

# SOME PUBLIC MONUMENTS OF VALLETTA

1800-1955 (1)

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"Valletta is ornamented in several places by large monuments and testimonial columns, raised as tributes of public or private admiration, in memory of persons, some of whose names would not be otherwise remembered. However, these erections, especially the Ponsonby column, and that on Corradino Hill, give pleasing variety and relief to the outlines of some localities".

WILLIAM TALLACK, 1861. (2)

"Since the English became masters, the proud bastions of Valletta have become sepulchral". (3)

Most cities have in their public squares and parks statues and inscriptions commemorating great men and women, and others whose worth is less apparent, but the memorials of Malta are unusual in that, in many cases, they surmount the graves of the individuals concerned. This custom may have originated in the fact that, in the early days of the British occupation of Malta, there was no adequate English Church where such burials might have taken place and memorials been erected. Whatever the reason, the bastions of Valletta have been so used for over 150 years, and the inscriptions they contain form an interesting sidelight on the history of the island.

## Fort St. Elmo

The first burial in the fortifications of Valletta was that of General Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734-1801). As a young man he fought in the Seven Years' War, and with the outbreak of war with France in 1793 he soon proved his outstanding qualities as a soldier; not only had he great military ability, but he was considerate of those under his command, and his private life was also beyond reproach. In March 1801 he landed in Egypt with an army 15,000 strong, and on 21st defeated the French outside Alexandria. During the battle, however, he received a wound from which he died a week later. On 9th April, the Frigate *Flora* arrived at Malta, bearing the body of the Général which, after remaining in the Lazzaretto until 23rd, was removed to the Chapel in the Palace for lying in state. On 29th an impressive procession, with detachments of the garrison, military bands, and artillery, escorted the funeral carriage, drawn by artillerymen and preceded by the Garrison Chaplain, Dr. Pargeret. Guns were fired from the ramparts and the ships

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(1) The inscriptions given were copied by the author during war service in Malta in 1942-48 unless other sources are indicated. Material supplied by J. Cassar Pullicino Esq. is shown by J. C. P., and references to printed books are given in full in the first reference; subsequently the author's name and the page reference only are given.

(2) Tallack, W. *Malta under the Phoenicians, Knights and English*. London, 1861 pp. 63-64.

(3) MacGill, T. *A handbook, or guide, for strangers visiting Malta*. Malta 1839. p. 47.

in harbour as the cortège passed through streets lined with troops to the bastion of St. John, in the north-east of Fort St. Elmo (4). A grave was excavated from the rock, and the entrance to the turret closed by a slab of black marble (5), with a long inscription in Latin written by Fra Gioacchino Navarro, Librarian of the Order of St. John. The following translation appeared soon after:—

TO THE MEMORY  
OF RALPH ABERCROMBIE, A NATIVE OF SCOTLAND,  
KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF THE BATH;  
A MAN,  
HIGHLY DISTINGUISHED FOR HIS PROBITY,  
MAGNANIMITY, CONSUMMATE COURAGE  
AND MILITARY TALENTS,  
IN THE SEVERAL WARS OF AMERICA AND HOLLAND:  
WHOM GEORGE THE THIRD, KING OF  
GREAT BRITAIN,  
WITH THE UNIVERSAL APPROBATION OF HIS SUBJECTS,  
APPOINTED COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA  
IN WHICH CAPACITY,  
COMPLETING AN EXPEDITION TO EGYPT,  
HE,  
ALTHOUGH EVERY WHERE OPOSED BY THE BRAVEST  
OF THE TROOPS OF FRANCE,  
IN ONE FORCIBLE ATTACK GAINED, AND KEPT  
POSSESSION OF THE WHOLE EGYPTIAN COAST;  
AND IN HIS PROGRESS DEFEATED AND SUPPRESSED  
THEIR ENDEAVOURS TO OPOSE HIM:  
UNTIL, THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ARMIES  
ENGAGING IN A SANGUINARY CONFLICT NEAR  
ALEXANDRIA,  
ON THE 21ST DAY OF MARCH, IN THE YEAR 1801,  
WHILST FIGHTING IN THE FOREMOST RANKS,  
AND IN THE VERY BOSOM OF VICTORY,  
HE RECEIVED A MORTAL WOUND  
IN HIS THIGH;  
OF WHICH, TO THE KEEN REGRET OF ALL WHO KNEW HIM,  
HE EXPIRED

