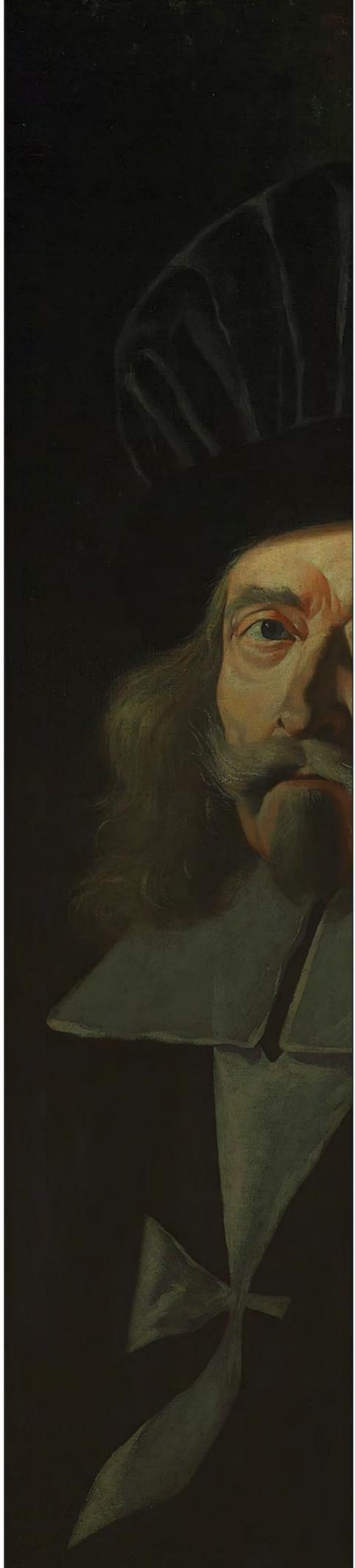


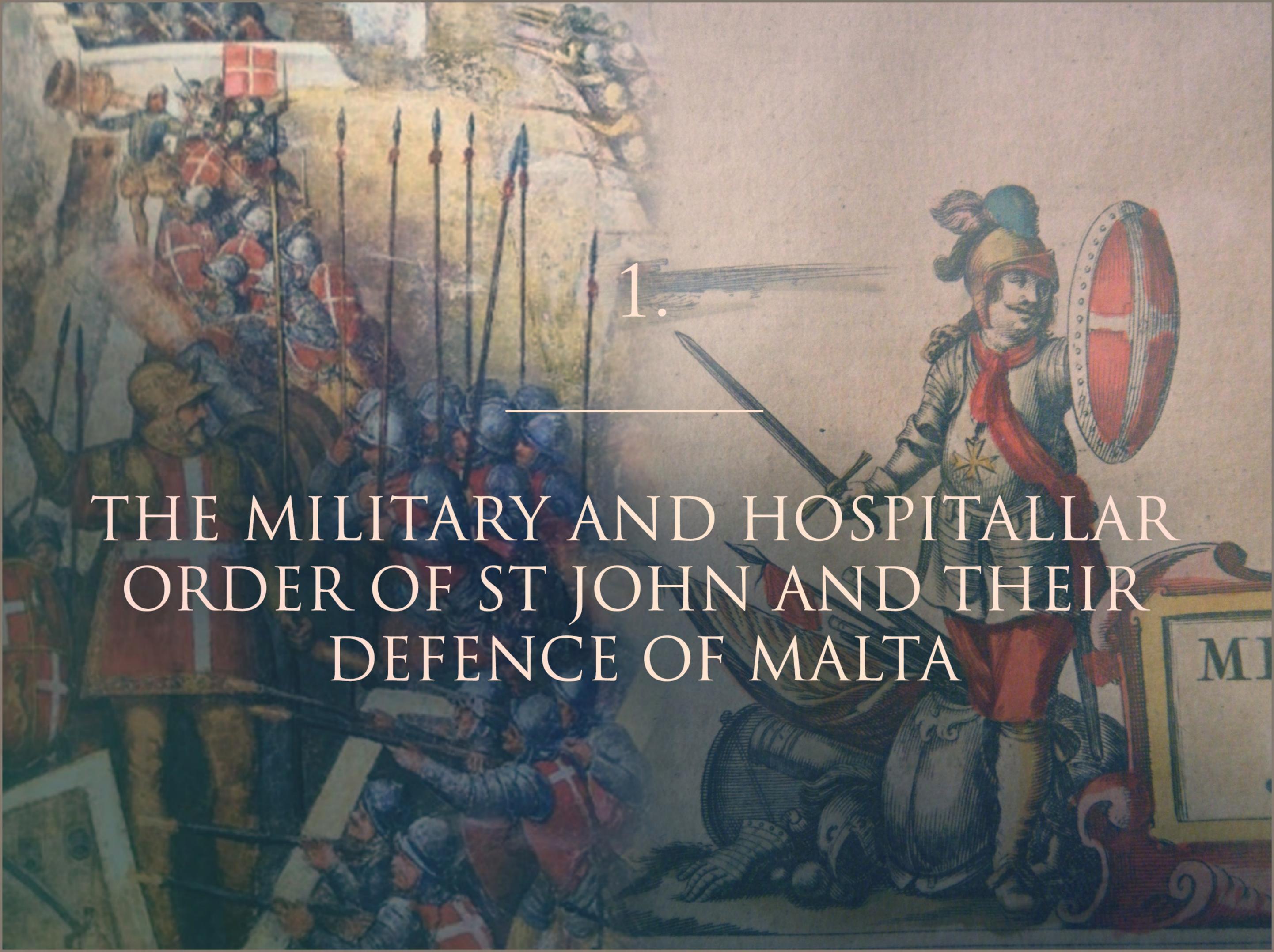


THE GHALLIS COASTAL WATCH TOWER 1658



Din l-Art Helwa
NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA





1.

THE MILITARY AND HOSPITALLAR ORDER OF ST JOHN AND THEIR DEFENCE OF MALTA

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In order to understand the purpose of the Għallis Coastal Watch Tower, and other similar fortifications, we need to have an understanding of the role of the Military and Hospitallar Order of St John and the Knights of Malta and the important historic and architectural impact they had on the island.

In 1530, Emperor Charles V, also King of Sicily, granted the Maltese islands to the Hospitallar Knights in perpetual fiefdom to make the island their base.

Malta had excellent harbours for the Order's navy. The Order had been ousted from Rhodes seven years earlier, and earlier still from Jerusalem where their role had been to tend to pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Also a religious order, with the principal duties of looking after the sick, the Knights inevitably had to take on a military role in order to protect their hospitals and those wounded in battle in defence of Christianity.

THE MILITARY AND HOSPITALLAR ORDER OF ST JOHN AND THEIR DEFENCE OF MALTA



Photographed from a map accompanying the History of the Knights of Malta written in 1726 for the Order of St John by Mons. Rene'-Aubert, L'Abbe' de Vertot, published by MidSea Books Ltd . The map, by Guillaume Delisle, shows the territories defended after the 12th Century by the Order of St John.

THE MILITARY AND HOSPITALLAR ORDER OF ST JOHN AND THEIR DEFENCE OF MALTA

Malta then had few defences that could withstand enemy invasion. Incursions from pirates from the Barbary Coast and from the far reaching armies of the Ottoman empire were frequent. Coastal defences were inexistent and after assaults by corsairs, the islands' inhabitants were often captured and sold as slaves. In 1565, Suleiman the Magnificent and his

Ottoman fleet besieged Malta for five long months. After Grand Master Jean de Valette, with his small band of knights and the Maltese emerged victorious, it was most apparent how open to invasion the island still was. The Order therefore made it their strategy to fortify the island to the hilt, surrounding its main harbours with imposing bastions.



