

## Update 3: Superintendence clarifies FAA statement on Casa Lanfreducci

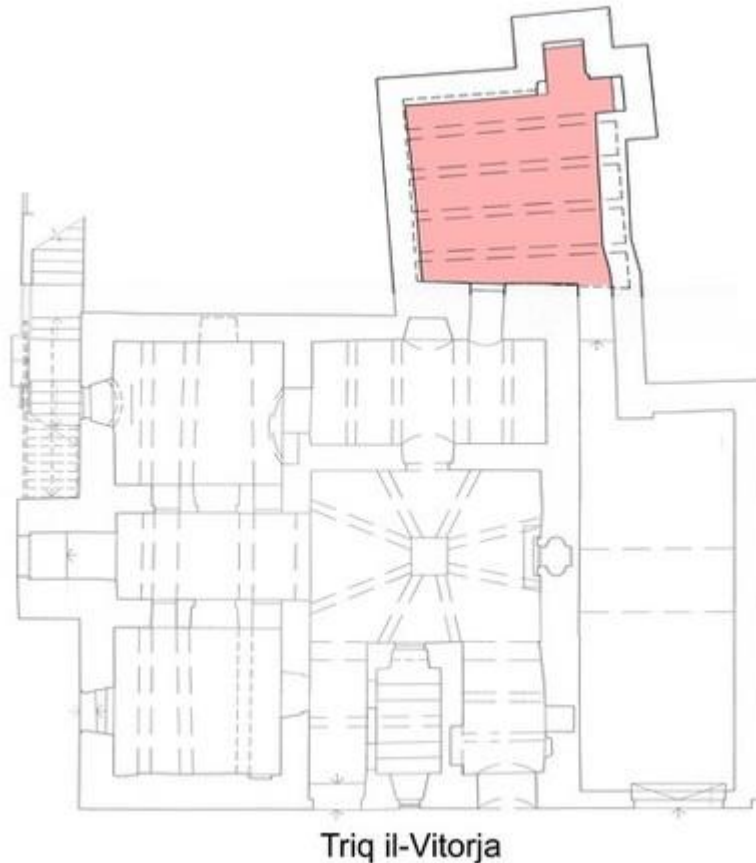
Updated 3.30 p.m; 4.44 p.m. and 7.20 p.m. latest with Din I-Art Helwa statement



Casa Lanfreducci, next door to Our Lady of Victories Church.

The Superintendent of Cultural Heritage, Anthony Pace, insisted this afternoon that the lower ground floor of Casa Lanfreducci was not a crypt or a burial crypt, and it was only one particular room and not the entire lower ground floor of Casa Lanfreducci which should be excluded from any proposed development.

Reacting to a statement issued by *Flimkien Ghal-Ambjent Ahjar*, the Superintendent said that investigations identified a room directly underneath the sacristy of the Church of our Lady of Victory as having originally formed part of the burial crypt of the church.



This room is currently accessed through Casa Lanfreducci's Lower Ground Floor, to which it does not belong

Mr Pace said it was only this particular room (shaded red on the attached plan), and not the entire lower ground floor of Casa Lanfreducci, should be excluded from any proposed development, and that the access to it from Casa Lanfreducci should be blocked up so that this space could be re-annexed to the Crypt of the church.

