

## Square comes alive to music and history



Once an unsightly car park, new life is flowing in an embellished St George's Square in Valletta, which was inaugurated on Sunday. During yesterday's sunny public holiday people flocked to the city to enjoy the spectacle. Children had a whale of a time dancing around the water spurts.

Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi.

A re-enactment of the celebrations held to mark the victory of the Battle of Lepanto culminated in the newly embellished St George's Square yesterday, drawing the curious crowds to the now car-free area.

The re-enactment was the highlight of yesterday's programme of events to mark the square's inauguration.

The five-hour naval battle, fought off western Greece, saw a galley fleet of the Holy League practically wipe out the Turkish Ottoman fleet in 1571. The victory gave the Holy League temporary control over the Mediterranean, protected Rome from invasion, and prevented the Ottomans from advancing further into Europe.

Yesterday's colourful event, part of a series of activities organised throughout the week, included the participation of over 100 re-enactors in period costume. It started at City Gate and moved along a busy Republic Street to Palace Square.

Other activities to mark the inauguration included a march by scouts and girl guides from the Central District through the capital city, while children had a field day with shows by animators and falconers, fire juggling and eating.

Music filled the air with, among others, the Sarsaza Percussion Ensemble, a parade by Tama Tnabar, a violin performance by Simon Vella, and concerts by gospel choirs EnKore and Animae.

The activities continue throughout the week, with more live music, children's animation and a wine festival.

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## Comments

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 6 days ago)  
@ Victor Laiviera

Thanks for the link. It's a very interesting article with a couple of B&W shots.

On 7th June, two were apparently shot at directly (without orders given) in Old Bakery Street. The lined up soldiers were being threatened by the mob both from uphill and from downhill directions.

The third (near the fountain) was hit accidentally. The firing was directed at the debris, and only meant to disperse the crowd wrecking the Chronicle. No-one else died on this day as a result of the riots. So actually, the 7th June relates to three deaths not four.

A fourth died on 16th June in hospital as a result of a wound from a bayonet while resisting arrest.

I am not convinced, Victor. The place in question is the Chronicle building. The man near the fountain was coincidental, and the placing of Wreath at the centre of the Palace Square was merely symbolic.

This was mob behaviour which, in accordance with current sedition laws, would be quickly crushed by the AFM and the Malta Police under responsible government. Erecting a monument in a public space to commemorate it is politically motivated and unacceptable.

mario scerri (1 week, 6 days ago)

Il-proverbju jghid mhux kull ma jleqq huwa deheb. Ok il-pjazza giet sabiha imma l-monument tas-sette gunio x sar minnu?

Ma ninsewx li dik kien kundizzjoni ewlenija tal-MEPA biex harget il-permess tal-embellishment ta pjazza San Gorg li dan il-monument jkun parti minn dan il-progett. Mhux donnu sparixxa w hadd ma jaf x sar minnu.

Trid tqis ukoll li dan il-monument huwa parti mill-istorja ta pajjizna. Bla ma trid tasal ghal konkluzjoni li l-arroganza ta dan il-gvern li kull m ghandu banketta maggranza biss iktar mill-opozizzjoni hi bla limitu.

Charles DeMicoli (2 weeks ago)

Will they remove the water jets after the inauguration/celebration is over?

Victor Laiviera (2 weeks ago)  
@ Mr Raymond Sammut

Perhaps these two excerpts will convince you. They are taken from an article by Police Historian Eddie Attard which appeared in The Sunday Times of the 6 June 1999 (<http://www.allmalta.com/folklore/past02.html>):

"... a party of ten soldiers under Lieutenant Shields was sent to protect the Daily Malta Chronicle offices, where a crowd of about 400 was watching the wrecking of the place. It was said that there was a strong smell of gas and they feared an explosion since burning missiles were being thrown at the premises. The lieutenant ordered one of his men to fire a round into the burning debris to disperse the crowd.

A shot was fired and a man who was near the fountain opposite the Chronicle door was hit and died shortly afterwards. This third victim was Lorenzo Dyer from Senglea." (My note: The fountain mentioned is one of the twin fountains on each side of St George's Square)

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"Meanwhile, in Valletta and in several other localities, posters calling for national mourning were put up. Wreaths were also placed in the middle of Palace Square and in Old Bakery Street where the three men were killed the previous day."

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ Victor Laiviera --These excerpts appear on-line, and I suspect they were originally sourced from Ganado's text.

7th June 1919: The people attacked Union Club in Royal Street. Remove the British flag from the national library. Another attack on the lyceum, remove and burn the British flag. Happened also the first attack on the Daily Malta Chronicle publisher. Another group of people went to attack Ċikku Azzopardi's house in St Lucy Street. Another attack on Cassar Torreggiani's house in Old Bakery Street. And near Torreggiani's house British soldiers shot dead the first two Maltese citizens, Manwel Attard and Ġużeppi Bajjada. Then another Wenzu Dyer dies near the Daily Malta Chronicle, and people took him to the National Assembly hall. Dr Sceberas closed the meeting, and the public goes to their homes in a silent manner.