Detail from the wall paintings of the Great Siege at the Grand Masters Palace, Valletta by Perez d'Aleccio.



Portrait of Grand Master Jean de Valette at the Grand Masters' Palace, Valletta. Photograph: Daniel Cilia



Suleiman the Magnificent – Sultan of the Ottoman Empire 1494 – 1566. Under his reign the Ottoman Caliphate ruled over 25 million people. It was his ambition to capture Malta.



Photo of Grand Harbour Fortifications

Following the Great Siege of 1565, the city of Valletta, the first planned fortified city in early Modern Europe, was built by Grand Master Jean de Valette to protect Christianity. Subsequent Grand Masters went about strengthening the outlying coastal defences as the threat to invasion from landings at the northern bays of the island was great. By 1610 Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt had built the tower at St Paul's Bay,

in 1618 the imposing St Mary's tower on Comino. Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castellar followed with Xutu Tower in Wied iż-Żurrieq in 1647. He commissioned the imposing Red Tower in Mellieha in 1649 and dedicated it to St Agatha, as a symbol of fortitude. All these coastal fortifications today have been restored and are looked after by Din l-Art Ħelwa, National Volunteer Trust of Malta.

THE MILITARY AND HOSPITALLAR ORDER OF ST JOHN AND THEIR DEFENCE OF MALTA

The island's strategic importance was due to its location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, the need for command over the routes between Sicily and North Africa, and its protected deep water harbours. It was imperative for any ruling power to own and defend it. After the Order was ousted from Malta by the French in 1798, Malta became a British Protectorate. The British began their own string of defences building great low lying camouflaged forts such as those of Delimara, Rinella, Mosta and Madliena and many others which were designed to protect the island from the long distance cannon from dreadnoughts, and then of course, from the menace that had presented itself from the skies: the aeroplane.



2.

