa Maltija.*

European Archaeology Council

As a member of the European Archaeology Council, the Superintendence attended the Annual meeting held between the 21st and the 23rd of March at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels. The theme tackled this year was 'Urban Archaeology and the Cities of Tomorrow', which is highly relevant to the local scenario as continued development and re-development within our urban areas continue to bring to light archaeological remains spanning millennia. During the meeting, common challenges and best practice were discussed and a number of case studies being presented.

European Committee for Standarisation (CEN) on restoration and conservation

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage continued participating in the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) for restoration and conservation under the aegis of the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCA) in 2022. The Superintendence is collaborating with the University of Malta (UoM), Restoration Directorate, Planning Authority and Heritage Malta in the drafting and compiling of European Standards for restoration and conservation. Together with the other entities, the Superintendence provides its expertise to this international endeavour to achieve a holistic, comprehensive and unified regulatory framework and common terminology for cultural heritage conservation across the European Union.

Collaboration with the Energy and Water Agency – Electronic Vehicles Charging Infrastructure rollout

In recent years, the Superintendence actively collaborated with the inter-governmental committee on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure, led by the Ministry for the Environment, Energy, and Enterprise (MEEE). This committee was tasked with overseeing the development and implementation of this critical national infrastructure. The Superintendence played a key advisory role, focusing on ensuring that the installation of charging points did not compromise cultural heritage, including historic centres, surrounding buildings, and archaeologically significant areas. With the conclusion of the committee's work, responsibility for the strategic rollout and permitting of the charging infrastructure has transitioned to the Energy and Water Agency (EWA). The Superintendence continues to work closely with EWA, providing guidance on the siting, design, and installation of charging points to safeguard cultural heritage assets.



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Public Relations and Outreach

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European Heritage Days

The Superintendence, in its role as National Coordinator for European Heritage Days, coordinated and continued to promote this event by working with a number of local partners. The Superintendence participated online in meetings held for National Coordinators in March and October of this year. In 2024, Malta celebrated EHD between the 4th and the 13th of October, with a total of seven (7) events registered. The theme for 2024 was 'Heritage of Routes, Networks and Connections', an included several events highlighting the connectivity between spaces, places, and people. This year's EHD saw the continued participation of Festivals Malta – Notte Bianca, the Floriana Local Council, Bird Life Malta, and Heritage Malta. With such a range of partners, the programme was vastly varied and covered all aspects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.



SCH freebies handed out at KSU Freshers' Week 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Freshers' Week

In 2024, the Superintendence concentrated its efforts to participate in the KSU Freshers' Week at the University of Malta, marking its first-ever appearance at this event. Unlike previous years, when the entity engaged in an extended outreach period by visiting various colleges during their respective Freshers' Weeks, this year's approach was more centralised.



SCH stand at KSU Freshers' Week 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



SCH stand at KSU Freshers' Week 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

This event was held during the first week of October and offered University students a chance to engage with government entities and private companies. The aim of the SCH in attending the KSU Freshers' Week was to target tertiary students enrolled in cultural heritage and arts disciplines. The primary objectives were to raise awareness about the entity, its functions, and possible career paths for interested students. The initiative was highly successful, attracting significant interest from students. Many

expressed enthusiasm for internship opportunities and have since began following the SCH on social media platforms. By strategically assigning various experts to the stand, the SCH effectively engaged a diverse range of students with varying interests and areas of expertise, ensuring a broad and meaningful outreach.

Public Service EXPO

In 2024, the Superintendence achieved another milestone with its participation in the Public Service EXPO, held from the 15th to the 19th of May. The event's theme, "Skills," provided an ideal platform to highlight the entity's broad expertise, including archaeology, osteology, conservation, and underwater archaeology.

The Superintendence showcased its work through an exhibition of artefacts that lasted the duration of the EXPO and daily live demonstrations conducted by its experts. The artefacts that were selected for the exhibition were recovered from the same tomb in Rabat, dating to the Early Punic period, and ranged from oil lamps, to drinking vessels and urns. Additionally, a collection of unprovenanced underwater artefacts were also exhibited to display the detrimental impact of looting on underwater cultural heritage artefacts.

To support the dynamic nature of the exhibition, officers of the Superintendence transported fresh artefacts daily for live interventions, including cleaning, conservation, and documentation. These artefacts ranged from pottery unearthed in a tomb in Safi to Knights period smoking pipes, human remains, and underwater finds. Visitors were treated to live demonstrations of processes like pottery cleaning, research, conservation, and the cleaning of human remains. This rotation allowed visitors to witness firsthand the meticulous work involved in archaeological excavation, artefact conservation, and underwater exploration.

The EXPO also served as a valuable opportunity to engage with the public and collaborate with other professionals, highlighting the importance of these disciplines in understanding and safeguarding our shared heritage.







