

Valletta War Museum reopens

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Faith in the newly refurbished National War Museum: The Gloster Gladiator biplane aircraft was one of the World War II trio - dubbed Faith, Hope and Charity. Faith, the only recovered plane among the three, is a major attraction at the museum, which was officially reopened yesterday and offers visitors a clear journey through Malta at war. Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi.

As bombs fell over Malta during World War II, a museum curator compiled a detailed log of the air raids that plagued the island.

Costanzo Busuttil, the curator of the Museum Department, took on a personal challenge and carefully annotated the date, time and duration of each and every aerial attack. He then translated his annotations into graphs, charts and statistics and put together a unique record of the ordeal Malta endured during the war.

These annotations are now on display at the National War Museum in Valletta, which was officially re-opened yesterday after it was closed for refurbishment in November 2007. The revamped museum is more organised.

"We've had to be selective," curator Charles Debono said, as he explained that the museum was now clearly divided into eras.

Travelling through time is easy as the timeline is clearly mapped out with markings on the ground and informative panels on the walls.

Visitors can also access power-point presentations through monitors found throughout the experiences. The museum starts by taking visitors to the early 1900s, through World War I, a display of trench mortars, machine guns, a German torpedo and flags, among other things.

Visitors then walk through an inter-war period and through World War II. Apart from uniforms and bombs, the museum features ruins such as remains from the Royal Opera House bombed during the war.

One of the main attractions is Faith, the Gloster Gladiator aircraft that formed part of the wartime trio - dubbed Faith, Hope and Charity. Charity was shot down in flames off Malta in July 1940 and is still unaccounted for while Hope was destroyed by enemy bombing in May 1941.

Educational displays provide information about the role of the Church during the war and an insight into life at the time, complete with a shelter, among other things.

One display includes the jeep that US President Franklin Roosevelt rode in while in Malta in 1943. The jeep is named Husky after the operation in which Sicily was invaded. The museum experience ends with a memorial for victims who died during the war.

Speaking during the official inauguration, Deputy Prime Minister Tonio Borg said the museum was a showcase of Malta's history and identity as it displayed the courage and values shown by Maltese people during hard times.

He said the museum was itself part of another museum - Valletta - and the government was committed to restoring and reviving the city through a number of projects. These included the restoration of Fort St Elmo and St George's Square and the revamping of the City Gate area.

Comments

R. Caruana (4 days, 4 hours ago)

Worst of all, Heritage Malta has doubled the entrance fee to most museums, including this one!

And Faith rots away....

martin portelli (5 days, 4 hours ago)

Will we be charged a visitors entrance fee at city gate to enter 'Valletta the museum' too?

John N Scerri (5 days, 4 hours ago)

The remains of the Gladiator are more suitable in the Aviation Museum at Ta'Qali.

By the way there were 4 Gladiators one of which was cannibalized for parts.

Another thing, the Names of Faith, Hope and Charity were just romanticized nicknames made up afterwards and not linked with particular planes!

Joe Grima (Brussels) (5 days, 8 hours ago)

The poor luckless Gladiators! Yes, it is true that Hope was destroyed in an instant by bombing on the ground, Charity was shot down, and is fast corroding unless it is located and recovered, while poor old Faith is going at a much slower rate, with the lack of maintenance, restoration, and dedication by experienced engineers, thanks to Heritage Malta! Probably in a few more decades, nothing will remain of the three!

mario mifsud (5 days, 9 hours ago)

How nice ! A historic plane cramped in a room
good job

Andrew Gatt (5 days, 10 hours ago)

Heritage Malta, you are doing an excellent job managing various historical sites in the Maltese Islands. Well done.

However, I note with regret that you persist in clinging on to "Faith" rather than handing this incredibly rare and evocative airframe over to the Malta Aviation Museum for a ground-up restoration, They have the parts. They have the setting. They have the expertise. They have the motivation. You, on the other hand, have had Faith for DECADES and you have done NOTHING.

Faith's place is at Ta' Qali.