GRAND MASTER DE REDIN
AND HIS THIRTEEN TOWERS

GRAND MASTER DE REDIN AND HIS THIRTEEN TOWERS





Portrait of Grand Master Martin De Redin – Art Institute of Chicago – photograph: Daniel Cilia

Grand Master Martin de Redin (1579 – 1660) was a Spanish knight from Pamplona who ruled Malta as the 58th Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers between 1657 and 1660. He was a military and political figure having previously been Grand Prior of the Order of Malta and Viceroy of Sicily. Elected after the death of Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris, a knight of Provence, he felt the need to continue the line of coastal defences by commissioning a string of signalling watch towers all of which were in direct sight of each other. As a gift to the Order, he personally paid for the erection of 13 coastal watchtowers today known as the 'de Redin Towers'. It was an amazing feat that they were all built in little over one year in 1658. Sadly, he died only six months after his last tower was completed and is buried in St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta.

Essentially a military man, Grand Master de Redin organised a local regiment of 4000 musketeers and regulars, and brought in food and supplies from Sicily when Malta suffered shortages.

GRAND MASTER DE REDIN AND HIS THIRTEEN TOWERS

These towers did not have the role of fortresses to resist invasion, such as the Red Tower in Mellieha, or the St Mary's Tower on Comino that could hold garrisons of over forty men and could withstand a siege of forty days. The latter had their own large reservoir of water, and were fully armed to descend into battle if the enemy landed. The de Redin towers

had minimal cannon and ammunition and their role was to signal the sight of the enemy to the neighbouring tower, and from there, to the Grand Master in Valletta. They did this either by sending smoke signals, raising red flags or by lighting bonfires at night. Therefore their height was more important than their volume, hence their slim walls.



Għallis Tower sporting the flag of the Order of the Knights of St John



The Red Tower, Mellieha, 1649, is a small fortress built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt. It had a garrison of over 40 men and was able to withstand a siege of 40 days. Photo: James Evans



The neighbouring St Mark's Tower, known as the Qalet Marku Tower, also built by Grand Master De Redin

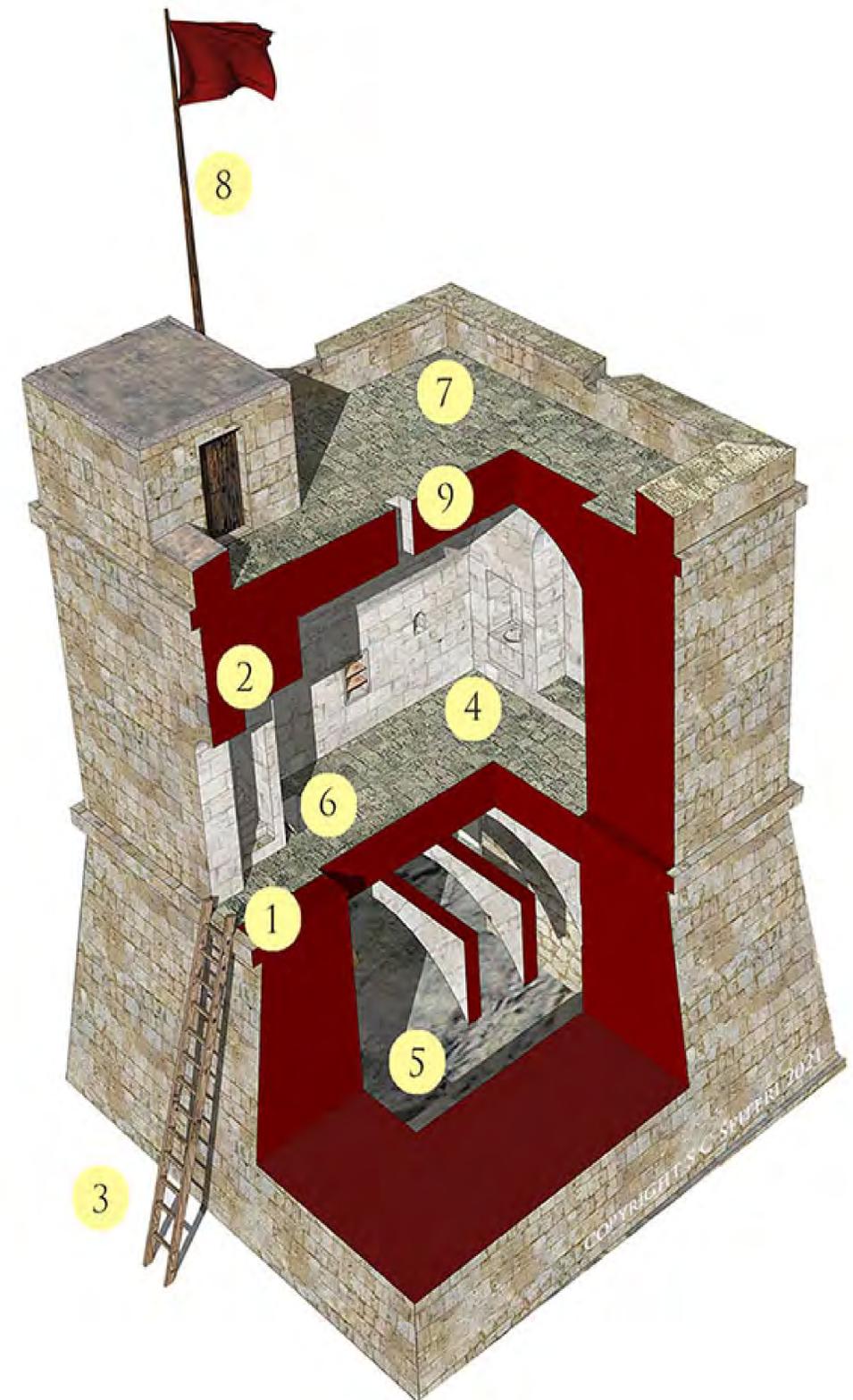


3.

CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION

1. Main entrance into tower on first floor
2. Spiral staircase leading up to roof of tower
3. Wooden ladder (alternatively, a rope ladder was also used)
4. Living quarters (with barrel-vaulted ceiling and floor resting of rib arches)
5. Storage area accessed via trap door in floor of living area
6. Trap door providing access to storage area via ladder
7. Terrace/gun platform of tower ringed by low parapet with 3 embrasures
8. Wooden flagpole for signalling flag
9. Ventilation opening



*Cross Section of Ghallis Tower showing its construction.
'Image source: Courtesy of Stephen C. Spiteri'*

CONSTRUCTION

The Għallis tower, and other 'de Redins' were built roughly to a similar plan and had roofs that rested on buttressed vaults rather than on wooden beams so they could support a heavy piece of ordnance. The Għallis tower is about 12 metres high, 9 metres square at the base tapering to some 8 metres at roof level. It was probably the second of the thirteen towers to be constructed. The stone work cost around 408 *scudi*. A *scudo* was a coin used in Italy and Sicily during the time of the Order and was used in Malta till the 19C. As the Order of St John was a Sovereign order it could mint its own currency. *Scudi* were made either in silver or in gold and one coin might have bought you 80 kilos of grain in the 16C, which might make it worth some 15 to 20 dollars in today's money. Each tower had a well for essential water supply.

Built on two floors with a sentry turret on the roof protected by a low parapet wall and with three embrasures, they were wider at the base, probably to withstand cannon shot or earthquakes and to protect



A silver scudo dated 1738 minted during the time of the later Grand Master Ramon Despuig (1736 - 1741)

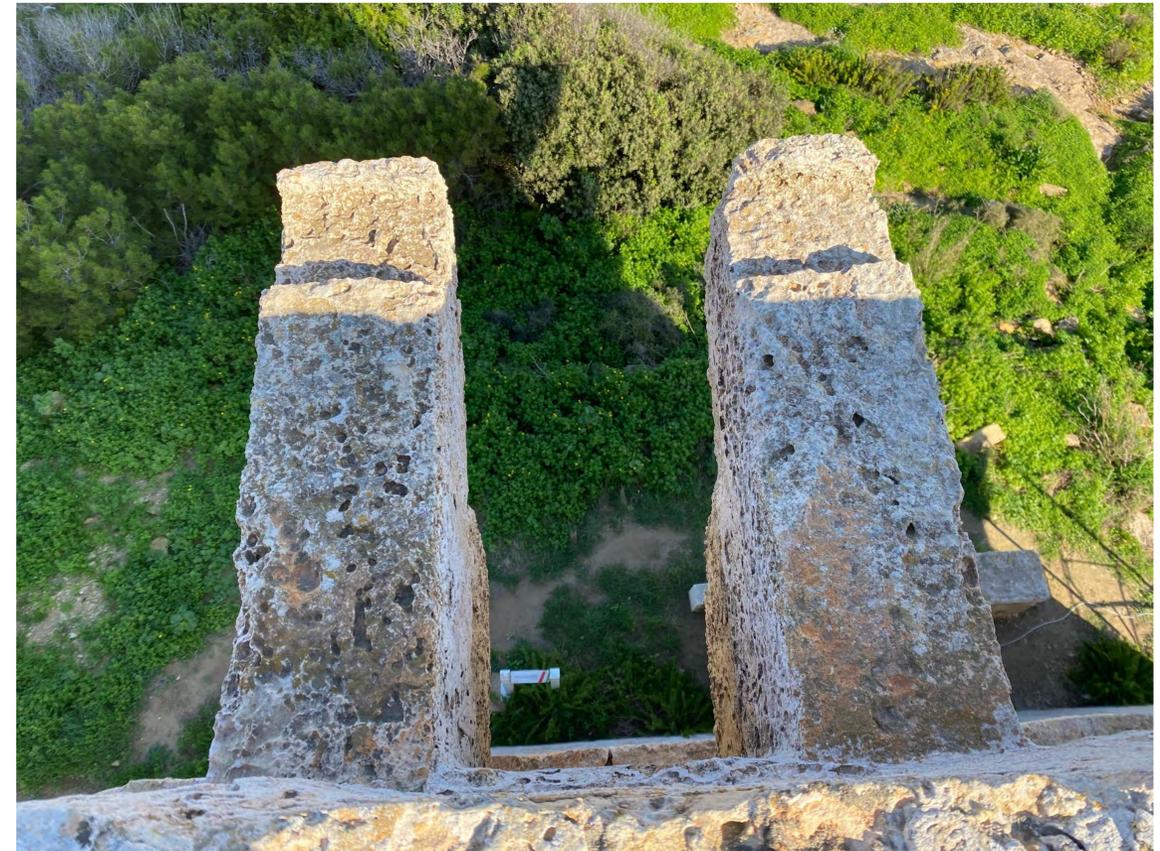
the ammunition stored in the ground floor. They have a scarped ground floor which slopes elegantly upwards to the second floor where it is met by a cornice. This gives them the iconic shape that marks the Maltese coastline. On the outside the masonry was usually constructed in hard corraline limestone, (*tal-qawwi*) which is resistant to weathering and was harder and more costly to quarry, but the inner unexposed walls were made of softer globigerina limestone (*tal-franka*). Today one can see that the softer globigerina