SCH stand at Public Service EXPO 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH



SCH stand at Public Service EXPO 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

SaltFest



Setting up the archaeology section within the Salt Museum at Salina Nature Reserve.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

The Superintendence's Underwater Heritage Team, in collaboration with BirdLife Malta and the Salina Nature Reserve, launched an exhibition of underwater archaeological artefacts at the newly inaugurated Salina Salt Museum. The grand opening of the Museum was celebrated during the Salt Fest at the Salina Nature Reserve, which took place during the weekend of the 27th and 28th of July. The exhibit was built around a collection of artefacts that were illegally recovered from the seabed and eventually returned to the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Artefacts from underwater contexts which were shown to visitors and used as a tool to highlight some major themes about maritime archaeology. A central topic, given the theme of the event, was the process of desalination; by which salts are drawn out from artefacts recovered from marine environments. Other themes frequently discussed revolved around the history of Salina Bay, the negative impacts of looting, and other resources available to learn more about Malta's underwater cultural heritage.



SCH staff at SaltFest held at Salina Nature Reserve.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Visitors had the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities celebrating the museum's opening, which included complementary entry throughout the weekend. Among the many attractions, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage presented a unique display of underwater artefacts recently recovered from Marsaskala, which were undergoing a delicate desalination process. Guests had the opportunity to interact with the artefacts and view them up close, providing an immersive and memorable experience.

Educational Outreach

Msida Sea Scouts

One of the more impactful events of this past year was with the Msida Sea Scouts. The group had been snorkelling in Marsamxett Harbour and had encountered British Period artefacts of which find they raised and reported to the Superintendence in August 2024. The artefacts, which are gin bottle fragments, were subsequently handed over to SCH for processing and desalination. Following this exchange, an event was scheduled for the Scouts (Refer to Figure). At this event, the troop was able to learn more about the discipline of underwater archaeology, experience underwater sites through Heritage Malta's Dive into History VR experience, see the conservation treatment being applied to the artefacts they discovered, and interact with artefacts and teaching aids from other collections. An important theme that was discussed was the crucial role of public reporting in terms of the management and discovery of underwater sites but also the importance of documenting finds while leaving them in-situ.



Presentation being delivered to Msida Sea Scout group.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

St Aloysius College

In 2024, the Superintendence continued its commitment to engaging with schools and students through various educational initiatives. Notable initiatives include the Superintendence's visit to St. Aloysius College, which is currently collaborating with the SCH to study a WWII shelter on school grounds. Additional outreach included a lecture delivered at St. Paul's Missionary College and participation in the St. Edward College Careers Fair.

Savio College

The Superintendence was also pleased to host students from Savio College, Dingli, for the second time. During their visit, students had the unique opportunity to explore the SCH laboratory, where they attended a lecture delivered by experienced archaeologists. They also participated in hands-on activities, including handling and cleaning archaeological artefacts, offering them a direct and practical insight into the fascinating work of cultural heritage preservation.



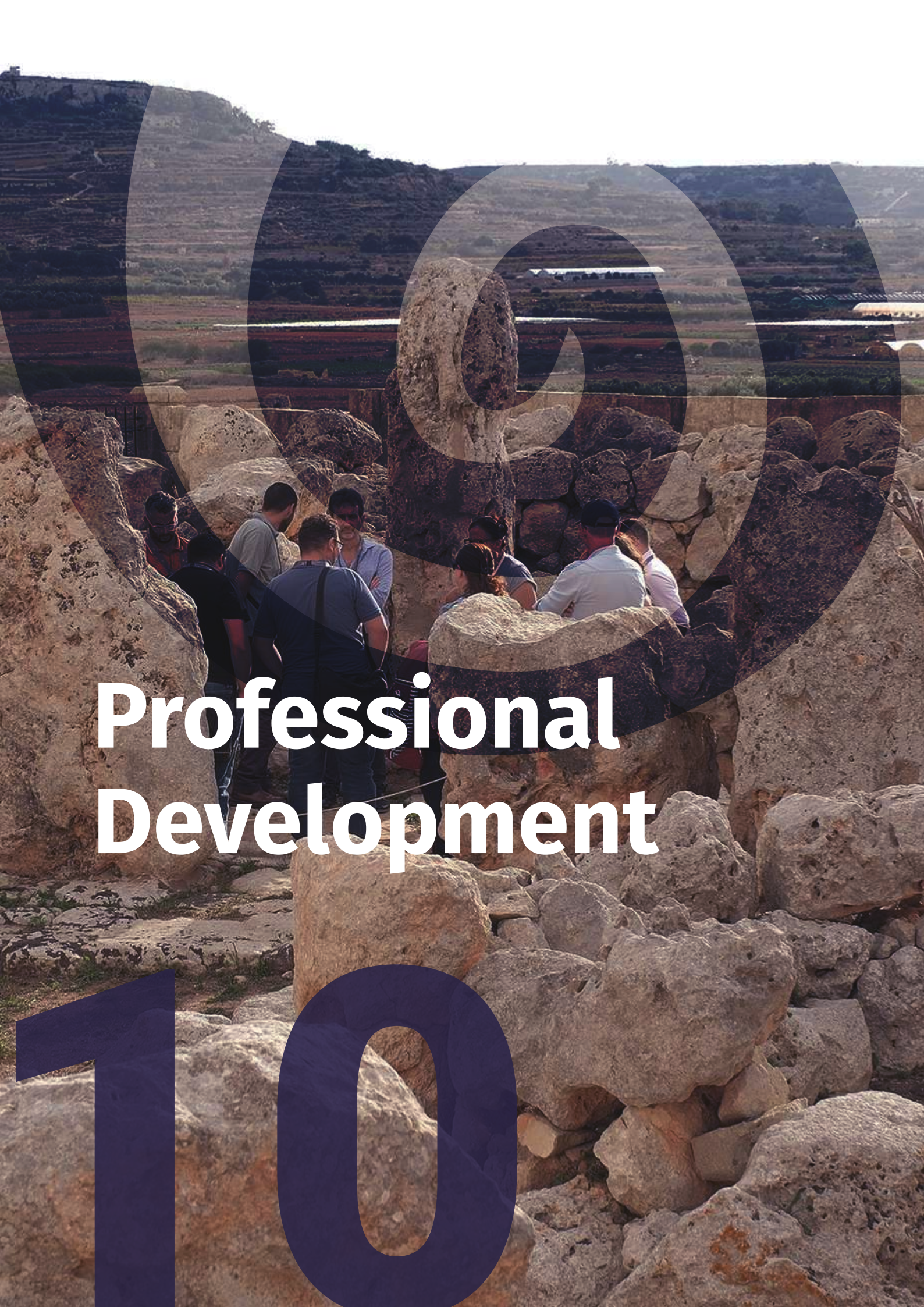
Students visiting the SCH Lab.
PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

