

# DISCOVER FLORIANA

## HISTORIC WALKS IN A GREEN CITY



FLORIANA  
*Borgo Vilhena*

Victor J. Rizzo

# Floriana – A Brief History



*Old Postcard of Floriana*

The town of Floriana is situated a stone's throw away from the capital city, Valletta. The origins of Floriana date back to 1634 when Grand Master Antoine de Paule, sensing another attack by the Ottoman Turks, brought over an Italian engineer, Pietro Paolo Floriani of Macerata, to examine the state of the Islands' fortifications.

His recommendations were to the effect that in the stretch of land just outside Valletta, other fortifications were necessary to prevent a situation whereby the enemy could see directly into the capital city. Notwithstanding some initial opposition, works on the fortifications were eventually taken in hand and completed in 1721 ending with what is today Portes des Bombes, having an extension of over 4 Km.

With the accession of Fra Antonio Manoel de Vilhena to the post of Grand Master in 1722 this town was given the name of Borgo Vilhena. However, the residents kept calling their old town Floriana and so it has remained. Borgo Vilhena features in the coat-of-arms of Floriana.

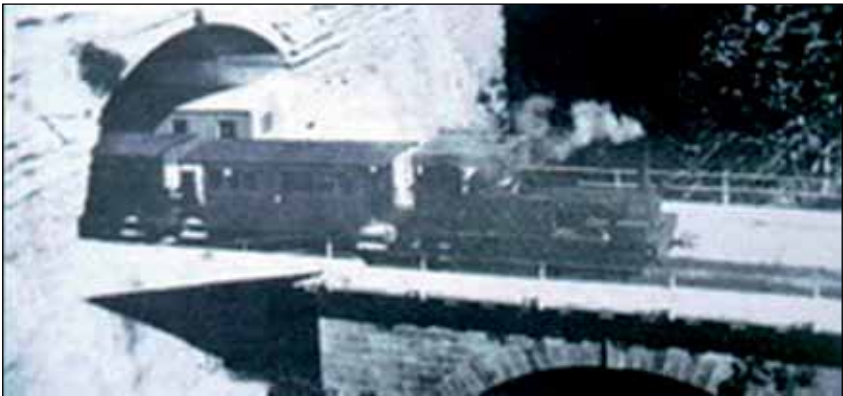




*Portes des Bombes with one arch in 1721*

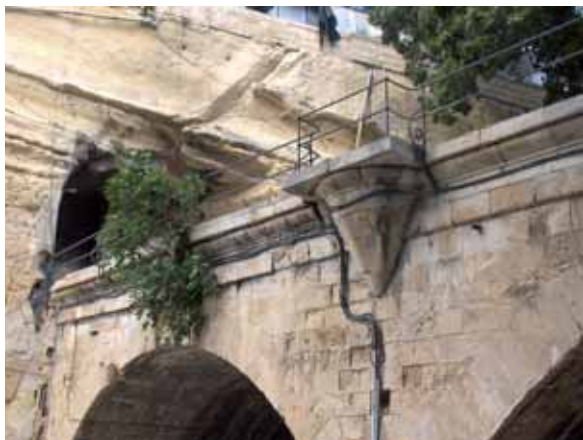
Floriana now has a population of about 2,600 inhabitants, somewhat low considering that in 1860 the population reached a peak of 7,871.

This town covers an area of 133 acres extending from City Gate to Portes des Bombes, an *enceinte* between the inner and outer defences.



*Train emerging at Floriana from Valletta terminus*

At its highest point, Floriana is about 39 metres above sea level. Below Floriana lies a tunnel of the Malta Railways starting from the ditch below the bastions near Portes des Bombes to the ditch at the entrance into Valletta. This tunnel is nearly 1Km long but it is walled up at the exits.



*Train tunnel exit from Valletta side*



*Floriana viewed from Valletta*



Floriana is greatly underestimated by the Maltese. Mentioning Floriana, to many it brings to mind only the Granaries, officially St Publius Square being the largest square in Malta, St Publius as the patron Saint of the town, and the football team.

Floriana offers an immense heritage and a rich history. You are invited to discover Floriana walking along most of its gardens. Floriana has no less than 15 gardens. A quick look at the map will reveal that nearly half the area of Floriana is made up of green and open spaces. It can arguably be styled as the green city of Europe.

The buildings, churches and monuments in this locality provide an insight into Malta's political and social past from the time of the Knights of St. John to the present day. The residents also have a strong sense of identity.

Floriana Local Council is twinned with Macerata in Italy and Kerčem in Gozo.

All buses leading to or from Valetta pass through Floriana

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## Floriana Gardens – Central

*This tour takes you to 3 main gardens in Floriana - The Mall, Argotti and St Philip Gardens with some history on the Malta Railways. You will walk back to the start along Wignacourt Fountain, Sarria Chapel, Floriana Parish Church, the Granaries and the Air Forces Memorial.*



*Old photo of 'Biskuttin' and The Mall Gardens*

This walk starts, and ends, near the monument of Christ the King near the Tritons Fountain by the main entrance to Valletta. This area is known locally as “*Biskuttin*”, literally a small biscuit. The bronze monument of Christ the King is the work of the renowned Maltese artist Antonio Sciortino. The monument was erected to commemorate the International Eucharistic Congress of 1913. Apart from the imposing figure of Christ, the monument includes the figure of a lady representing Malta kneeling in homage of Christ.

Keep going straight crossing very carefully towards the Independence Monument situated at the entrance of The Mall gardens. This bronze



*Monument of Christ the King*

statue commemorates the Independence of Malta from the British Empire on 21 September 1964. The monument was erected in 1989 modelled by the Maltese sculptor John Bonnici.

*Independence Monument*



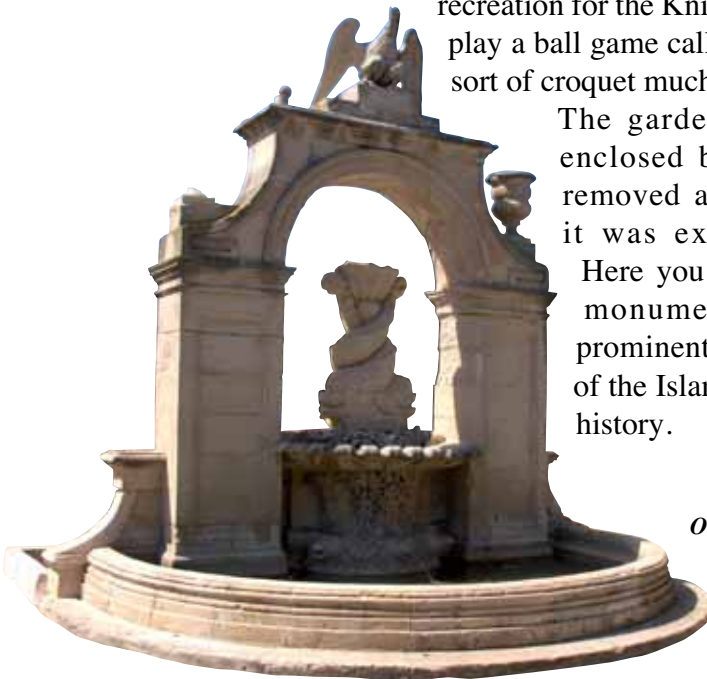


*The Mall Gardens*

Entrance to The Mall Garden is through any one of the two arches. This narrow garden of about 400m in length was constructed by Grand Master Lascaris in 1656 as a place for recreation for the Knights where they used to play a ball game called ‘*Palla a Maglio*’. A sort of croquet much in vogue at that time.