(4) *Dictionary of National Biography*. London 1921-22. Vol. I pp. 43-46. Anderson A. *A Journal of the forces which sailed from the Downs, in April 1800...* London, 1802 pp. 467-8, 471-77. Walsh, T. *A Journal of the late campaign in Egypt...* London, 1803 pp. \*144-145. Angas G. F. *A ramble in Malta and Sicily, in the autumn of 1841*. London, 1842 pp. 28-29. Wilson, R. T. *History of the British Expedition to Egypt*. London, 1802. pp. 351-352.

(5) Descriptions of the grave vary. Angas, p. 29, wrote that Abercromby's "embalmed body is enclosed in a barrel within the turret just as it was brought from the battle of Aboukir", but in view of the elaborate funeral procession this seems unlikely. Anderson, p. 477, referred to "a sepulchre, excavated in the solid rock" which suggests that a grave was made in the floor of the turret. Wilson, p. 351, was incorrect in stating that the tablet was horizontal.

ON THE 28TH DAY OF THE SAME MONTH, IN THE 68TH  
YEAR OF HIS AGE.

HE WAS A COMMANDER  
EMINENTLY CONSPICUOUS FOR HIS SKILL IN THE ART OF WAR;  
FOR HIS PRUDENCE IN PROJECTING  
AND BRAVERY IN EXECUTING, HIS MEASURES,  
AND FOR HIS UNSULLIED HONOR IN ALL, THAT  
CONCERNED THE GLORY OF HIS COUNTRY AND KING.  
HIS SOVEREIGN AND GREAT BRITAIN WERE ALIKE  
GRIEVED AT HIS LOSS.

HENRY PIGOT,  
APPOINTED BY ROYAL AUTHORITY  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE GARRISON  
OF BRITISH TROOPS, STATIONED  
IN THIS ISLAND, HAS PIOUSLY ORDERED  
THIS TO BE RAISED OVER THE ASHES  
OF THAT EXCELLENT AND WELL DESERVING  
OFFICER, CONVEYED HITHER, IN PUBLIC  
FUNERAL, ON THE 29TH DAY OF  
APRIL, IN THE SAME YEAR. (6)

It may well be that it was intended to remove the body to England later, but this was never done, and though commemorated by an elaborate monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, General Abercromby still lies in the turret that now bears his name, on the ramparts of the island whose advantages as a military station so impressed him in the course of his last journey to the east. (7)

With the passage of years, the grave became neglected (8) and in bad repair, and seems eventually to have been forgotten, since in 1871, when the Royal Engineers were carrying out some alterations in connection with the placing of a new gun, they uncovered the coffin. This was still in good condition, and after being re-cased was replaced in a new vault behind the old one. (9)