St Theresa Middle School

The SCH was also involved in a school visit which was held for Grade Seven (7) students at the St Theresa Middle School. Students were introduced to the function of the SCH and archaeology through a short lecture and a hands-on activity.

Public Relations

Various SCH staff contributed to public outreach through a number of interviews for footage connected to the TV programmes. SCH staff appeared on *Bil-Fatti* TV programme, on *Id-Dar Maltija, Darna* and regularly featured on the popular programme 'Malta u lil hinn Minnha' to which the Superintendence is a regular contributor.



Professional Development

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E-RIHS Pilot Training school held in April 2024.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

E-RIHS Pilot Training School

At the end of April, the E-RIHS Maltese National Node held its first Pilot Training School which saw the participation of **sixteen (16)** representatives together with a number of observers from the **eight (8)** agencies which form part of the initiative. The Training School, which was fully funded by MHAL, was organised and coordinated by the Superintendence as its representative. The Superintendence not only took care of all logistics relating to the organisation of the Training School but was also part of the sub-committee (together with the University of Malta and the Archdiocese of Malta) tasked with the content preparation for the Training School. The Superintendence led one of the training days relating to archaeological method and had a leading role in the concluding day. Moreover, two (2) days out of the training school were held at the offices of the Superintendence, making use of the Lecture Hall and Laboratory. The training school was very well received by the local participants as well as the foreign observers who were invited to attend to provide feedback on the Training School, since it is intended that this type of product be part of Malta's in-kind contribution to E-RIHS.eu.

Capacity Building for World Heritage Sites

In October and November, the Superintendence, in partnership with ICOMOS International, hosted a workshop titled "Capacity Building for Heritage Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context." Designed for professionals in the heritage sector, the workshop featured a blend of online and in-person sessions, conducted over four (4) weeks. This workshop was part of a series by ICOMOS and its primary aim was to increase stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the importance and effectiveness of Heritage Impact Assessments in the context of World Heritage Sites. The Maltese workshop brought together twenty-five (25) key stakeholders from state entities/authorities involved in World Heritage decision-making. The workshop was presented by notable international and local experts, and it draws on resources from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership programme.



Capacity building in Heritage Impact Assessments organised by SCH and ICOMOS International.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH





Capacity building in Heritage Impact Assessments organised by SCH and ICOMOS International.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Zooarchaeology Workshop

In 2024, the Research Archaeology and Conservation Team continued developing a number of educational and mentorship activities. In December 2024, the team organised a workshop for archaeology monitors and SCH staff on the subject of Zooarchaeology. This workshop comprised presentations from two (2) experts in the field of Zooarchaeology and hands-on practice on the study of ancient animal remains, to provide further knowledge on the treatment and understanding of ancient materials that are unearthed during surveillance projects on developments sites. Further workshops for archaeology monitors will continue being provided in 2025, following the success of this workshop.



Zooarchaeology workshop organised by SCH for archaeology monitors.

PHOTO SOURCE: SCH

Others

Various members of staff also received further training in different areas including customer care, management, mental health, risk assessment, and health and safety. Further specialised training for team members included project management, digital methods and tools for cultural heritage, Digital Transitions, modern tools and techniques for efficient QC Seminar, GIS training, and writing up of proposals for funded projects.



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