The garden used to be totally enclosed by a wall which was removed after World War II as it was extensively damaged.

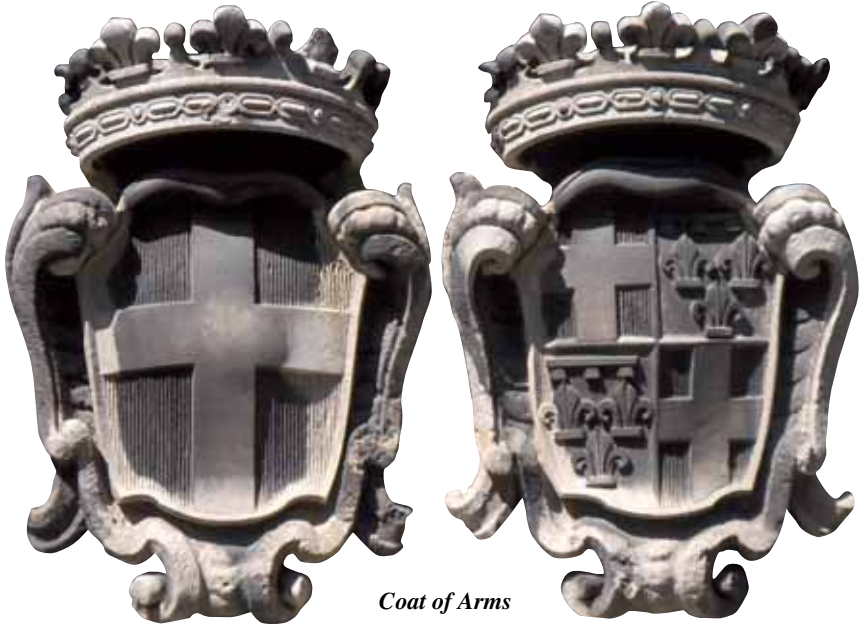
Here you will find a number of monuments commemorating prominent Maltese personalities of the Islands’ political and social history.



*Ornate Fountain in  
The Mall*







*Coat of Arms*



Walking the whole length of the garden you can have a closer look at the monuments.

At the end, behind the building which is now government offices, cross over carefully towards Wignacourt Fountain.

This is an ornamental monument erected by Grand Master Aloff de Wignacourt to commemorate the arrival of the water supply to Floriana in 1615. Nowadays, the water trough with an overlying fleur-de-lys still provides a fresh drink to horses which

*Wignacourt Fountain*

frequently stop here with the traditional horse-drawn carriages known locally as the *karrozzin*. The coats-of-arms of the Order and that of GM Wignacourt embellish the doorway.

The entrance to the Argotti Gardens is exactly behind the fountain.



*Entrance to Argotti Gardens*

The origins of the Argotti Gardens go back to the early 18th century and were laid out as two private gardens. One belonged to Knight Don Emmanuel Pinto and the other to the Bailiff Ignatius de Argote et Guzman. When Pinto was elected Grand Master of the Order in 1740, de Argote purchased Pinto's part, annexed it to his own garden and built his summer residence here where it still exists.

In 1800, the British governor appointed a Carmelite friar as Malta's first professor of natural history. He assembled the plants in Floriana's Mall Gardens and five years later were moved to the site of the present Argotti Gardens.





*Huge Ficus with entwined roots*

The private section, known as The Argotti Herbarium and University Botanic Gardens, is administered by the Department of Agriculture but it has also been entrusted to the University of Malta since 1855 interrupted by a 23-year period starting in 1973. The University keeps a dedicated botanical section which is used for educational purposes as well as housing a specialist selection of plants.

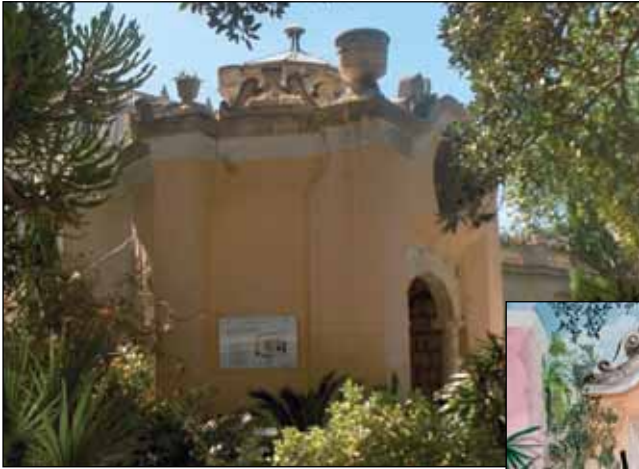
In this respect, Argotti's past has been greatly associated with Maltese medical and surgical history. Medicinal herbs are said to have been grown here since the Maltese Islands' rule by the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. At some time after the war, an anatomical laboratory was also temporarily set up in one of the back rooms.

There are two main sections to these gardens, the public and private sections. Argote's summer residence was in the latter part near the entrance.

The gardens have a rich collection of trees and shrubs from oaks to oleanders and potted plants, especially cacti. The huge Ficus trees have become a landmark in the garden with their entwined roots fused together. The gardens also hold a variety of water features – fountains and ponds.

The private section, run by the University of Malta, has a number of Maltese indigenous and endemic plants. Foreign plants mostly of

tropical origin are hosted in the greenhouses. The herbarium houses marine plants, fungi and a laboratory. The old summerhouse of Bailiff de Argote has been converted into an exhibition hall, museum of garden history and plant science, plant pressing equipment, gardening maps and records.



*Grotto in the section of the University of Malta*



*The nymphaeum, from a watercolour by Kenneth Zammit Tabona*

Near the entrance gate there is a curious grotto, a nymphaeum, embellished with coloured stones, red corals, sea shells, and a decorated floor. It originally formed part of Bailiff Argote's villa on the site.

Unfortunately, the lovely greenhouse as seen in an old photo had to be dismantled in later years as its upkeep was deemed too costly.

The nice fountain in the large open space in the centre of the garden formerly adorned *Ġnien is-Sultan* (the Sultan's Garden) near Victoria Gate in Valletta. From the spacious terrace of Argotti one can admire a splendid view of Marsamxett harbour, distant towns and the countryside.