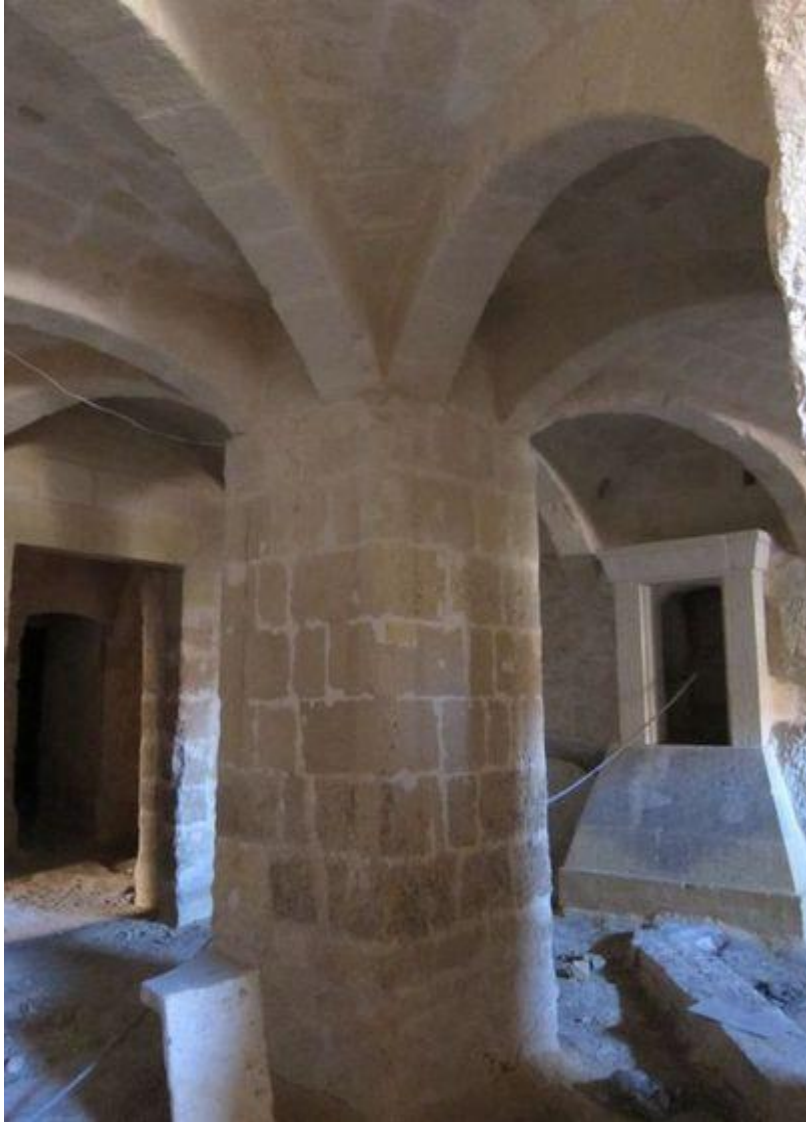
Earlier today, FAA said it welcomed the announcement that investigations carried out by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage have confirmed that the basement under Casa Lanfreducci in Valletta in fact formed part of the crypt of Our Lady of Victory Church.

It said that this part of the crypt will now be re-integrated with the church and other apertures closed off so that it will not be affected by the Valletta Regeneration Project which, the Superintendent stated, would be able to proceed unhindered without this site.

FAA had raised the alarm when a quantity of bones were found in the basement of Casa Landfreducci. They were thought to belong to the Knights. The basement was to have been used as a changing room as part of the open theatre that will be build on the Opera House ruins.

"This is not the first time that FAA has had to speak up in order to ensure the preservation of the underground treasures of our capital city which possesses a

great wealth of architectural treasures beneath its streets and buildings. FAA therefore calls on the authorities to provide sufficient funding and staff to the Superintendence and the Faculty of Architecture to enable them to map out Valletta's unique underground features and draw up a restoration and rehabilitation plan to preserve and add value to Valletta's architectural heritage," FAA said.



"One cannot rely on these treasures coming to light accidentally as was the case when FAA revealed the 16th Century architectural features of the basement of Casa Lanfreducci, following which the study of this crypt was passed on to the Superintendence for further investigation and its value as part of the Church of Our Lady of Victory now recognised."

#### **FAA REACTION TO SUPERINTENDENT**

In reply to the Superintendent's statement, FAA said it was reassuring to know that strong measures are to be taken to protect the part of the Lanfreducci basement that originally formed part of the crypt, but it was very disappointing that the

**The basement of Casa Lanfreducci.**

beautiful architecture of the rest of the basement still ran the risk of being reduced to showers and toilets.

"FAA maintains that projects, especially those in heritage sites, should not be commenced before all the necessary studies are carried out. The NGO calls on the authorities to provide sufficient funding and staff to the Superintendence and the Faculty of Architecture to enable them to map out Valletta's unique underground features and draw up a restoration and rehabilitation plan to preserve and add value to Valletta's architectural heritage."

## DIN I-ART HELWA SUGGEST USE

Din I-Art Helwa in a statement said it was delighted that the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage had been able to ascertain the historical origin of the basement of Casa Lanfredis, and that it had confirmed that one particular space was originally part of the crypt of the Church of Our Lady of Victory.


