

Street names, inscriptions worth restoring

Michael Galea, Valletta



Now that restoration works on St Barbara's Bastion have been completed, the Valletta council should again put up the street name "Nix Mangiari Steps/Taraġ Nix Mangiari" on the left as one exits from Victoria Gate.

These steps, the beggars' steps, have historical significance. They are mentioned by 19th century travellers to Malta, including Hans Christian Andersen. These steps were once a busy pathway for sailors and merchants, leading to the Grand Harbour marina.


The name of these steps is very intriguing, being a combination of German and Italian. Nix is the old German form of nichts (nothing), and mangiari comes from the Italian mangiare, to eat, thus 'nothing to eat'! This was the cry of the beggars lining the steps.

The Greek inscription on the Doric entrance of the Old University in St Paul Street, Valletta, needs touching up with black paint to make it legible and more conspicuous.


The inscription, freely translated, reads: 'Knowledge is the gateway to glory'. It is said to have been written by Sir Themistocles Zammit, then rector of the University.

The same applies to the marble tablet in Merchants Street, corner with St Lucia Street, referring to Sir Oliver Starkey's residence (now the Russian Cultural Centre). This is one of the oldest houses in Valletta. Unfortunately,

Comments

Andrew Azzopardi(1 week, 2 days ago) 

The Greek inscription on the portico of the former University building predates Sir Themistocles Zammit. It dates to the early 19th century, when the Doric portico with the Royal Arms (with the Hanoverian escutcheon) was erected, when the University was re-established in the early British period.


Pule' Carmel(1 week, 2 days ago) 

To All those interested in dynamics, Just look at the horizontal tendency of the remnant peaks, it all verifies clearly that the circulation in the vortex is predominantly horizontal

I noticed such erosion on "L -opra morta" of buildings , this time the vortex circulation is vertical. If one looks at old buildings where the opra morta on the top of the building is squarish, one finds a lot of eroding about 20 centimetres down from the edge indicating the vortex formed by the edge. To all architects, all this erosion would be minimised if we **ROUNDED UP ALL THE EDGES ON OUR BUILDING** and what is more , **WIND NOISE** , the related wind noise generated by the vortex formation at the edges would be reduced to a healthier magnitude and we would sleep even on a windy day. Obviously there would be less maintenance on our historic and other buildings

Russell Lethbridge(1 week, 2 days ago)

Interesting stuff, thanks for sharing.

Pule' Carmel(1 week, 2 days ago) 

It is such a pity that many street names have lost the history associated with the district.

As an engineer I find the photograph very interested indeed. The formation of the shapes in the eroded stone should be of great interest to all architects and civil engineers. May I point out that the edge on the left of the picture causes a lot of vortices when the wind **BLOWS** and so the main vortex is powerful near the edge and one will see that the erosion has almost flattened the surface of the globular stone. However, more towards the right, the erosion takes another form and there are serrations and what looks like hills and valleys. In this region the vortex is not so powerful and

had broken down, However it was strong enough to circulate around the peaks and the valleys to scrape at more material. The molusc glue with which the globular stone holds together seem to identify the path of crawling creatures.

One may not believe it but that photograph indicates clearly how interesting sites as the GRANDCANYON was formed through the vortex erosions of liquids and winds. The street name is of recent historical interest but the the erosion pattern goes further baCK.
