

The Museum Project - a masterpiece for masterpieces

The 'Awla Capitularis' is the official meeting location for the Cannons of the Collegiate Chapter of St Helen. As a minimum the chapter meets once monthly and more frequently if required. During these meetings the Cannons discuss all matters related to the running of this church. This building overlies the sacristy at the back of St Helen's and includes a hall and two smaller rooms.

A few years ago this place was restored and while maintaining its functionality was also turned in a museum for all items which are related to this church or have a connection with Birkirkara's history.

It is also evident that the original intention was to continue with the construction over the Awla Capitularis itself. In fact a main and a secondary staircase lead to the roof area while part of the walls, comprising the preliminary features of three windows, had already been built. Probably the construction had stopped due to financial reasons.

While doing conservation and restoration work on the facade of the church some six years ago the architect monitoring this work Arch D De Lucca (Dean of the Institute of Baroque Studies at the University of Malta) advised us that continuing this building will not only create additional space required for the many artefacts but will also enhance the massing structure of the Church itself.

After innumerable hours of discussions and planning the necessary permits from the Church and Civil authorities were obtained. Work commenced on the 24 April 2006 and the construction of the outer wall has just been concluded. In order to have the minimal impact on the Church itself we are following rigorously instructions received.

The next step is the roofing of this area - a space frame which will span over 450 square metres. Subsequently we shall be looking

at an elevated flooring solution to make good for substantial tilting differential (originally necessary for the running of rain water). Lighting, display set up will also be of utmost importance. We shall also be looking at the possibility of improving access to both the old and the new area through the installation of a lift.

The whole project is being funded through the 'Hbieb tat-Tempju ta' Sant' Elena' which is a lay organisation set up with specific purpose to promote and increase the love towards this magnificent Temple. It is to be appreciated that such a project requires substantial funding and is expected to span a number of years up its conclusion. We wish to open this place to the Public as soon as possible.... the major issue is cash resources.... if any one of you may wish to help you may directly credit the Hbieb tat- Tempju account with **HSBC Bank number 042 078402 050**.

For contributions from outside Malta you would need to quote the international **IBAN : MT45 MMEB 4442 8000 0000 4207 8402 050**

We have opened a special scheme whereby a person can donate by 'buying' one or more shares in this project. The cost of one share is Lm20. Anyone contributing in this manner will receive a receipt and a commemorative signed card. The names of all such persons will be framed collectively and prominently placed in the topmost part of the main staircase leading to the new area. These names will be given due prominence and will be heralded as those that have made this new area possible.

Anyone wanting more information or would like to send a donation is to contact Mr. Emanuel Sammut, the Procurator of the Basilica, on: emsammut@maltanet.net

We are confident that through the support of many this project will come to a satisfactory conclusion. We thank you.