Adjoining the Abercromby Bastion is one that now bears the name, great-

- (6) There are copies of the inscription, all differing in some ways, in Brocktorff, L. *Inscriptions on the Monuments*. Malta, c. 1838: Anderson, pp. 489-90; Walsh, pp. \*144-5; Wilson, pp. 351-354; Bartlett, J. *Gleanings on the Overland Route*. London, 1851, pp. 66-67. Bartlett, Wilson, and Walsh have translations, the latter by Captain Edward Draper; Wilson's is given here, and Bartlett's copy and translation are reproduced in Zammit, Sir T. *Valletta, an historical sketch*. Malta, 1928, pp. 78-79.
- (7) Laferla, A. V. *British Malta*. Malta, 1945. Vol. I p. 8. Anderson, pp. 477, 491.
- (8) Monson, W. I. *Extracts from a Journal*. 1820, pp. 126-127. Visitors occasionally saw it, however, e.g. Angas in 1829 (pp. 28-29) and Lady Montefiore in 1827 (Montefiore, Lady. *Private journal of a visit to Egypt*, 1836, p. 109.)
- (9) Shaw, C. *Malta Sixty Years Ago*. London, 1875, pp. 17-18. Zammit, Sir T. *Malta; the Islands and their history*. Malta, 1929, pp. 363-4. (The latter's words rather suggest that the coffins of Abercromby and Ball were interred in the same vault, but are not entirely clear) Fortescue, Sir J. *Six British Soldiers*. London, 1928, p. 151 commented "the tomb, when I saw it in 1912, seemed hardly to be honoured as it should."

ly honoured in Maltese history, of Ball. Rear-Admiral Sir Alexander John Ball (1757-1809) had a distinguished naval career in the West Indies (1782-83) and during the Napoleonic Wars. He was a close personal friend of Nelson, who, after initially disliking him, came in time to write "His activity and zeal are conspicuous even amongst the band of Brothers". In 1798 he was placed in command of the blockade of Malta, and gained the high regard of the Maltese. He was recalled in February 1801, but in 1802 returned as Civil Commissioner, a post he held until his death at San Anton Palace on October 25th, 1809. His concern for the people of the island led to his being known as the "Father of the Maltese". He was buried in the bastion formerly known as Conception in Fort St. Elmo, with the following inscription closing the entrance:—

HIC SITUS EST  
 ALEXANDER IOANNES BALL  
 EQ. BARONETTUS EQ. ORDINIS S. FERDINANDI  
 INTER PRAEFECTOS CLASSIS REGIAE BRITANNORUM  
 AD TERTIUM GRADUM EVECTUS  
 QUI  
 SUPREMA POTESTATE IN HANC INSULAM LEGATUS  
 UT POPULO DOMINATIONE FRANCORUM OPPRESSO  
 AC PRO PATRIA MILITANTI  
 SUCCURRERET.  
 MODERATOR CAUTISSIMUS  
 CONSILIO LABORE ET CONSTANTIA  
 QUO MELITENSES  
 IN GALLICA SERVITUTE REPELLENDA  
 ADIUVERENTUR  
 OMNEM OPERAM ET UTILEM POSUIT.  
 OPTIMEQUE MERITUS  
 REGIUS PRAEFECTUS MELITUS ET GAULI DICTUS  
 JUSTITIA BENEFICENTIA ET LENITATE  
 REM CIVILEM SIBI COMMISSAM CUM LAUDE GESSIT  
 IDEM BONARUM ARTIUM COMMERCII  
 ET REI AGRARIAE STUDIOSSIMUS  
 HAS INSULAS QUIBUS  
 PRO DIGNITATE SERENISSIMI REGIS GEORGI III  
 PREFUIT ANNOS DECEM  
 NOVIS OPERIBUS EDIFICIIS, VILIS, HORTISQUE  
 OPULENTIORES REDDIDIT ATQUE EXHILARAVIT.  
 VIXIT ANNOS LII  
 DECESSIT DIE XXV OCTOBRIS MENS ANNO MDCCCIX  
 DOLOR ET LUCTUS BONORUM OMNIUM  
 ELATUS EST FUNERE PUBLICO  
 TOTA EFFUSA OB VIAM CIVITATE. (10)

In February 1871 his grave, like that of General Abercromby, was uncovered, and the body reburied. (11)

(10) *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. III, pp. 70-72. Zammit; *Valletta* pp. 79-81. Rawson, G. *Letters from Lord Nelson*. London, 1949, pp. 42, 197.