CONSTRUCTION

has been used in multiple restorations over the years even on the exterior walls. Each tower had a well for essential water supply, which was accessed through a shaft in a niche within the wall of the first floor.

Originally there was no entrance on the ground floor. Guards would enter the tower by means of a rope or wooden ladder ladder to a doorway on the first floor. This was then lifted up into the tower for protection. Today a wrought iron railing has been placed for safety and this marks the original entrance on the first floor of the West wall. The ground floor held essential supplies and ammunition which were hauled up to the first floor living quarters through a trap door. The living quarters would accommodate the guards and commander. Small niches in the walls of the towers are evidence of storage spaces for lit torches or candles. A spiral stone staircase (*garigor*) would allow passage to the roof where a small sentry

room offered shelter to the guard on duty. On the East facing wall, the remains of a small box machicolation can still be seen. This is a small opening between two corbals through which stones, or other materials such as boiling oil or water could be dropped on the enemy in the case of an attack on the walls.



Machicolation

CONSTRUCTION

During the British period, doorways were cut into towers on the ground floor, or stone staircases were built on the outside to ease passage to the first floor. A small wall was built to protect the new entrance door on the North East wall.

A marble plaque commemorating that Grand Master de Redin ordered the building of the towers was placed over the front entrance but many of these inscriptions are now missing. At Għallis tower, this was replaced by a plain marble slab to prevent water infiltration.



Garigor



Sentry Room



Marble plaque as found at Torri tal-Hamrija, Qrendi, another tower built by Grand Master De Redin.

A man in a dark uniform and top hat is aiming a rifle from a stone fortification. The scene is set in a desert environment with a clear blue sky. The man is wearing a dark jacket and a top hat, and is holding a rifle with both hands. The rifle is mounted on a wooden structure. The background shows a stone wall and a large, rounded structure, possibly a fortification or a building. The overall tone is historical and dramatic.

4.

GUARDS AND ARMAMENTS

GUARDS AND ARMAMENTS

Grand Master de Redin ordered that each tower was to be guarded by four people, consisting of three guards and a *bombardiere* commander. Three of them were to be paid two *scudi* per month each, and the *bombardiere* was to be given two and a half *scudi* per month. The salaries were to be paid by the Università' of Notabile (today Mdina) that is the local government of the time. The Order was thus able to afford arming the tower with artillery.



