

13th January 2011 – Timesofmalta.com

## Beauty of ancient, threatened, basement revealed



Flimkien Għall Ambjent Ahjar has published pictures of the basement of Casa Lanfreducci, previously part of the Our Lady of Victory crypt, a network of interlinking vaulted rooms, which the Valletta Regeneration project is planning to convert to changing rooms, toilets and showers for the nearby performance space as part of the City Gate/Opera House project.

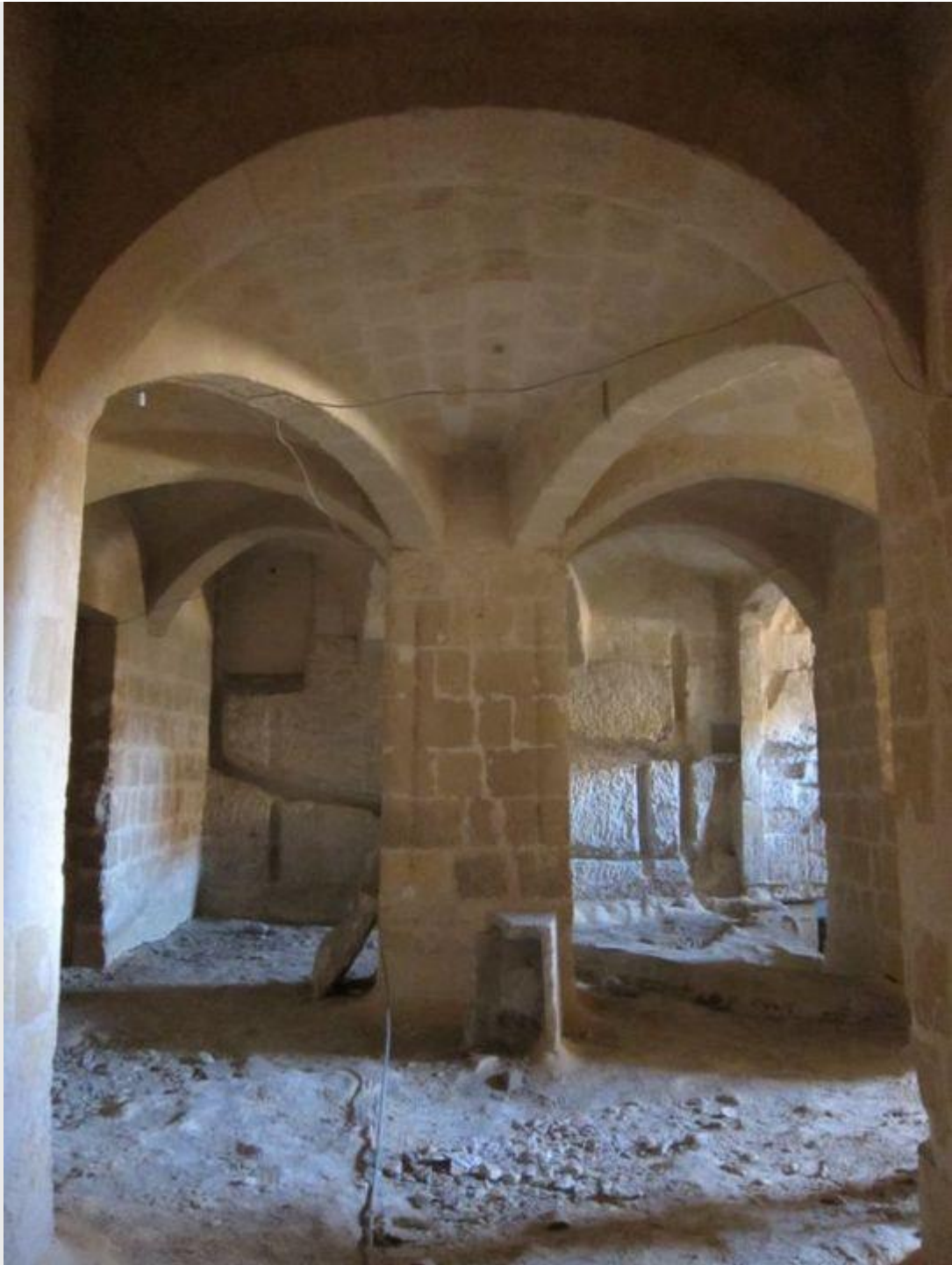
It explained that some of the rooms are arched, without dividing walls, so conversion to changing rooms, toilets and showers would necessitate partitioning which would alter the micro-climate of the place and could cause problems like the serious damp problem caused in Our Lady of Victory church when part of the crypt was walled off.