"If this space, with its marvellous architecture, can indeed be safely and accessibly integrated into the crypt area, and can have the right atmospheric conditions, it could indeed provide the perfect backdrop and extend space for the housing and display of the many precious vestments, treasures and artefacts that form part of the inventory of the Church," Simone Mizzi, Executive President of Din I-Art Helwa said

"This would indeed be a very dignified use which would respect its origin and add much grandeur to this first church of Valletta".


Din I-Art Helwa has been working with the Superintendence to list the whole inventory and artistic assets of the church for some time and many actually date back to the time of the Order. There has been no work done since 2004 on the restoration of the Church and it has become extremely urgent to continue with this project to prevent further deterioration of its monumental vault paintings and artistic and historic inventory.

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## Comments

kenneth mahoney(6 days, 13 hours ago) 

In my opinion the basement under Casa Lanfredis in Valletta, in fact formed part of the crypt of our Lady of Victory Church, should be taken in consideration, and should be taken care of. The rest one can continue the dedicated work even if there are bones these should be taken care of and investigate where they came from

Victor Bonnici(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Allow me pl. to make a correction. For 'pro accessu' pl. read 'for the access to the bells and to the burial places'.

Joe Morana(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Well done to FAA for highlighting the threat regarding the Casa Lanfredis basement /crypt. This has induced the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to carry out the necessary investigations.

While public outcry regarding the conservation of this crypt is commendable, very little attention seems to be given to the sorry state of the historic church of Our Lady of Victory itself. This historic, architectural and artistic gem badly needs restoration works on the Erardi paintings on the Church's vaulted ceiling and on inside walls and artefacts of the church as well.


It is sad indeed to see how such historic and cultural heritage is not being taken care of as it really deserves. Urgent action is needed.

It is heartening to learn that Din L-Art Helwa to list the whole inventory and artistic assets of the church for some time and many actually date back to the time of the Order. May i suggest that Din L-Art Helwa issues a publication regarding this inventory and/or better still in coolaboration with the Department of Information revamp the booklet on the Church of Our Lady of Victory by Chev. Bonnici Cali (published by DOI-1966) and add to it tehinventory work carried out.


C Galea(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Well done FAA .If it wasn` t for Astrid and her group we would have much more unjustified buildings being built to satisfy the greedy ones .


What would have happened if FAA didn` t speak about the proposed BIG hole in front of St John cathedral?

Frans Sammut(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Congratulations, Astrid Vella and FAA. Indeed , this is not the first time that FAA spoke up in order to ensure the preservation of the underground treasures of our capital city where a great wealth of architectural treasures lie beneath the streets and buildings. I strongly support the plea made to the powers that regarding the FAA's call to provide both the funding and staff needed by the Superintendence and the Faculty of Architecture in order to map out Valletta`s unique underground features as well as draw up a restoration and rehabilitation plan by way of preserving and adding value to Valletta`s architectural heritage.

Victor Bonnici(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Continuation of the Latin inscription: perpetual foundations having been founded by him for the solemn celebration of the Office on the night of the Nativity, on the three days of Christ`s the Lord`s death, with masses in suffrage for his soul to be said on the said night and on Maundy Thursday, on the feast of of St. Jerome, and on the anniversary of his death, the 11th of October. The commendator chaplain brother lord Francesco Antonio del Castillo, for so many benefices of this liberal donor, added this memorial, although small, on the 31st of August 1757.

Victor Bonnici(1 week, 2 days ago) 

In the sacristy of the church of Our Lady of Victory there is a Latin inscription on marble beneath a portrait of Fra Jerome de Montoliu set up by Fra Francesco Antonio del Castillo as a memorial to the restoration of the church undertaken by Montoliu. I am reproducing its translation as it may throw more light on the current controversy. To God, the best, the greatest. In consideration, towards this holy church, of the exceptional generosity of the most illustrious lord brother Jerome de Montoliu, bailiff of Majorca, commendator of Espluga Calva and Gagnen, who restored this (church) by a new erection of the facades, both of the interior as also of the exterior, and by a new construction of both the choir for the clergy and for the musicians; portraits and gilded sculptures and a pulpit for preaching, staircases for the ascent up to the bells and to the burial places (scalis pro accessu ad campanas, et sepulturas) having been added with other buildings for preserving the sacred vestments, vestries for the furniture and a parish house for convenience, not only more spacious but also more dignified; etc.

S Zammit(1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

Now Din I-Art Helwa speaks! Where have you been for the last six months while this was going on?