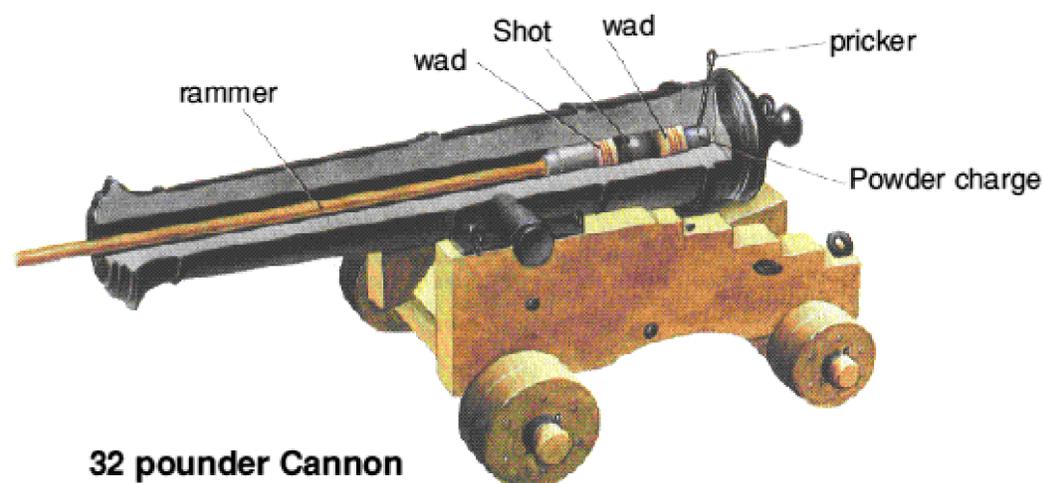
Order's Flag on Għallis Tower



Canon on Xutu Tower

GUARDS AND ARMAMENTS

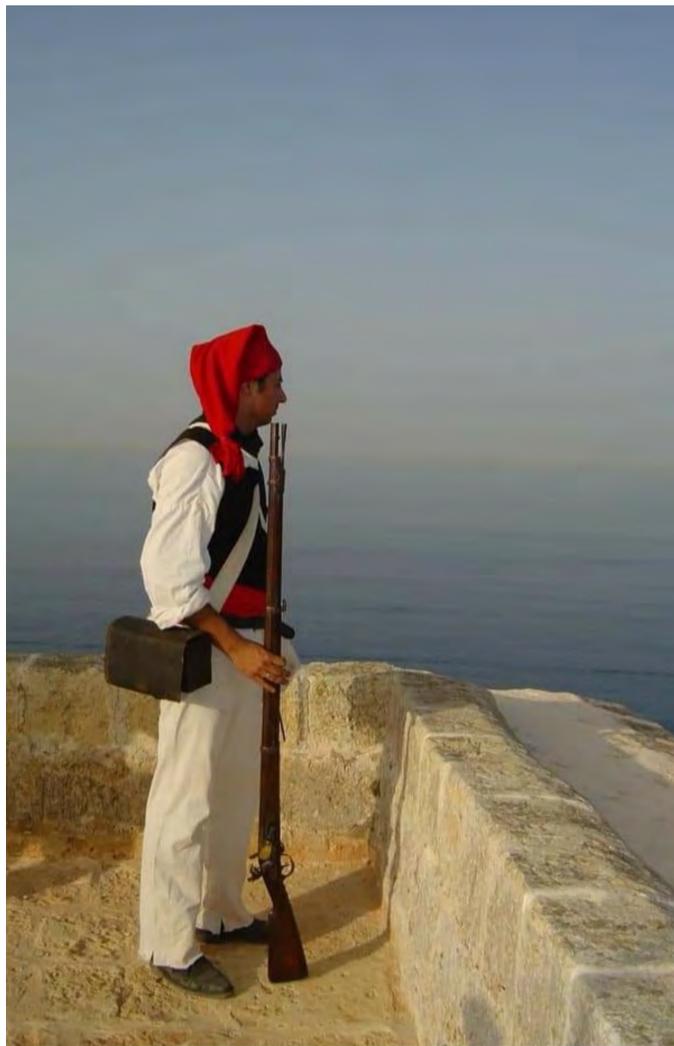
Unlike the other towers, Għallis Tower flew the colours of the Order of St John, a white Latin cross on a red background. An 18C report of an inspection, showed it was armed with a 4-pounder bronze gun and carriage, two swivel guns, four muskets, three rammers with their extractors and wool sponging attachments, one brass ladle, one wadding extractor, two hand-spikes, one vice, four beds, ten iron cannon balls, five rotoli fuses, twelve rotoli gun powder, two rotoli lead bullets, twelve stone bullets for muskets, thirteen rotoli hawser ladder with knots, two arm-stands and two swivel gun rammers with extractor attachments.



32 pounder Cannon



GUARDS AND ARMAMENTS



An 18C typical tower guard on watch, armed with musket



Tower Guard loading a mortar in readiness for an enemy landing



Capo Torre, or Commander of the Tower, firing a wall gun (moschettone di posta)

Images by courtesy of the Historic Re-enactment Group of Malta



5.

LATER HISTORY OF THE
GHALLIS TOWER

LATER HISTORY OF THE GĦALLIS TOWER

During the first fifty years of British rule in Malta, the Royal Engineer Office regularly inspected the state of the coastal towers. The general opinion was to try to maintain the coastal towers and block the entrances of those not in use, while the coastal batteries and redoubts had to be abandoned to decrease the expenses needed to maintain them.

Most importance was given to St Paul's Bay and Marsaxlokk harbour and inspections by the Royal Engineers were conducted on St George's tower, Mistra battery, St Paul's tower, known as Wignacourt tower, Għallis tower and St Lucian tower. Towers that needed to be kept for civil purposes, such as to prevent smuggling were to be paid for by the local government, while the few which were deemed essential for the military defence of the island would be paid for by the central government in England such

as Għallis tower. This shows that the Għallis tower was considered to be the most important of the de Redin towers.



The great 100 ton Armstrong gun at Fort Rinella, a fort built by the British in 1878. The large cannon was used to fire on warships outside the Grand Harbour even at a distance of eleven miles. It arrived in Malta in 1882.



6.

ABOUT DIN L-ART HELWA
NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA

ABOUT DIN L-ART ĦELWA, NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA

Din l-Art Ħelwa (This Fair Land) was set up in 1965 to protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of the Maltese islands. It is a voluntary non-governmental organisation that set itself the task of saving national monuments by raising funds and finding experts to restore them and then managing them for the benefit of the public. It also lobbies for the enacting of better laws for the protection of cultural heritage and the landscape.

