

27th January 2009

Barrakka Gardens, war rooms to be turned into heritage park



One of the tunnels in the labyrinth that lies beneath the Upper Barrakka gardens in Valletta, which formed part of the Lascaris war rooms during World War II. The tunnels and other areas in the vicinity were yesterday turned over to the NGO Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna to create a heritage park.
Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi.

The Barrakka Gardens in Valletta were yesterday handed over to the heritage NGO Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna in "the biggest ever transfer of state property", with Grand Harbour providing a magnificent backdrop.

The Saluting Battery at the Barrakka Gardens, the nearby ditch, St Peter and St Paul counterguard and the tunnels beneath, including the Lascaris War Rooms, will be transformed into a multi-period heritage park.

Tunnels built during World War II and once used by Nato, some of which have never been opened to the public, will be given a new lease of life.

The project is the first in such an advanced stage of what is intended to be the regeneration of the harbour.

During the ceremony, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt and Parliamentary Secretary Jason Azzopardi handed over the 5,000 square metre property to fondazzjoni executive chairman, Mario Farrugia.

Speaking at the event, Mr Farrugia said the park will consist of five different attractions with themes directly linked to this part of Valletta.

The project, which will cost close to €1million, will be spread over three years. The first part will open this year.

The main aim of the project, Mr Farrugia said, is not only to restore the area but also to offer the public and visitors another top attraction.

Comments

Graham Crocker (6 days ago)

D Vella , Yes you are right, why don't we speak to tourists in Maltese. -_-

Eric Soames (6 days, 5 hours ago)

D Vella: Either way, still rude.

Adrian Allain (6 days, 10 hours ago)

I am delighted to see that a larger part of the Lascaris area will be open to the public than is at present.

I lived and worked 'down the ditch' from 1955 until 1958. My bedroom and office were under the arches of the bridge, but my primary place of work was in the RAF HQ Malta Sector air defence operations room in the tunnel shown in the photo above. The last remaining hut under the arches has been labelled the 'NAAFI' for years, but it never was run by NAAFI. It was a canteen run by those of us airmen who lived down there on the Duty Crew. The NAAFI was in the Royal Navy's area at the other end of the tunnel and overlooking Grand Harbour. Our official dining room was at the army's Lintorn Barracks, but we preferred to have a breakfast of pastizzi and a glass of tea at a little cafe near Hastings Gardens. Much closer to 'home'.

I look forward to visiting my old haunts when they are opened to the public.

I have colour slides of the Ops Room and our accommodation. Not many people were taking colour photos in those days.

D Vella (6 days, 11 hours ago)

Dear Mr Soames,

I feel exactly as you do when Englishmen march into a shop,office or what have you in a foreign land and assume,well demand actually, the assistant reply to them in English.

I am equally annoyed when newspapers in this land publish whole tracts of Italian or Latin assuming all of us to be fluent in them .Either they are too lazy to translate ,or even worse, arrogantly exhibit elitism to the enth degree.

At the end of the day Mr Tabone Vassallo wrote in Maltese for the benefit of the reader's of this newspaper,the majority of whom happen to be Maltese. Not a huge sin.

Eric Soames (1 week ago)

Mario Tabone-Vassallo: Your comment is impolite, to say the least, on, as far as I can see, two levels. Firstly please know that in internet communication, using upper case is considered shouting, and therefore rude. Secondly, this paper has chosen English as its language so using any other is tantamount to excluding others who don't enjoy knowledge of that other language from the conversation. I wouldn't dream of writing to a Maltese language paper in English unless I asked for my contribution to be translated.

Mario Tabone-Vassallo (1 week ago)

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