(11) *Zammit: Malta* pp. 282-284

### The Lower Barracca

On the Bastion of St. Christopher is a pleasant garden known as the Lower Barracca. On the harbour sides are arcades, and in the centre stands a handsome monument which is the tribute of Malta to Sir Alexander Ball (12). Soon after his death, a committee of "Deputies of the Nation" was formed to consider a public memorial, and in December submitted the design of a mausoleum to Mr. Chapman, the Acting Commissioner, with the request that a site should be granted for its erection (13). Finally the Lower Barracca was chosen, and the monument built by public subscription in 1810. The Architect, Giorgio Pullicino, based his design on the Temple of Theseus at Athens, though the difference in shape and proportion of the memorial makes the effect somewhat different. The allegorical sculptures are the work of Vincenzo Dimech. The frieze bears the inscription:

ALEXANDRO IOAN BALL EQ. BAR.  
MELITENSIVM PIETAS  
ET SVORVM DESIDERIVM

SIMBOLIS PRIVATIS OB MER: P.P. (14)

With time, this monument became weathered and dilapidated. In 1883 Captain E.H. Seymour, R.N., then stationed at Malta, took the initiative in forming a committee to repair it, and the work was eventually carried out under the supervision of the Director of Public Works, the Hon. E.L. Galizia, M.Inst.C.E. The Governor, General Sir Lintorn Simmons, presided at the ceremonial inauguration of the restored memorial on December 18th, 1884. A Latin inscription on the base of the front of the monument, written by Dr. Don Giuseppe Zammit, reads:

MONVMENTVM HOC  
COLLATIONE POPVLI AEDIFICATVM  
A.D. MDCCCX  
PARIQVE MODO RESTITVTVM  
A.D. MDCCCLXXXIV

On the rear, a similar tablet bears the English translation "This monument, erected by public subscription A.D. 1810, was by the same means restored A.D. 1884". (15)

The gardens, originally a place of recreation for the Knights, were used by the French as a market garden during the Siege of 1798-1800, and when a new market was being built in Strada Mercanti (1859-61) one was held here under canvas (16). The area was cordoned off with barbed wire during the second world war, but is now once again a popular resort.

### The Upper Barracca

The best known of the public gardens of Valletta is that known as the Upper Barracca, situated on a lofty part of the fortifications and overlook-

(12) Godwin Rev. G. N. *A Guide to the Maltese Islands*. Malta, 1880. pp. 125, 136.

(13) Hardman, W. *A History of Malta...* 1798-1815. London, 1909. p. 508.

(14) Zammit; *Valletta*. pp. 81-83: Laferla. Vol. I. p. 72.

(15) Zammit; *Valletta* p. 82: Godwin p. 136: Rutter, J.G. *Illustrated Guide to Malta and Gozo*, 7th ed. Malta, c 1935. pp. 109-110: Seymour, Sir E. H. *My Naval career and travels*. London, 1911 pp. 228-9.

(16) Godwin pp. 136, 125.

ing the Grand Harbour. When Valletta was originally built to defend Malta from the Turks, the ramparts were divided up between the Knights of the different Langues for defensive purposes. As the danger receded, these posts became recreational rather than military, and the Knights of Italy used the bastion nearest their Auberge for a garden and fashionable lounge. In 1661 one of their number, Fra Flaminio Balbiano, Prior of Messina, had the arcades built and roofed at his own expense (17). This Knight was one of the most notable members of the Order of St. John of his day. He had served with distinction in the navy of the Order, while his benefactions included the enrichment of the Chapel of Our Lady of Philermos in the Conventual Church of St. John, and the erection in 1641 of an ornamental pyramid (now destroyed by bombing) in the cemetery of those who fell in the Great Siege, adjoining the Church. He died at the age of 95 in 1669, and is buried in the church, which contains two inscriptions in his memory. (18)

The gardens on the ramparts, known originally as the Bastion of St. Peter and St. Paul, or "Porta d'Italia", were used for recreation for many years. In 1715 the Duc de Vendome gave a great banquet there to the Knights who had assembled in force to repel a threatened Turkish invasion (19). Later, a casual sentry leaning over the ramparts and smoking a pipe let a spark fall into the arsenal below, and so caused a serious fire (20).