Since 1965 Din l-Art Ħelwa has saved some 41 historic sites and manages 19 of them in trust or in guardianship. After 1974, when Malta was no longer a military base, Malta's abundant architectural military gems, fell into neglect and by the end of the 20C most required urgent repair and restoration. Although the GĦallis Tower was not granted in guardianship to Din l-Art Ħelwa till 2003, it was successful in a first

restoration of the tower in 1995 with the financial help of the Mizzi Organisation. External plaster, Portland cement, weeds growing from mortar joints and rusted metal elements were removed from the walls. The soot on the internal walls was cleaned which had accumulated due to repeated fires in the tower. A number of stones which had severely deteriorated were also replaced and a steel door was also fitted to protect the tower from further vandalism. However, Din l-Art Ħelwa was only given official guardianship of the tower in 2003 and despite ongoing maintenance it needed constant attention due to its increasing exposure to the elements and traffic emissions. With the funding granted by the Majjistral Local Action Group Foundation for the restoration of cultural assets in the North of Malta, Din l-Art Ħelwa was able to carry out another restoration in 2021.

ABOUT DIN L-ART ĦELWA, NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA



30th OCTOBER 2021, Restoration by Din l-Art Ħelwa starts, this time with the support of the Majjistral Action Group Foundation Funds for the restoration of cultural assets in the north of Malta as part of the European Rural Agricultural Programme.

Today, the Għallis tower, and its neighbouring Qaliet Marku and Madliena towers, still very much exist in their original state, and can be enjoyed in their original context and environment without the encroachment of modern building. This allows us to enjoy the defence sight lines planned by Grand Master Martin de Redin between the three. Din l-Art Ħelwa hopes to restore the natural environment around the tower, and regenerate the biodiversity and plant species that exist to create a walking trail along the coast. We hope you have enjoyed this historic tale and the Ebook about Grand Master Martin de Redin and the thirteen coastal watch towers he left us in legacy.

ABOUT DIN L-ART HELWA, NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA



Should you wish to assist our voluntary organisation in any way, by becoming a guardian of our natural or historic built heritage, please visit www.dinlarthelwa.org. You can simply help by becoming a member or a volunteer or by leaving a donation. All proceeds are dedicated to the upkeep of the historic sites in our care.