At a lower level you can also see another garden which will be visited later. This garden is known as *Ġnien San Filippu* (St Philip Garden), otherwise known as *Ġnien tal-Ġeneral* (the General's Garden).





*Former greenhouse in garden*

As you leave the Argotti Gardens turn right towards the entrance of St Philip Gardens. A ramp leads down to the lower gardens of St Philip (*Ġnien San Filippu*) aptly named after St Philip's bastion on which it stands. The ramp was constructed for a proposed external Floriana railway station which was never built.

Halfway down the ramp you will walk through an arched gate. Do notice the raised door in the ceiling which used to be operated by chained pulleys which are still visible. When closed, this door could only be raised from inside the fortifications.

*Fountain in the centre of Argotti Gardens*





*View of St Philip Garden from Argotti*

Walk further down to the end of the ramp towards a door which led to the platform at the underground station. Though there is a steep flight of steps, a visit to the upper level of the garden is worth it.

At the far end of the garden, from a terrace on the ramparts, you can view the Portes des Bombes area which was the only entrance to the outer fortifications of Valletta. The train tunnel emerged at ground level exactly below this terrace. These can also be seen in Walk 2.



*Raised iron door in ramp*



*Rear view of Portes des Bombes*

From here you can also view the entrance to the last short section of tunnel through the ramparts called the *Fausse Braye*, the outer defences in olden times.

The garden is pleasant with wide paved passages and rich in citrus fruit trees, cypress, jacarandas and decorative plants. Rose bushes and other flowers bloom below the bastion walls.

In the centre, a tall ornate fountain also built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, was originally located in St George's Square



*View of tunnel entrance in Fausse Braye*



*Ornate Wignacourt Fountain*

(*Misraħ San Ġorġ*) in Valletta until the early nineteenth century. The fountain was moved by the British military authorities to St Philip Garden so that Valletta's main square could be used for military parades. This fountain, which is rather deteriorating, is scheduled as a national monument.

It features a large circular basin with three superimposed upper basins shaped like seashells, each one smaller than the one below, supported on a cone-shaped pedestal with three dolphins with upturned tails. This was the first fountain erected after the building of the Wignacourt aqueduct from Mdina and was inaugurated on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1615.



*Old Railway  
Booking Hall*







*Former Wesleyan Methodist Church*

Retrace your steps to exit St Philip Garden and walk right towards an inconspicuous small building in the corner. This is what remains of the Floriana Railway Station at ground level. This simple building housed a booking hall and a stairway led down to a platform 15 metres below. One side of the tunnel was enlarged to accommodate a single platform.

The railway line to Mdina commenced in Valletta and passed underneath the fortifications through a tunnel almost 1km long emerging at open ground near Portes des Bombes below St Philip's Bastion.

Keeping in mind that this tunnel was dug in 1880, it was a remarkable piece of engineering.

Somewhere near the Floriana platform, the railway tunnellers at that time, discovered an ancient reservoir built by the Knights and had to divert round it in a double S curve to go to the end of the line in Valletta. There were 5 main stations along the line with another 4 halts consisting only of a platform where the train stopped only on request. These halts were between the main stations. After crossing the carriageway below St Philip's Bastion the railway entered another small tunnel



*Sarria Church*

penetrating an outer bastion in the fortifications passing on a stone-arched bridge or viaduct which you can visit in Walk 2.

The official opening of the Malta Railway Co. took place on 28 February 1883. Serious competition of tramways and omnibuses starting in 1922 lead to the final closing down of the service on 31 March 1931.

Though hardly noticeable, this small railway relic in Floriana should be preserved as a tourist attraction.

To the left near the station lies the former Wesleyan Methodist Church built in Neo-Gothic style designed by the British architect Thomas Mullet and completed in 1883. Today it is known as the Robert Samut Hall and houses cultural events. Robert Samut was born in Floriana and is the composer of Malta's national anthem.

This church lies next to a building which was erected between 1908-1909 as a place for recreation for the British Services and was also known by the name of "Connaught Home" after the Duke of Connaught who



laid the first stone. Today the building is an old people's home named "*Dar il-Mistrieħ*".

Across the road lies Sarria Church built to the design of Mattia Preti. Arguably, the only church in Malta designed by this famous artist. This church is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception and replaced a previous chapel built in 1585 by the Knight Fra Martin de Sarria Navarro whence the name derived.

During the plague of 1675, the Order under Grand Master Rafael Cotoner prayed for the intercession of the Immaculate Conception to relieve Malta of this terrible disease pledging by a decree in 1676 to build a new and bigger church dedicated to Our Lady. The foundation stone was laid on 8th December 1696, with Lorenzo Gafà as the engineer in charge of its construction.

All the seven paintings embellishing this church are also the work of Mattia Preti. The use of this church was restricted to members of the Order of St John.

*Parish Church dedicated to St Publius*





*Detail of Church Frontispiece*

Keep walking to your left until you arrive in St Publius Square in front of the Parish Church of Floriana also dedicated to St Publius, Malta's first Bishop and one of the Patron Saints of Malta.

This is one of the finest churches in these Islands and is probably the last parish church built during the reign of the Holy Order.

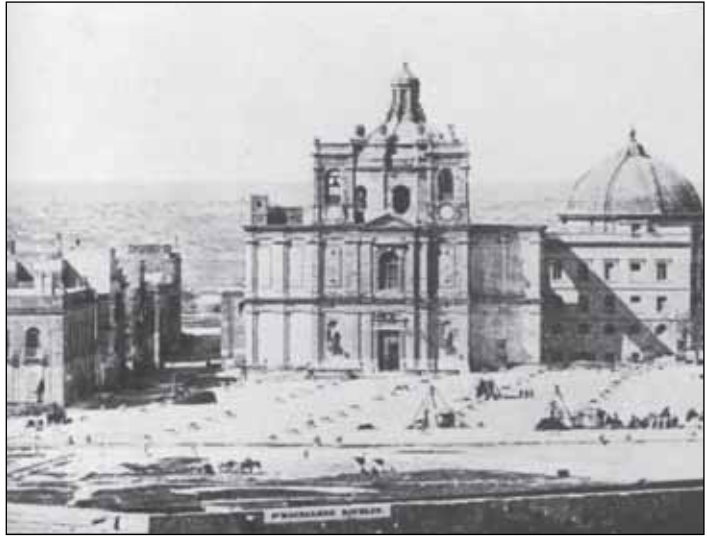
Situated at the centre of the town overlooking the granaries, work on the current church started

*Main Altar in Parish Church*





*Statue of St Publius*



*Old Parish Church  
and Granaries*

in 1733 with extensions through the years as the population grew. The church was consecrated in 1792 and was given the status of a parish in 1844. It suffered severe damage during the Second World War but it was restored to its present state.

*Damaged Parish Church and Granaries in use*





### *Granaries in front of Church*

The titular painting, behind the main altar, was started by Favray and continued by his student Filippo Vincenzo Pace and depicts the martyrdom of St Publius. Various paintings depicting instances from the shipwreck of St Paul and his stay on the island adorn the ceiling.