In 1775 a revolt against Grand Master Ximenes was plotted. It began during a festa, when attention was diverted by a fiddler on the Upper Baracca. The revolt failed, and as it was believed the conspirators met under the arcades of the same garden, the roofing was removed to make clandestine meetings more difficult. This theory is not certain; it has also been suggested that the roofs were taken for firewood by the French during the Siege of 1798-1800. (21)

With the British occupation in 1800, and more especially with the Governorship of Sir Thomas Maitland (1813-1824) a new use was made of the gardens by the erection of monuments to Lt. Col. Edwards (1816) and Sir Giuseppe Zammit (1824). Sir Thomas himself was buried in the centre of the gardens, and from time to time other memorials have been erected.

In 1827 Lady Montefiore wrote of the Upper Baracca as "a pleasant promenade", and it is mentioned, sometimes under the name of the "New Barracca" as a favourite resort in the writings of many travellers to Malta. Not only was it pleasant in itself, but the view of the Grand Harbour and the cities beyond was magnificent (22). It is the setting of an episode in the remarkable novel "Grand Harbour" by Bradda Field, who writes vividly

(17) Zammit: *Valletta* pp. 57-60; Schermerhorn, E. W. *Malta of the Knights*. London, 1929. p. 207.

(18) Sammut, E. *The Co-Cathedral of St. John*. Malta, 1950. pp. 31, 22; Scicluna, Sir H. P. *The Church of St. John in Valletta* Malta, 1955. pp. 80, 132, 133, 271, 296.

(19) Harrison, A. St. B. & Hubbard, R. P. S. *Valletta and the Three Cities*. Malta, 1945. p. 58; Godwin p. 118.

(20) Schermerhorn p. 215.

(21) Schermerhorn pp. 207, 289; Godwin 247.

(22) Montefiore pp. 109, 274; Badger, G. P. *Description of Malta and Gozo*. Malta, 1838. pp. 198-200; Slade, A. *Turkey, Greece and Malta*. London, 1837. Vol. I p. 64.

(23) Field, Bradda: *Grand Harbour*. Constable, 1834 p. 84.

of ".....the seventeenth century garden spreading agreeably before her. Red and white oleanders stood out vividly against the dull green of cypress trees and palms. Climbing pink geraniums wound themselves round pillars of naval and military memorials and dropped dying petals upon baked earthen paths. Bougainvillea flung itself in purple festoons over the worn arches of Fra Balbiano's historic arcade". (23)

Amongst other activities in the gardens were band concerts and an annual flower show held by the Economico-Agrarian Society, who maintained the gardens for some years. Countrymen who came in for St. John's Day were allowed to leave their carts there for the night. (24)

Perhaps the most remarkable event in the gardens, however, was the ceremonial blessing of the sea from the harbour side of the Barracca, during the Eucharistic Congress of 1913. (25)

1940 brought the air raids, and the arcades and memorials suffered severely from bombing. With the return of peace, reconstruction became possible, and much of the damage has been restored, monuments removed for safety returned, and new ones erected. There are still some which have not been entirely made good, however.

The gardens are approached from Castille Square. Flanking the entrance are two old cannons. That on the left is of German make and dated 1619; that on the right bears the arms of Grand Master Manoel de Vilbena and was made by Petrus Ribot in 1728.