QUIZ



Din l-Art Helwa
NATIONAL TRUST OF MALTA

1. HOW MANY COASTAL WATCH TOWERS WERE BUILT BY GRAND MASTER DE REDIN?

11

13

21



2. WHO WAS THE GRAND MASTER WHO PRECEDED GRAND MASTER DE REDIN?

Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris

Grand Master Jean de Valette

Grand Master Ramon Perellos

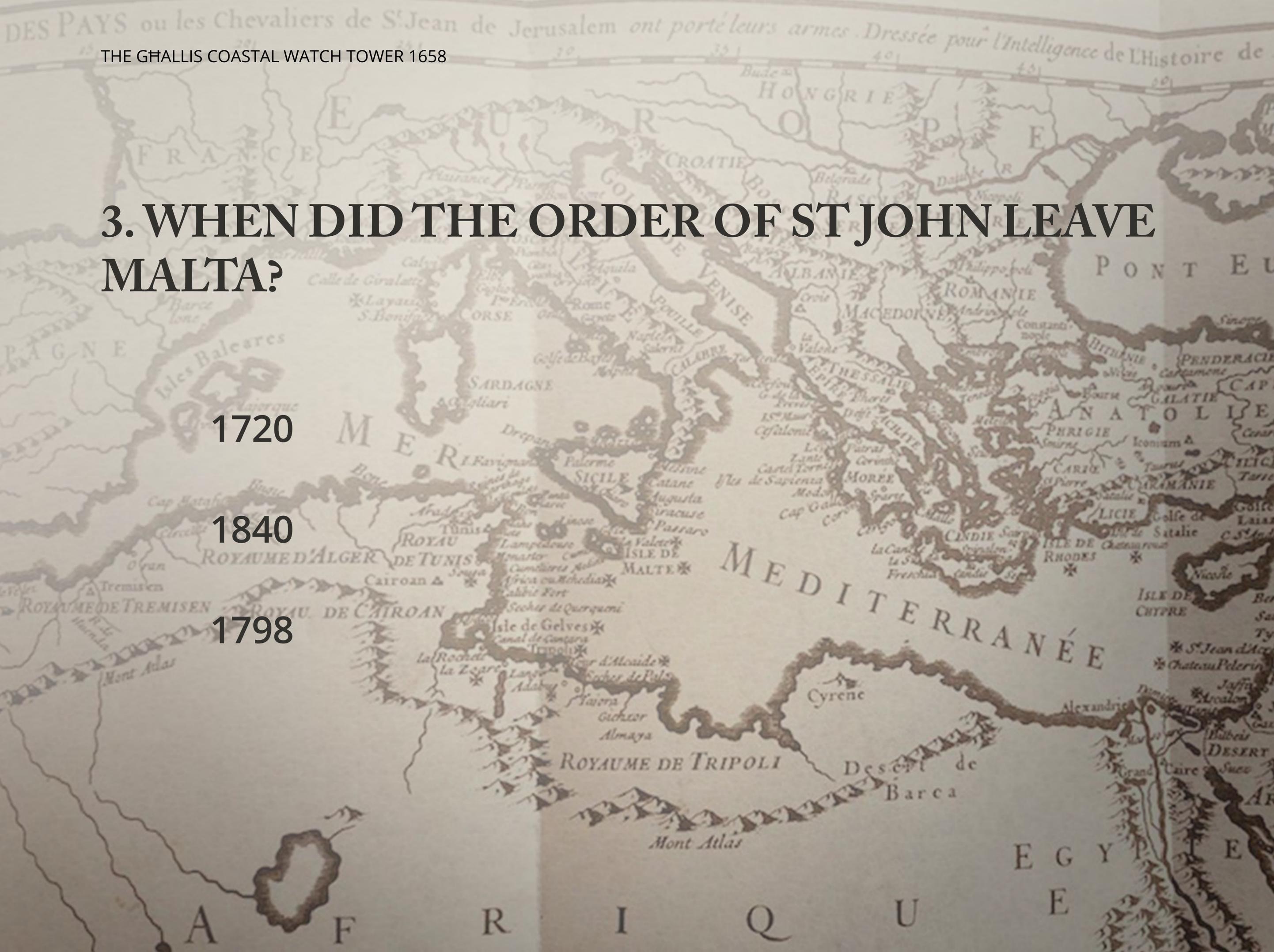
THE GHALLIS COASTAL WATCH TOWER 1658

3. WHEN DID THE ORDER OF ST JOHN LEAVE MALTA?

1720

1840

1798



4. WHAT ARE THE TWO COMMON MALTESE STONES MOST USED IN BUILDING THE COASTAL WATCH TOWERS?

Tal Qawwi a type of limestone

Tal Franka a type of limestone

Marble

5. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WATCH TOWER AND A FORTRESS?

They are both used to keep animals

The first is used to watch out for an enemy approaching by sea or on land

The second is used to house a garrison and ammunition to last forty days

6. NAME ANOTHER WATCH TOWER, AND A FORTRESS?

Qaliet Marku Watch Tower

The Red Tower also known as Fort St Agatha

Fort Rinella, a British Fort



7. WHAT WAS A COMMON CURRENCY USED IN THE TIME OF THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA?

A Pound Sterling

A Euro Coin

A Scudo

8. WHEN DID THE GREAT SIEGE OF MALTA BY THE OTTOMAN ARMY TAKE PLACE?

1920

1300

1565



9. WHO WAS THE GRAND MASTER WHO LED THE MALTESE TO VICTORY AT THE GREAT SIEGE?

Grand Master de Rohan

Grand Master Lascaris

Grand Master Jean de Valette



10. WHEN DID THE GREAT SIEGE END?

8th September 1565

21st September 1964

12th April 1941



11. WHAT GREAT CITY WAS BUILT IN MALTA AFTER THE GREAT SIEGE?

Paris

Mdina

Valletta



12. WHAT IS DIN L-ART HELWA?

A Football Association

The name of a Maltese Sweet

A voluntary organisation looking after Malta's Cultural and Natural Heritage

QUIZ ANSWERS

1) How many coastal watch towers were built by Grand Master de Redin?

13

2) Who was the Grand Master who preceded Grand Master de Redin?

Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris

3) When did the Order of St John leave Malta?

1798

4) What are the two common Maltese stones most used in building the coastal watch towers?

Tal Qawwi a type of limestone / Tal Franka a type of limestone

5) What is the difference between a watch tower and a fortress?

The first is used to watch out for an enemy approaching by sea or on land

The second is used to house a garrison and ammunition to last forty days

6) Name another watch tower, and a fortress?

Qaliet Marku Watch Tower / The Red Tower also known as Fort St Agatha / Fort Rinella, a British Fort

QUIZ ANSWERS (CONTINUED)

7) What was a coin commonly in use in the time of the Knights of Malta?

A Scudo

8) When did the Great Siege of Malta by the Ottoman army take place?

In 1565

9) Who was the Grand Master who led the Maltese to victory at the Great Siege?

Grand Master Jean de Valette

10) When did the Great Siege end?

8th September 1565

11) What great city was built in Malta after the Great Siege?

Valletta

12) What is Din I-Art Helwa?

A voluntary organisation looking after Malta's Cultural and Natural Heritage

THE GHALLIS COASTAL WATCH TOWER 1658



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
PARLIAMANTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

Part financed by the European Union
Co-financing Rate:
75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



***The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas***



Din l-Art Helwa
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