The prime treasure of this church is the titular statue of St Publius carved in wood by the Maltese sculptor Vincenzo Dimech in 1811. The parish church is worth a visit.

In front of the parish church one cannot miss the extent of the granaries in St Publius Square in the centre of the town, also known as *Il-Fosos tal-Furjana*.

The so called *fosos* or grain silos were dug in the rock as part of the military strategy to store grain for use in case of a siege.

The *fosos* are bell-shaped reservoirs capped by a large stone, some

circular, others squarish, carefully sealed with mortar when full of wheat. Thus grain is stored in a dry environment with easy access. The surface between capstones is covered in stone slabs.

Commissioned by Richard More O'Farrell, Governor of Malta between 1847 – 1851, the granaries spread over much of Floriana in olden times and were used primarily for grain. Today, the main concentration of 76 granaries is here in St Publius Square.

Nowadays this spacious area hosts all sorts of social, cultural, political and religious activities when a high attendance is expected.

From the granaries walk on towards the memorial of the Commonwealth Air Forces servicemen who lost their life in active duties in the Mediterranean and have no known grave.

After the Second World War ended Malta was the chosen location for the memorial. Malta's crucial contribution to the war in the Mediterranean skies must have played an important element in this decision.

The Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial is a 15-metre column of Italian travertine marble. It is carved with a light netted pattern and a gilded bronze eagle on top, 2.4 metres high. The column stands on a circular base around which the names of 2297 Commonwealth Air Force servicemen who lost their lives in the Mediterranean, with no known grave, are inscribed on bronze plaques.

At the base of the column itself, a bronze panel bears the following inscription:

“Over these and neighbouring lands and seas, the airmen whose names are recorded here fell in raid or sortie and have no known grave. Malta, Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria. Propositi insula tenax tenaces viros commemorat.”

The Latin epigram translates to “A brave island resolute of purpose remembers brave men.”

*Gilded Bronze Eagle*





The request for the monument was approved in February 1948, and the inauguration ceremony of the monument was held in 1954 by Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of England and Head of the Commonwealth.

Have a quick look around you as this memorial, and the adjacent car park, were erected in what was previously known as Rundle Gardens. Named after Sir Henry Leslie Rundle who was Governor of Malta in the years 1909 – 1915. What remains of this garden is now known as *Masġar is-Sliem* (Grove of Peace) to mark the First International Peace and Freedom Conference held in Malta on 19 March 1984. Olive trees, and a small bronze monument commemorating this event are located at the main entrance of this grove.

You are now near the monument of Christ the King where you started this walk.

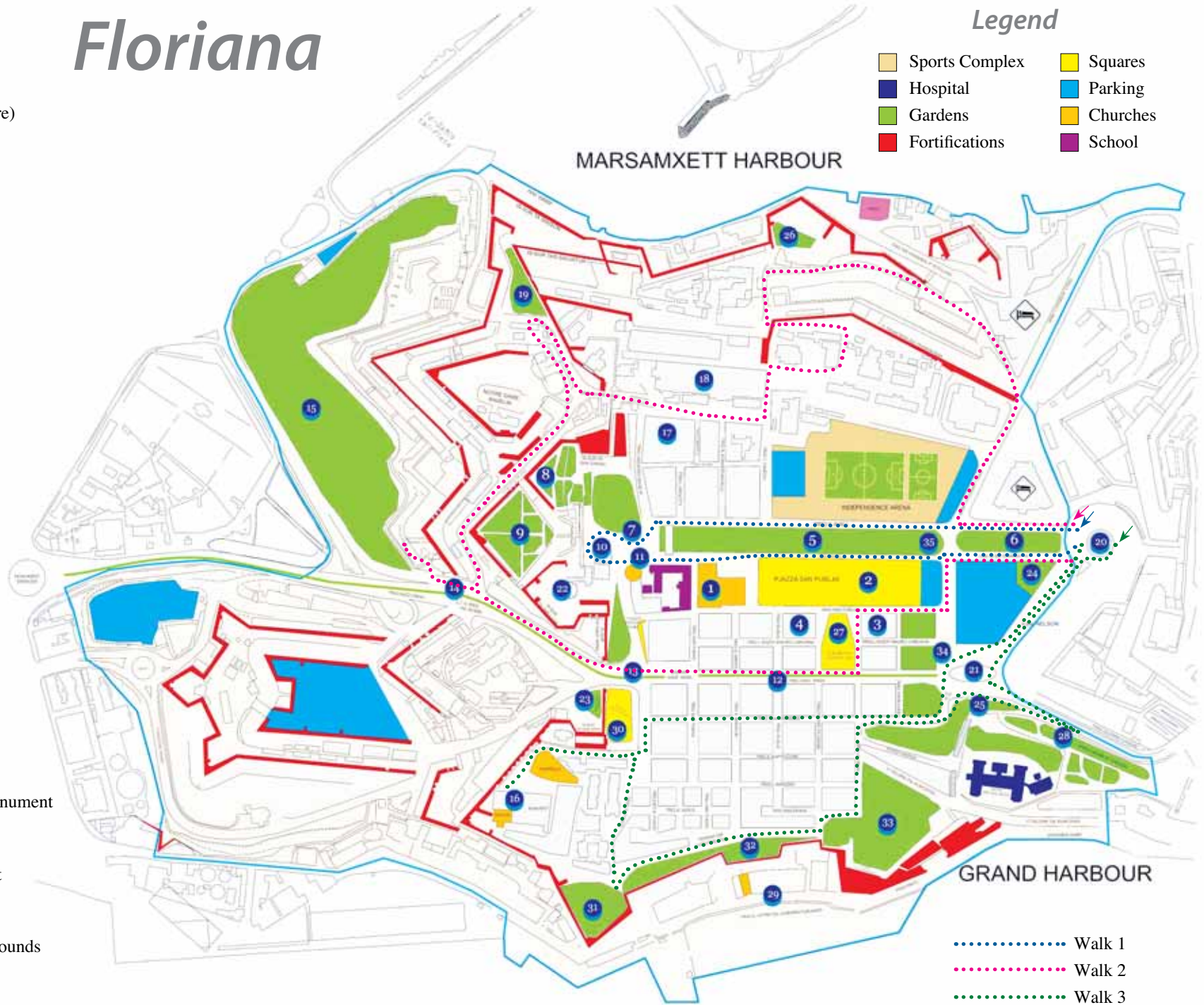
*Commonwealth  
Air Forces  
Memorial*



# Floriana

## Places of Interest

1. St Publius Parish Church
2. The Granaries (St Publius Square)
3. Catholic Institute
4. Montgomery House
5. The Mall
6. Christ The King Monument
7. Wignacourt Water Tower
8. Argotti Gardens
9. St Philip Gardens
10. Robert Samut Hall
11. Sarria Church
12. St Anne Street
13. Lion Fountain
14. Portes de Bombes
15. Jubilee Gardens
16. Capuchins Church & Friary
17. Archbishop's Curia
18. Police General Headquarters
19. Sa Maison Gardens
20. Tritons Fountain
21. War Memorial
22. Boy Scouts Island Headquarters
23. Dante Alighieri Monument
24. Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial
25. RMA and KOMR Memorials
26. Garden of Rest & Museum of Malta's Burial Heritage
27. Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena Monument
28. Herbert Ganado Gardens
29. Valletta Waterfront
30. Pietro Paolo Floriani Monument
31. Vilhena Garden
32. Sir Luigi Preziosi Gardens
33. King George V Recreational Grounds
34. Dun Karm Psaila Monument
35. Independence Monument