On the wall to the right of the entrance is a much discoloured and partly illegible tablet headed by a trophy with a Union Jack design on a circle in the centre. Below the inscription is an upturned boat in relief. The wording is:

.....WOOD	SURGEON
.....STRATFORD	ASSIST PAYMASTER
.....DA GAMA	MID (PORTUGUESE NAVY)
E.W. FIELDING	MIDSHIPMAN
S.H. KEMBLE	MIDSHIPMAN
W.C. HADRILL	MASTER'S ASSISTANT
C. ARTHUR	QUARTERMASTER
W. EASTERBROOK	PRIVATE R.M.
W. FITZSIMMONS	A.B.
J.G. WEBBER	ORD.
OF H.M.S. ORLANDO	
DROWNED BY A BOAT UPSETTING	
IN TUNIS BAY, NOVEMBER 3R 1864	
BE YE READY	

Within the gardens there are arcades to the left and in front. The first memorial on the left has suffered from enemy action, and it is a little difficult to visualise the original design. There are two tablets on the pedestal, flanked by pairs of relief figures of infantrymen, rather poorly executed. This

(24) Godwin p. 118; Zammit; Valletta p. 60.

(25) *The Congressionist's Vade-Mecum: XXIV International Eucharistic Congress. Malta, 1913.* p. 65; Farrugia, Mgr. L. *Ricordo del XXIV Congresso Eucaristico Internazionale...* Malta. 1914. pp. 205-6.

base supports a curious object like a lidless rectangular box, placed on end and empty. The inscription reads:

TO THE MEMORY OF  
JOHN BATHURST THOMSON  
SURGEON OF H.B. MAJESTY'S 69TH REGT  
WHO DIED AT VALLETTA  
ON THE 18TH SEPT. 1850 AGED 36 YEARS  
THIS MONUMENT HAS BEEN ERECTED  
BY THE OFFICERS, NON COMMD OFFICERS  
AND SOLDIERS OF THE CORPS

The remainder of the inscription, and a further 24-line inscription in Latin on the rear of the pedestal, could not be copied owing to being overgrown by foliage.

In the centre of the gardens is the memorial to the man who first used them for commemorative purposes, Sir Thomas Maitland. To the right of a circular pool, surrounded by railings decorated with Maltese crosses, is a simple sarcophagus type of tomb in red-brown stone, inscribed:

FRONT: SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE RIGHT HONORABLE SIR THOMAS MAITLAND  
MANY YEARS GOVERNOR OF MALTA AND  
LORD HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE IONIAN ISLANDS  
HE DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT FLORIANA JANUARY 17TH 1824  
AGED 63.

REAR: IN HIM HIS COUNTRY LOST ONE OF ITS ABLEST  
AND MOST FAITHFUL SERVANTS  
HIS OWN FOLLOWERS THE STEADIEST PATRON  
AND THE FIRMEST FRIEND

Sir Thomas Maitland was Governor of Malta from 1813 to 1824, and in that time earned the nick-name of "King Tom", for his forceful and at times overbearing personality. He was entrusted with the difficult task of ruling the Ionian Islands as well as the Governorship of Malta, and spent much of his time there, but it was at Malta that he died, vigorous, hard-working and active to the last. After attending to his official duties on the morning of January 17th, 1824, he went to Floriana to visit his friend the Rev. J.T.H. LeMesurier, the Garrison Chaplain. At 1.30 p.m. he had an apoplectic stroke, and died that night. On 19th his body lay in state in the Hall of St. Michael and the George, the Order of which he was the first Grand Master (1818), and on 21st it was carried in procession to the Upper Barracca, where Mr. Le Mesurier read the funeral service and three volleys were fired over the grave. (26)

Writing in 1834, Adolphus Slade commented of Valletta that "Maitland and Hastings, also Sir Henry Hotham, sleep on its lines: the two former still — no credit to their heirs — unmemntoed by stone or tablet!" This was not correct, for Lady Montefiore referred to Maitland's monument in her

(26) *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. VII 818-20 (The account of the funeral is wrong in every particular); *Gentleman's Magazine* 1824 Vol. I pp. 370-1: Lord, Frewen. Sir Thomas Maitland. London, 1898, pp. 279-280. *Laferla* Vol. I pp. 88-124.