P Borg (1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

Very nice words Din I-Art Helwa. If you are working on the Church, why you did not speak up for the Crypt, when FAA, it was alone to battle against your dear Piano's plans to make it into toilets?

Philip Pace(1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

With this new problem surfacing up, I am in the strong belief that not enough study was taken up by the concerned group of 'experts' who drew up the plans for this useless project, a project that isn't in the Nation's interest. This and other problems shall turn up and it would be considered as a white elephant. Furthermore this project shall be time consuming and delays shall eventually surface and it won't be delivered on time with the project turning up to be more expensive than the 'stated' budget. Only time will tell!

Frans H Said(1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

Every excuse is good so long the INFAMOUS PIANO PROJECT is not affected. There seems to be a panic in Govt circles in case the project would not be finished before the next election and a new govt would be tempted to cancel the whole white elephant. But a Piano has been decreed, and a Piano shall be imposed. Do not argue!

ct busuttil(1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

Mr IC, as far as I know, it is the job of the Cultural Heritage to protect and preserve what is worth preserving and not for an NGO like FAA. Thank God that such an ngo is so vigilant. We should support them by joining join them without any loss of time?

A. Vassallo(1 week, 2 days ago) 🗨️

@ J. Borg

We do not need a GATE for Valletta but we need an ENTRANCE. A gate is there to hinder people from entering the city, an entrance is there to welcome all and subdry.

Vince DeBono(1 week, 2 days ago)

Pity the new(old) access bridge is narrower than the current one in use


Frans H Said(1 week, 2 days ago)

An this fracas and damage to the bastions is being carried out by the same people who had cricised Lorry Sant when he opened the bastion beneath the Lower Barrakka and in Gozo in nfrom of the cathedral. A walled city, surrounden by bastion of nearly half a millenia required a DOOR. A triumphal gate would hav e been ideal, but it seems that the INFAMOUS Piano can only draw straight lines and has no idea of patrimony and gates which many cities boast of, even in the middle of squares. See Arc de Triumph in Paris, Marble Arch in London. The world famous gate in Berlin, the gate in Brussels, and many Roman Gates - just to mention a few.

VIVA PIANO

Astrid Vella(1 week, 2 days ago) 

While it is of course reassuring to know that strong measures are to be taken to protect the part of the Lanfredis basement that originally formed part of the crypt, it is very disappointing that that beautiful architecture of the rest of the basement will still be reduced to showers and toilets. FAA repeats its call on the authorities to provide sufficient funding and staff to the Superintendence and the Faculty of Architecture to enable them to map out Valletta's unique underground features and draw up a restoration and rehabilitation plan to preserve and add value to Valletta's architectural heritage.

Ivan Cassar(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Had the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage been advised in time (in 2008) about the finds a lot more would have been saved. This development reiterates the fact that it is this authority that should have been involved from the beginning. We still don't know:

Who moved the bones?

When?

What will happen to them now?

I am also very curious to know how the Superintendence came to its conclusions.

I confirm my position that FAA mismanaged the situation by taking the issue to the press and not informing the Superintendence, but however they deserve credit for their role in preserving this interesting space.

Astrid Vella(1 week, 2 days ago)

Ivan, you are failing to mention that the Authorities were informed of this already two years ago and no action was taken. Maybe you would have preferred that situation to continue?

D Vella(1 week, 2 days ago)

What's so wrong in giving incidents like these publicity?. We have learnt that this is one of the few mediums available to the common man which might,just might put wrongs to right. This 'Omerta' culture of hiding everything and seeking favour, political or otherwise has to stop if we harbor any hope of creating a truly free and democratic society based on rights and justice not favours.

john sammut(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Its not because the govt tried to con us into thinking that the premises could be used - its because they used said tactics to mislead us.


Food for thought.

Raymond Sammut(1 week, 2 days ago) 


The Maltese authorities didn't need "investigations" to be carried out by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. They had known all along.

What this public admission by the Maltese government is stating is that the so-called "Casa Lanfredis" (which is not the original Casa Lanfredis) and the Police Station are illegal structures because they are situated on top of the church yard; which is national heritage.

This is a national scandal, and the Maltese government still has a long way to go before it will clean up its act. The fake and despicable Casa Lanfreducci, together with the police station, must be demolished, and the Our Lady of Victory Church must be given back its rightful church yard --for this was the wish and the design of the post-siege knights and their architects.