## Legend

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| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Sports Complex | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Squares  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #000080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Hospital       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #00bfff; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parking  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90ee90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Gardens        | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffcc00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Churches |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ff0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Fortifications | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> School   |

- Walk 1
- Walk 2
- Walk 3

Walk No. 2 (Approx. duration 2 ¼ hr)

## Floriana Gardens – Marsamxetto Harbour

*This tour takes you near the two five star hotels in Floriana, the Central Public Library, the Msida Bastion Historic Garden, Sa Maison Garden, the Malta Railway tunnel exits, Portes des Bombes, the Lion Fountain and the GM de Vilhena monument in St Anne Street.*

This walk starts, and ends, at the Tritons Fountain opposite the main entrance to Valletta. The fountain represents three bronze mythology figures holding a large bronze plate and formed part of the embellishment project of the Bus Terminus. It was designed by the Maltese sculptor Chev. Vincent Apap and was inaugurated on 16 May 1959.

It should be noted that the fountain occupies the site of what was the old Tram Terminus in 1922.

*Tritons Fountain*





*Tram Terminus before Hotel Phoenicia was built*

Cross over carefully towards the Phoenicia Hotel, a five star hotel and one of the earliest hotels in Malta. Walking to the end of the block turn right into Great Siege Road.

About 150 metres further down, at the third side-road on the left, turn left and keep walking down. When you arrive exactly opposite the main entrance of the Grand Hotel Excelsior, another five star hotel, turn again left and keep walking down towards the Central Public Library in Joseph J. Mangion Street.

*Central Public Library*





*View of ramparts from Msida Bastion*

Walking further along the Library terrace do notice that on your right lies the top of the Floriana Retrenchment curtain wall with a deep ditch underneath. This wall, viewed from the harbour area, provides an impressive backdrop of the bastions. A quick look over the wall is recommended. You are on Msida Bastion overlooking Pietà Creek

Entrance to the Msida Bastion Historic Garden on your right is through the museum.



*General View of Historic Garden*

This old cemetery has been turned into a historic garden by *Din l-Art Helwa*. It is the last surviving burial grounds of four cemeteries located close to the Floriana bastions. The other three cemeteries, Quarantine, Greek Orthodox and Cholera, are no longer in existence and the land has been built upon.

This line of fortifications in Floriana, formerly known as St Philip's Bastions, was commissioned by Grand Master Antoine de Paule in 1635 and designed and built by the Italian engineer Pietro Paolo Floriani as additional protection to the Valletta land front. The bastions saw action briefly when Napoleon's forces bombarded the walls in June 1798. The French, blockaded by the British and Maltese, surrendered in September 1800. A pair of George III cannons each weighing four tons are a reminder of the bastions' original purpose.

From as early as 1806, there is

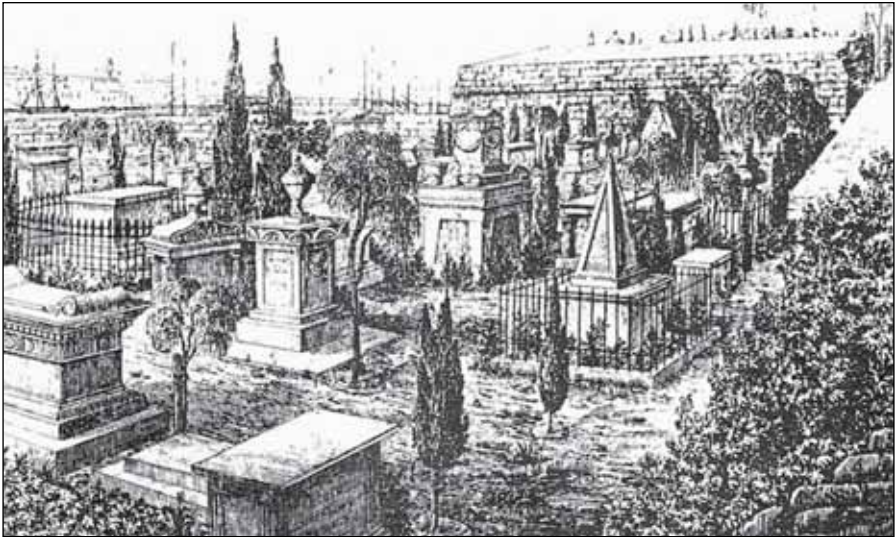
*Watercolour by Anna Galea*



evidence of burials at the Msida Bastion for members of the Protestant Community in Malta. Records show that at least 528 people were buried here and it was more or less full when Ta' Braxia Cemetery opened in 1886.

Those buried were predominantly English who were associated with the armed forces and civil administration. Other officials, businessmen and their families, some of whose descendants still live in Malta today, were also buried here.

The most famous Maltese believed to be buried here was Mikiel Anton Vassalli, known as the father of the Maltese language, who died in 1829.



*Lithograph of Msida Bastion Cemetery in 1840 by Giovanni Schranz*

By 1910 the Msida Bastion Cemetery had become neglected and its deterioration continued.

During the Second World War the cemetery was bombed and part of the bastion wall and some graves were damaged. As the cemetery was protected only by a low wall, much was vandalized and destroyed. Monuments were raided for the marble and stone carvings. Large trees and undergrowth, growing without restraint for decades, added considerable damage.





*View of burial monuments after restoration*

In 1988, *Din l-Art Helwa* together with the Government of Malta and the British High Commission decided to restore tombs, where possible, and to open the gardens to the public. Restoration began in 1993 and the first section restored was officially opened in September 1995. Work continued unabated since then.

*Din l-Art Helwa* is proud that the restoration of this site to its former finery was acknowledged internationally by the award of a Silver Medal by Europa Nostra in 2002. The first such medal to be awarded to Malta.

In 2004 a small Museum of Maltese Burial Practices was opened in the building adjacent to the garden.



*Cannons on ramparts*

Walking out of the garden and museum, turn right. The first building on your left within a walled garden lies an attractive two-storey former military residence better known as Aertex Villa. This building is currently occupied by a Government Department.