diary seven years earlier. The explanation seems to lie in the account given by Tallack: "Sir Thomas himself lies buried in the same spot, but under a broad slabwork tomb, which, notwithstanding its size, is generally passed unnoticed, through its being level with the ground, and situated amongst and under the thick shrubs behind the arches of the colonnade". This grave was replaced by the present memorial in 1863, but the present inscription is copied from the original one. (27)

Prominently placed in the centre of the gardens is the memorial of another notable figure in Maltese history — Lord Strickland. Gerald Strickland, first Baron Strickland and 6th Count Della Catena, was the son of Commander Walter Strickland, R.N., and his wife Louisa, née Bonici. In 1886, at the age of 25, he was elected to the Malta Council of Government, and later became Chief Secretary. In 1902 he left that post to become successively Governor of the Leeward Islands, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales. After his retirement from the colonial service in 1917 he resumed an active part in Maltese politics. From 1927 to 1932 he was Prime Minister, a period that saw bitter disputes in internal affairs. In 1939 he became leader of the elected member of the new Council of Government. He died on August 22nd 1940. His vigorous and combative nature roused much opposition, but his zeal for the enhancement of Malta's status in the British Empire was widely appreciated. (28)

The statue representing him was the work of Antonio Sciortino; it was executed in 1945 and erected by public subscription in 1947. The pedestal is inscribed:

LORD STRICKLAND G.C.M.G.  
COUNT DELLA CATENA  
1861—1940 (29)

This statue was one of the last works of the distinguished Maltese sculptor Antonio Sciortino, who was born at Zebbug in 1883. He was trained in Rome, and spent much of his life in Italy, but never lost his devotion to his native island. His first important work was a group suggested by an incident in Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables"; entitled "Les Gavroches", and this group now stands in the left-hand corner of the gardens, in the angle of the arcades (30). The base is inscribed:

LES GAVROCHES  
BY THE MALTESE SCULPTOR  
ANTONIO SCIORTINO  
PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT  
BY  
THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, MANUFACTURES AND COMMERCE  
1907

During the war this was removed for safety, but has now been replaced. On January 16th 1951 the sculptor's small bronze model was presented to

(27) Slade Vol. I p. 64; Montefiore p. 109; MacGill p. 46 (mentioned "only a stone"); Tallack pp. 363-4; Zammit; Malta p. 343; Brocktorff.

(28) *Dictionary of National Biography* 1931-1940. London, 1949. pp. 338-99

(29) J.C.P.: *Antonio Sciortino* (pamphlet) Malta, 1947. pp. 25, 28.

(30) *Antonio Sciortino* pp. 7, 9, 17.

H.M. Queen Elizabeth II (then Princess Elizabeth) by the Prime Minister of Malta at a ceremony in the Auberge d'Aragon. (31)

Sciortino's work included portraiture, allegorical subjects, and the project for an ambitious Empire Shrine after the 1914-1918 war. Examples of his work are to be found in many countries. Those erected in public places in Malta included the bust of Sir Adrian Dingli in the Maglio Gardens (1907), the International Eucharistic Congress Monument (1917) and the Great Siege Memorial (1927). Early in 1947 he presented a collection of his models in plaster to be housed in the Malta Museum. He died on 31st October of the same year. (32)

The latest addition to the monuments of the Upper Barracca links the war-scarred gardens with the great war leader Sir Winston Churchill; it is a bronze bust, presented to Sir Winston by the people of Malta, and placed on this spot at his request. The idea of a presentation originated with the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, whose President, Mr. Justice Montanaro Gauci, played a very active part in furthering the proposal. Contributions were received from widely representative bodies — Cathedral Chapters, schools, the Chamber of Advocates, professional bodies, clubs and other organisations, as well as individuals. The large bust, together with an illuminated address prepared by Sisters of the Order of St. Joseph stating "To you half the world owes its freedom, democracy its survival and justice its triumph" was presented to Sir Winston at his London home at Hyde Park Gate on August 3rd., 1955, by Mr. Justice Montanaro Gauci. (*Times*, August 4th, 1955: Information from Mr. Justice Montanaro Gauci).