8th June 1919: Another group of people meet at Valletta, and attacked the soldier of the R.E., McDougall. Attack for the second time and give fire to the Daily Malta Chronicle publisher. The public also attack Main Guard and the Union Club. Another desperate attack on the house of Kurunell Francia in the Royal Street. And here the British soldiers killed Karmnu Abela.

Ivan Grech Mintoff (2 weeks ago)

@ Victor Laiviera

Thank you for mentioning Mr Geraldu Azzopardi...

Not only was he an expert on the subject matter but also a very rare gentleman and a GREAT teacher of high morals.

I have fond memories of sitting with him at his house, as a child and him patiently introducing me to the joys of the crossword puzzle...

Unhesitatingly, I say that he was one of the heroes of my early childhood and I am proud to have known him.

I'd rather rely on his history to that of wiki!!!

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ Victor Laiviera --"The "Misraħ" mentioned in the above quote is St George's Square." You don't have a source here, Mr Laiviera. This is simply you making a statement without the required reference. Your source is only specifying "misraħ". There are several of these in Valletta.

What has been entered into Wikipedia presently is sourced from Ganado, H. (1977), *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, Volum I. I don't have access to this volume by Ganado from where I am presently, which means I can't verify precisely. You might be able to do better me.

In history texts that I visited in the past (such as Blouet, for example), it was never specified that anyone died inside the Palace Square during the riots. My understanding is that should this have been the case, it would always be readily highlighted in any history text. As it stands, it is highly unlikely that anyone died there.

Retrospectively, these were ugly events caused by sudden economic changes immediately following the end of WWI. They happened only in parts of Valletta, and nowhere else. Maltese politicians would know that these unfortunate events have no historical significance, and the monument is highly questionable and unwarranted.

A.F.Ellul (2 weeks ago)

At last , the square has come alife,now the next is the Royal Opera House needs to come alife.But when?

Victor Laiviera (2 weeks ago)

@ Mr Raymond Sammut

Wiki is hardly a reliable source to quote since anybody can change it as he or she likes.

The late Mr Geraldu Azzopardi, who was a leading expert on the events of the Sette Giugno writes, in "Meta l-Malti Għadab", published in 1979, page 17:

"Wieñed mill-midrubin, li ntlaqat f'rasu, telaq jġgri u wara erba' passi fil-Misraħ waqa' u miet. Dan kien Wenzu Dyer, ġuvni mill-Birgu".

The "Misraħ" mentioned in the above quote is St George's Square. The monument was not sited there without a good reason.

Joss Galea (2 weeks ago)

This is a really nice shot. The expression on this beautiful girl's face is priceless. I'm happy that this square is the way it is now!!!! At least after a boring day shopping with mum...children can come here and run a bit.

Andrea Portelli (2 weeks ago)

@ iCocker

to be precise yesterday's event was about the aftermath of 1603 at Patras (Greece) not Lepanto.

However I do agree that we use re-enactment too freely without knowing what it really means, and as a re-enactor myself it is quite frustrating.

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ Victor Laiviera -- No-one died in this square, as you allege. One of the rioters, who was seriously injured, was carried there (according to what is stated in Wiki currently). One has to ask, why was he taken there and not to a clinic or hospital? The mob and the inciters were running amok in many parts of Valletta and no-one seemed to know what was really going on. A sad episode which took place only in parts of Valletta (and not in any other part of Malta) and which no-one should have any reason to turn into a national saga.

iCocker (2 weeks ago)

Can one day someone be concise and understand the difference between re-enactment and pageantry. Re-enactment should be historical accurate.

How can someone say that a parade is historical accurate when Lepanto happened in 1571 and the parading costumes are a mix from the 17 century?

Michael DeBono (2 weeks ago)

In contrast to what Mr Mizzi is saying down below, music in the evening was very appropriate. There was recorded classical music (flute & string & cello) which accompanied the colourful synchronised water fountains, and there was a good deal of live soul music, which fits perfectly with the place and occasion, also creating a unique atmosphere. Well done Animaie choir and all the musicians participating in the concert. All those who attended will agree.

ASpiteri (2 weeks ago)

Every picture tells a story!

Instead of parked poshy cars of lawyers and parliamentarians, the square has finally returned to its original purpose; a living space for individuals. and that picture of a girl running freely in the middle of the square highlight such spirit that only open spaces can offer!

Victor Laiviera (2 weeks ago)

Will there be a re-enactment of the Sette Giugno Riots, which were the first "shots" in the battle for Malta's Independence? After all, one of the victims died in that square.

Or perhaps not - it might remind the people of the imposing monument that stood there and has now disappeared.

John Mizzi (2 weeks ago)

Well Done but the music was too loud and not appropriate for the occasion. Classical music should have been played instead to go with the surrounding scenery.