*Neo-Colonial Aertex Villa*

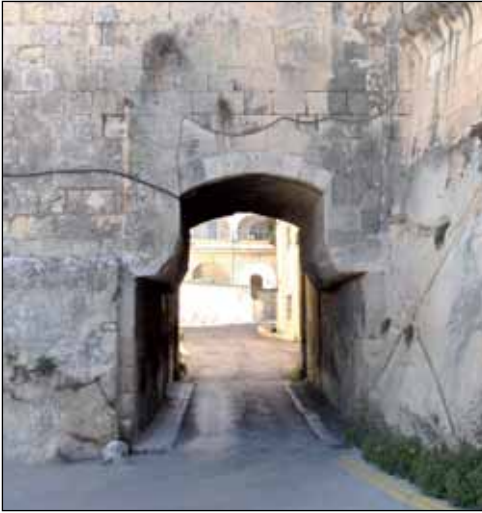
Developed in a British Colonial style, the building and garden have an architectural and townscape value which should be preserved and enhanced.

The building on your right is part of the original Polverista artillery chambers (casemates) running parallel to the Polverista Curtain, now also used by Government Departments.

Walking further on pass through an original arch known as Polverista Gate located within the bastion walls. This will lead you to the side entrance of the Police Headquarters. Walking further up the road turn right and keep walking past the main entrance of the Police Headquarters.

The large palace on your left houses the Archbishop's Curia with a very ornate entrance and staircase. This building replaced the original smaller one known as the 'House of Manresa' built by the Jesuit Fathers. It was completed in 1751 and inaugurated in the presence of GM Pinto and other high dignitaries of the Order. The Knights embellished it with famous paintings by the well known artist Antoine de Favray.

Walk further down the road for about 200 metres to arrive near the entrance to Sa Maison Garden or *il-Ġnien Tal-Milorda* as it is locally known.



*Polverista Gate*

The garden itself is set on five levels with a conservatory, several specimens of local flora in pots and a large number of tall trees and palms. At its highest point, a *gardjola* offers a splendid view over Pietà Creek. This is a heritage garden which should be given more publicity.

The Sa Maison Garden is a small, pretty garden mostly known for its military heritage. The garden is also known as ‘*il-Ġnien tal-Milorda*’ (Her

Ladyship’s Garden) in memory of Lady Julia Lockwood, who resided there between 1842 and 1856. She must have been a very benevolent woman considering that the garden earned her the title. Her house was

*Ornate entrance of Archbishop’s Curia*





*Entrance to Sa Maison Garden*

later demolished and the garden taken over by the military authorities, which were responsible for its maintenance until 1903, when it was taken over by the civil government.

Originally, Sa Maison Garden was meant to be a shooting lodge. It was built by Chevalier Caille Maison in the mid 18th century. It is said that during the time of the Order of St John it was a meeting place for freemasons.



*Regimental Crests on Bastion Walls*





*Stone Model of the Essex Regiment*

Another feature at this lower end is the massive skewed arch built by Giovanni Barbara, an assistant of Pietro Floriani. Further access towards the Polverista Curtain through a network of passages within the fortifications has been blocked for security reasons.



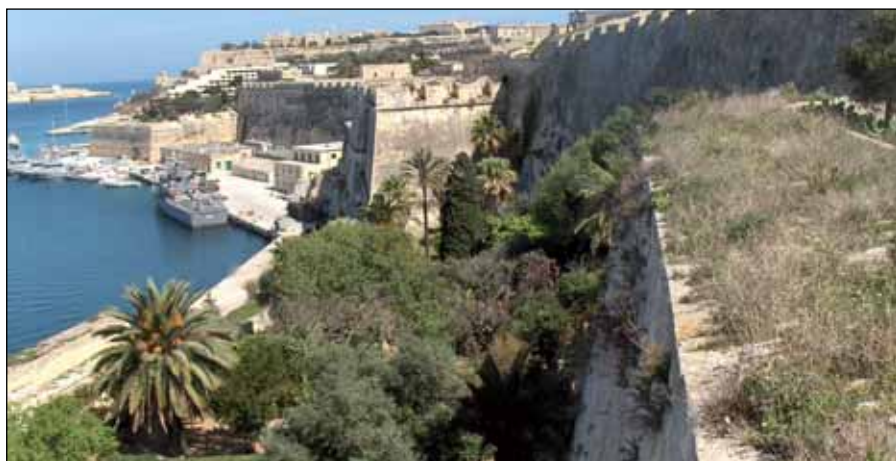
The visitor to Sa Maison Garden cannot help being impressed by the number of regimental crests engraved in the bastion walls. Other relics in stone commemorate the memory of those regiments responsible for tending the garden between the years 1856 and 1900. A small model of a castle carved in Maltese stone is dedicated to the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment.

Reaching the lower ramparts of the garden, a magnificent view is obtained of Marsamxetto Harbour with its creeks and yacht marinas.



*Skewed Arch at lower end of Sa Maison*

*Gardjola on bastions*



*View from lookout*

On your way out do visit the positioning of two cannon emplacements over the bastions. Before you exit the garden, behind the greenhouse, make sure to walk up the ramp towards the lookout (*gardjola*) where you will have an excellent 360° view of the surrounding area.

Retrace your steps out of the garden and walk a few metres up the road towards the first turning on your right. You will now be walking along the ditch below St Philip's bastion with the station of the Police Fire Brigade on your right.



*Former Tunnel Exit  
of Railway Track*



Before you exit into the main road near Portes des Bombes notice a walled tunnel exit on your left. The underground railway track from Valletta emerged from this side of the bastion after stopping at the Floriana platform. The train crossed the ditch and entered into another very short tunnel through the *Fausse Braye* which is visible from the terrace on top of St Philip Garden in Walk 1.

Take a very short detour on your right into the main road and climb up a small ramp near a stone pedestal with a ball shape structure on top to see the tunnel exit and the bridge or viaduct.

On returning to your route up the main road behind Portes des Bombes have a good look at the elaborate archway, a landmark sight when approaching Floriana. This was the main entrance to Floriana on the first



*Stone Pedestal*

*Tunnel exit on Viaduct*





### *Portes des Bombes*

line of fortifications into Valletta. The two pedestals on each side of the gateway gave the name of Portes des Bombes.

The original gate had only one archway named *Porta dei Cannoni* (Cannons Gate). Note columns on the façade are in the shape of cannons. It was built in 1721, at a cost of 6000 Scudi, during the reign of Spanish Grand Master Ramon Perellos to the designs of the French architect Charles de Mondion. The coat-of-arms of GM Perellos can be seen at the top of the archway.

Originally, the two pedestals were placed at the front of the bridge leading to the arch to form the gate actually named Portes des Bombes.