"The central arch supporting the large main room is a marvel of vernacular architecture and possibly unique to this site. The ingenious system of drains leads from gutters chiselled into the walls which carry water from a higher level down to ancient floor pipes which can be seen at the upper and even the lower basement levels, possibly carrying the water to an underground cistern".



The NGO said it had been confirmed that in the course of exploratory works on this site, that remains of those who died at the time of the Great Siege were found in several parts of this former crypt.

"Converting this structure to changing rooms, toilets, showers and storage would necessitate plumbing and structural works which would inevitably damage the walls and floors, as well as changing the unique character of this crypt.




"Having survived the bombing which destroyed the house above, is this crypt with its beautiful vaulting to be desecrated now? *Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini* – what the barbarians did not destroy in the war, are we to destroy now?" coordinator Astrid Vella asked.

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## Comments

john vella(17 hours, 12 minutes ago) 


Is there further need for us as a Nation to have more proof to call this venture a FOUL? Where are those who usually present themselves as Historians of Valletta? Why are they silent?  
This whole thing is MADNESS!  
Do not touch our Heritage you are like us Maltese.

James A. Tyrrell(17 hours, 26 minutes ago) 


These are the kind of places that tourists like myself want to see and will pay to see. Why in the name of God would anyone even consider desecrating such a place?

And once again it is down to FAA to bring these matters to the attention of the Maltese public. Where is Din l-Art Helwa, the supposed guardian of Malta's heritage, in all this?


Come to think of it, where was it during the St. John's Cathedral campaign, the Piano Project, the Balzan Palazzo and the Mellieha valley cases? I'm beginning to wonder what Din l-Art Helwa's members are paying for?

Marco Cremona(17 hours, 32 minutes ago) 


Was this/is this being contemplated in Renzo Piano's designs? Indeed, was he made aware of the existence/importance of this crypt?

I Borg(17 hours, 35 minutes ago) 

This is the cultural heritage of ALL Maltese and not only of those who want to use it for their commodities!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Disgusting!!!


simon Borg(17 hours, 39 minutes ago) 

unbelievable to waste such an archeological treasure to accomodate a roof-less theatre. But for the Prime Minister the end justifies the means. And when you are scraping the bottom this senseless attitude prevails, as it did during Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici in the mid 80's. The similarities are so conspicuous.

Stephen Koludrovic(17 hours, 39 minutes ago) 


A bar in balzunetta, Floriana, was made to reduce the width of his entrance to his shop, because it conflicted with the aesthetic style of the block.

If Renzo wants his toilets, he could do the same as he's done with his theater, in short have an above ground open air toilet.ha.ha.


Frank Portelli 2BFRANK(17 hours, 40 minutes ago) 

Nothing seems to be sacred anymore

Frank Portelli

Jesmond Micallef(17 hours, 45 minutes ago) 


I'm abit taken back on this one, now !! Are there alternative options within the immediate vicinity here .....? The crypt does not seem that big and so I wonder if an alternative site can be purposely dug up somewhere !!

C Galea(17 hours, 47 minutes ago) 


to Astrid and FAA

Thank you for showing us what we stand to lose if this ingenious idea of toilets will be done to this place .

I can't believe who are those people that come up with these ideas.Surely I will never employ them

J. Bonnici(17 hours, 54 minutes ago) 

MEPA! MEPA! MEPA are you there? Please wake up and stop this sacrilege from taking place in the name of progress or should I say regress! Or you have already issued a permit for this barbarous act? If not nick it in the bud NOW. Shoulder your responsibility.

Pierre André Aquilina(17 hours, 59 minutes ago) 

Beautiful! What does the Government think it is? Is it not subject to the rule of law? Everybody knows what happens if we come across something of historical or cultural value when excavating a personal property. Why are these rules not applicable to the Government? Turn a former crypt into toilets and showers? Does the Government not have common decency?

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