Claude Lacoste(1 week, 2 days ago) 

A another beautiful discovery what will be, now, preserved. Bravo FAA and Surintendance of Cultural Heritage.


adrian sammut(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Ahbar sabiha ghal kull minn ghandu ghall-qalbu l-preservazzjoni tal-wirt storiku ta' pajjizna.


Prosit lil-FAA li gibdet l-attenzjoni tal-awtoritajiet.

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Etienne Bonanno(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Congrats to FAA. Great work.

Pjil Humphries(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Thankfully, common sense has prevailed over egoism. But why wasn't this site investigated and protected when the plans were (hurriedly) drawn-up ?

When you think about this, it beggars belief ! - You plan to build under one of the oldest parts of a World Heritage site where beautiful architecture is known to exist, yet, despite being full of human remains, you don't investigate the provenance of the architecture (or its contents) before deciding to convert the site into a glorified toilet ! - And for what ???

Does anyone imagine that The Vatican would issue instructions to build a 'changing room' in the area of the Sistine Chapel without prior detailed investigation of what lay close-by

Oh sorry, I forgot... The Vatican only has a Pope !

M Tabone(1 week, 2 days ago) 

At least common sense prevailed. Prosit to FAA and authorities!

carmel callus(1 week, 2 days ago) 

@c.t. busuttil. Valletta is being given back its dignity by this Government. Proof of that are the ongoing projects and restoration works. It's only people who do nothing but criticise are the ones who may not make mistakes!

J. Borg(1 week, 2 days ago)

@ Carmel Callus

Yes and we will be having a city without a gate and a horrible structure as aprlament

instead of a decent theatre and square at the entrance of our capital city. This all due to the stubbornness of your government!!!!

edward.ciantar(1 week, 2 days ago)


Arrogance is the worst thing here, Mr Callus not a case of doing nothing.

Simon Camilleri(1 week, 2 days ago)

The problem is not their making mistakes. The problem is that the only way to get them to admit and correct the mistake is to embarrass them publicly. This reluctance is either the result of arrogance, or worse, of a hidden agenda and is becoming more and more frequent. Prosit FAA.

Victor Laiviera(1 week, 2 days ago)

How do you equate a Roofless Theater, a Gateless Gate and a Parliament on Stilts with "dignity"?

Frans Balzan(1 week, 2 days ago) 


Well done Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. This case shows that notwithstanding everything, in Malta we have institutions and mechanisms that work. In the end it is us Maltese and our Democracy that prevailed.

B.Storace(1 week, 2 days ago)

The question to be asked should be whether the director of Superintendence for Cultural Heritage would have bothered to take any action to protect this site without first having the problem brought to his/her attention by the ever vigilant FAA and the public outcry that followed???

c.t. busuttil(1 week, 2 days ago) 

THANK YOU FLIMKIEN għal AMBJENT AHJAR (FAA). Congratulations for being taken seriously and of course for being proved right once again. Valletta deserves its dignity.

patrick zammit(1 week, 2 days ago) 

A couple of weeks ago, a Govt official was quoted as saying:

"The utilisation of this space was crucial for the project as it will provide the necessary back stage and storage facilities, thus avoiding excessive excavation in the Auberge d'Italie area,".

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110106/local/knight-s-burial-place-to-be-linked-to-piano-s-theatre>

Now, we are told - "This part of the crypt will now be re-integrated with the church and other apertures closed off so that it will not be affected by the Valletta Regeneration Project which, the Superintendent stated, would be able to proceed unhindered without this site."

We are being treated by Govt as if we were idiots.

Michael Vella(1 week, 2 days ago)

Why do some people always feel the need to complain even when the outcome is a positive one??.....For once, the government listened to the people and common sense prevailed.

Well done to all concerned!

Dave Alan Caruana(1 week, 2 days ago)

I expect now the excessive excavation should be starting ...

this whole thing (the roofless theatre, parliament etc) should have been done in Comino,  
funded by the wage increases to our politicians!

There would have been no complaints that way for sure ..

Adrian Borg Cardona(1 week, 2 days ago)

Excuse me, Mr. Vella, if FAA had not raised the issue our Govt would have bulldozed its way (once again) into our national historical heritage. This Govt is bent on destroying Valletta - no doubt about that. Thank you FAA for once again standing up to the Govt and saving our heritage.

G BORG(1 week, 2 days ago) 

Proset FAA!

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