*Old photo of rear view  
of Portes des Bombes*



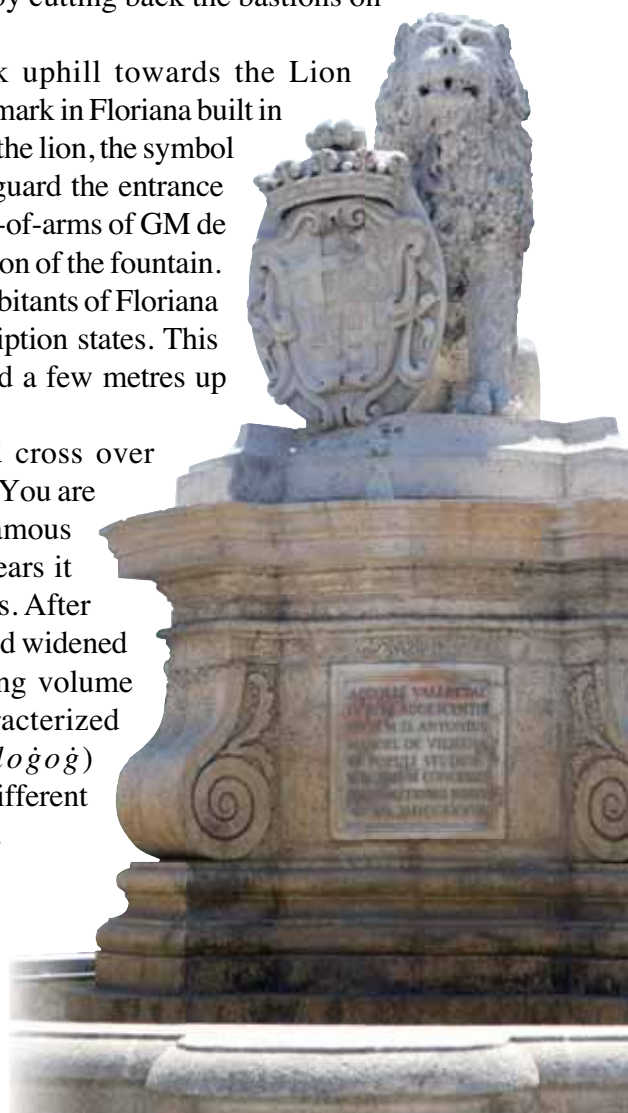
The arch was duplicated in 1868 by the British Government during the time of Sir Patrick Grant, Governor of Malta to accommodate heavy traffic in the Grand Harbour area. The architect was Col. E. W. Dunford, Royal Engineers.

The Latin inscription on the original arch on your right translates literally “While everywhere I am in combat with the Turks, I feel safe at this guarded place”

A Latin inscription over the arch on your left explains that this was done ‘to further accommodate the general public’. Some 65 years later access was further improved by cutting back the bastions on either side of the gate.

Continue with your walk uphill towards the Lion Fountain, another famous landmark in Floriana built in 1728. The majestic position of the lion, the symbol of Floriana, clearly seems to guard the entrance into Floriana, holding the coat-of-arms of GM de Vilhena who decreed the erection of the fountain. The Grand Master had the inhabitants of Floriana close to his heart, as the inscription states. This fountain was originally erected a few metres up the road.

Staying in the main road cross over carefully towards the arcades. You are in St Anne Street, the most famous street in Floriana. Over the years it has undergone various changes. After the war it was reconstructed and widened to cater for the ever increasing volume of traffic. The street is characterized by arcades (known as *loġoġ*) accommodating a number of different commercial outlets and clubs.



*Lion Fountain  
the symbol of Floriana*

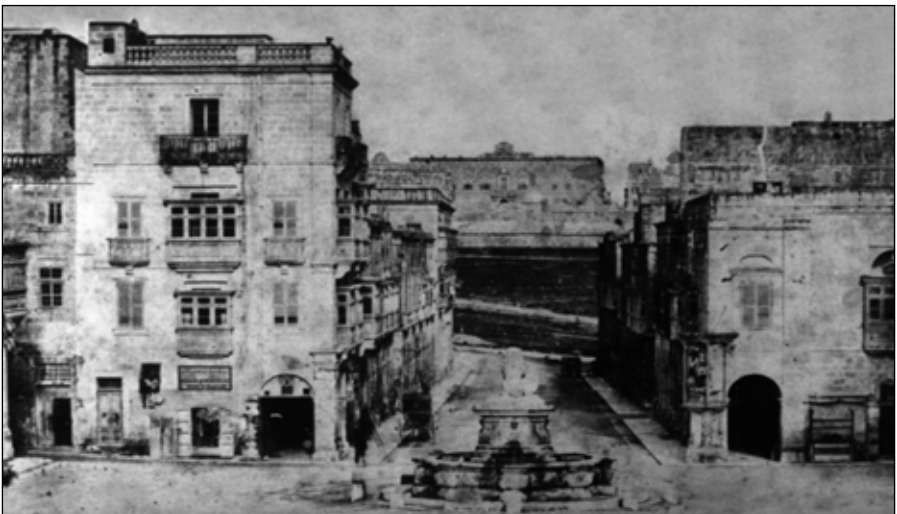




*Arcades in St Anne Street*

Further down the road, on leaving the arcades, you will come across another statue closely associated with Floriana – a bronze monument of the Portuguese Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena who gave the name to the town, Borgo Vilhena. The heraldic emblem of this Grand Master who reigned in Malta between 1722 and 1736 is also a lion.

*Old photo of former St Anne Street with Lion Fountain*





*View of St Anne Street from Cenotaph*

Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena enhanced the island's military defences by completing the extensions of the Floriana fortifications and the building of Fort Manoel to protect the exposed flank of the city in Marsamxetto Harbour. In fact this monument was originally erected inside the fort. Latin inscriptions on all sides of the pedestal praise this most loved Grand Master.

Our walk ends here. If you proceed up the side street by the monument, on your right, you will arrive very near the Tritons Fountain and the bus terminus from where you started.



*Monument of  
Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena*

## Floriana Gardens – Grand Harbour

*This tour takes you to the Cenotaph, Herbert Ganado Garden, King George V Recreational Grounds, Sir Luigi Preziosi Garden, Vilhena Garden, the Church of the Capuchin Order, the Pietro Floriani monument, the niches in St Francis Street and the Dun Karm Monument.*

This walk starts and ends at the bus terminus near the entrance to Valletta.

Before you start your walk have a quick look over the right side of bridge at the entrance to Valletta. Below lies what used to be the train terminus in Valletta. The tunnel passes below Floriana with the first stop, on request, at the Floriana underground platform.

Walk back to your left along St James bastion and notice an overhead *gardjola* (lookout) on the bastion. Whilst the shape of this lookout is hexagonal, others are circular. Lookouts are numerous in vantage points along the Maltese fortifications and all are somewhat different. In this area, every Sunday morning, an open air market is held.

*Bridge (foreground right) at Entrance to Valletta*





*Front view of Cenotaph*

Keeping to the left, cross carefully the very busy road from behind the War Memorial.

Malta's National War Memorial, the cenotaph, was built to commemorate those who died during the First World War of 1914-18. It was inaugurated on Armistice Day, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1938 before the start of the Second World War. The monument was designed by Mr Louis Naudi and inaugurated by the Governor, Sir Charles Bonham-Carter. It has the shape of a latin cross.

The main panel depicts the Maltese flag with the George Cross and a bronze crown. The other three panels illustrate the three scrolls of President Roosevelt, King George V and King George VI praising the valour of the Maltese during the war.

*Gardjola on St James Bastion*





*Cenotaph at night*

Originally the cenotaph had panels listing the names of the 592 Maltese servicemen who died in World War I.

Remembrance Day, or Poppy Day, is commemorated here every year in honour of those who lost their lives during the First and Second World Wars.



*Monument of Royal Malta Artillery Servicemen*



*Monument of KOMR Servicemen*





*Entrance to Herbert Ganado Garden*

Across the road at the other side of the Cenotaph, monuments of Maltese servicemen in the Royal Malta Artillery and the King's Own Malta Regiment were erected to commemorate those Maltese soldiers who lost their lives in active service during the Second World War.

A passage at the rear of the RMA Memorial will lead you into Herbert Ganado Gardens. This was formerly known as Kalkara Gardens. The name most probably derived from the former presence of a nearby Kalkara



*View of inner H. Ganado Garden*

Gate. It is a small terraced garden, well cultivated, having panoramic views of the outer Grand Harbour. Herbert Ganado, born in Floriana, was a well known lawyer, author and politician. His monument is in The Mall Gardens in Walk 1.

Retrace your steps to the main road and walk down the side road on you left until you reach an elaborate arch, with the British Monarchy coat-of-arms at the top. This is the entrance into the King George V Recreational Grounds. A bronze bust of King George V lies as you enter the garden.



*Arch leading into King George V Garden*

This garden was converted into Malta’s first Playing Field and inaugurated in the 1930s. The bronze bust of King George V, who was deeply interested in the people of Malta and had many recollections of the Islands, was unveiled in July 1939. In following years, the Malta Playing Fields Association continued to provide other more modern



*King George V Recreational Grounds*





*Sir Luigi Preziosi Garden*

equipment and garden furniture. The planting of trees and flower beds rendered the grounds as a popular garden.

Walk out through a gate at the left side and enter into Sir Luigi Preziosi Garden. The main redeeming feature of this garden is the excellent panoramic view of the whole of Grand Harbour. You are actually overlooking the Valletta Waterfront which is also in Floriana. Cruise liners berth at the waterfront area and provide a superb sight viewed from these heights.



*View of streetscape from Garden*



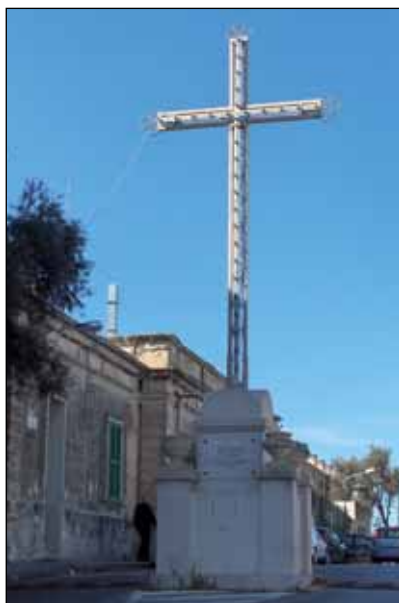


*Vilhena Garden*

Count Sir Luigi Preziosi lived in Floriana and was one of the finest Ophthalmic Surgeons with an immense international recognition. His monument is also in The Mall gardens featured in Walk 1.

When you are in this garden do also admire the streetscape of the square, also named after Preziosi. Notice the uniform design on three storeys with a very strong elaborate cornice at the top, and with receded roof structures. The detailed doorways, wooden and wrought iron balconies with louvered windows, are typical Maltese urban structures which are being conserved.

Your route is ahead up the steep slope but a very slight detour to your left will lead you into a recent small quaint garden named after Grand



*Cross leading into grounds of the Capuchins*



Master Manoel de Vilhena. Apart from the usual Grand Harbour views you can also admire the bastions and ramparts from the side.

The garden was built on the initiative of Floriana Local Council and inaugurated in October 2000.

Retrace your steps and turn left up the steep slope to emerge in Robert Samut Square, another site with granaries. The side road by the large cross will lead you up into the grounds of the Capuchin Order in Malta.



*Church of the Capuchin Friars*

Grand Master de Verdalle proposed to the bishop to invite the Capuchin Order to open a convent in Malta. The first Capuchins set foot in Malta on 10 February 1588. The marble inscriptions on the church façade are quite informative. According to the rules of this Order, their churches and convents had to be built as far away as possible from populated areas so as to maintain the hermitage spirit practiced by the Friars. GM de Verdalle donated this area as it satisfied this rule at that time. The Maltese engineer Girolamo Cassar designed both church and convent.

The church is dedicated to the Holy Cross, however, it is popularly known as the Capuchins Church.

All the altars in the church are made of wood. The two statues on the façade of the church are those of St Paul and St Publius.



*Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes*



*Main Altar of Our Lady of Lourdes*

of Our Lady of Lourdes was brought from France and placed in the chapel.

Work on the present chapel commenced in 1918 and were completed in 1920. The cupola paintings by the well known artist Giuseppe Calì were completed in 1929.

Walk back down to emerge near a recent monument on the granaries in honour of the Italian engineer Pietro Paolo Floriani, the architect of Floriana's fortifications. The bronze monument in neo-baroque style on a classical marble base, is the work of artist Chris Ebejer and commissioned by Floriana Local Council.

*Monument of Pietro Paolo Floriani*

Very near the church there is also a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. Before this chapel was built as we know it today there existed a smaller chapel dedicated to St Mary Magdalen Penitent built in 1706. In the year 1881, at the onset of world-wide devotion to our Lady of Lourdes, a statue





*Streetscape in St Francis Street*

The street facing this monument, St Francis Street, is your route and you will be walking along one of Floriana's oldest streets.

As you walk down, again notice the typical Maltese streetscape with characteristic doors and wooden or wrought iron balconies. At the crossroads do not fail to notice three corner niches.

The first statue is dedicated to St Francis and is very elaborate in a quite prominent place. The second statue is dedicated to Our Lady of



*Statue of St Francis*



*Statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*



*Statue of Our Saviour*



*Corner Wooden Balcony*



Mount Carmel holding Baby Jesus on her left arm. Both are holding the Mount Carmel scapular in their hands.

At the next crossroad there is a statue of Our Saviour holding an orb in His left hand. On top of this statue do not fail to notice a large and very rare elaborate wooden balcony built around a corner.

Walking further down the street you will emerge near the War Memorial. If you cross over very carefully you will arrive near a monument dedicated to Dun Karm Psaila. This monument was unveiled in October 2000. Dun Karm is Malta's National poet and will be remembered for having written the lyrics of Malta's national anthem. He passed away on 13 October 1961 aged 90.

Walking further on you will arrive near the bus terminus.



*Monument of Dun Karm*

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