The bust was the work of Vincent Apap, holder of the first Government scholarship for sculpture, who studied at Rome at the British Academy of Art under Antonio Sciortino. His work, both in portraiture and in imaginative sculpture, ranks high in contemporary Maltese art, and one of his earliest successes was the Fra Diego statue in Hamrun. In 1934 he executed a bust of H.R.H. the Duke of Kent at St. James' Palace, and this, presented to the people of Malta by H.R.H., was inaugurated in the Upper Barracca Gardens on November 29th, the day of his wedding to the Princess Marina. It was destroyed during the bombing, and its site is now occupied by the Churchill bust. (Barrington, B.L. ed. *The Malta Year Book* 1954. Malta, 1953, p. 108).

This stands between "Le Gavroches" and the Thomson memorial; the white stone base is inscribed:

TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
SIR WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL K.G.  
THE  
PEOPLE OF MALTA AND GOZO  
MCMLV

(31) *Times of Malta*, January 17th & 21st, 1951.

(32) Antonio Sciortino pp. 11-15, 27, 516; *Who was who* 1941-50. London, 1925, p. 1030.

Passing through the arches and turning to the left one finds a number of further memorials. Immediately on the left hand side, on the opposite side of the pillar to "Les Gavroches" is a battered memorial whose inscription is now missing. It consists of a tablet with a trophy with "80" in the centre, surmounted by a sphinx. The number 80 also appears in the iron railings which surround it. It commemorates Captain Rinaldo Sceberras of the 80th (now the South Staffordshire) Regiment, whose badge includes the sphinx.

Captain Sceberras entered the 80th Foot as an ensign, by purchase, on March 16th, 1826. He was promoted to Lieutenant on April 17th 1833, Captain March 17th 1843. In this latter year the regiment was transferred from Australia to India, and two years later was engaged in the Sutlej Campaign against the Sikhs (33). Captain Sceberras was killed in a desperate struggle during the Battle of Ferozeshah, on the night of December 21st-22nd, 1845, which was thus described by one who took part:

"While engaged in this I saw with surprise a large body of Seikhs, all clad in chain armour, rise from the ground and attack our people hand to hand. Captain Sceberras seized their standard, and immediately fell. Captain Best next rushed on it, and was cut down also. Sergeant Browne, a young married man, next took it, and shared a similar fate. The touch of that standard seemed fatal, yet no sooner was it down than another seized it. Finally Colour Sergeant Kirkland, of the Grenadier Company, got and kept it, though severely wounded". (34)

The dearly-won standard now hangs over the regimental memorial in Lichfield Cathedral. (35)

The next arch has been filled in, and on it is a tablet to Arthur Baynes, Secretary to Major-General Pigot, who administered the Government of Malta from February 20th to June 30th, 1801. It reads:

FUROR ARMA MINISTRAT  
ARTHURUS BAYNES  
MAJORIS IN MILITIA  
COMMISSARIUM IN RE CIVILI  
ET A SECRETIS IN DUABUS  
INSULIS MUNERIBUS FUNCTUS  
DECUS JAM HODIE  
LUCTUS SUORUM  
HAESIT IN MEDIO VITAE  
ET HONORUM CURSU  
INVIDA RAPTUS MORTE  
ANNORUM TRIGINTA ET OCTO  
IMPAVIDUS VIR ET LIBER  
CONTEMPTOR FORTUNAE  
NON SERVUS

(33) Chesney, Col. A. G. *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army*. London, 1897. p. 198.

(34) *Army Quarterly* Vol. XXXIII No. 2 January 1937 pp. 270, 280.

(35) Savage, Lt.-Col. M. B. *Lichfield Cathedral: a history of the Naval and Military Monuments...* Lichfield, 1945. pp. 21-23.

JUSTITIAM COLENS  
CAETERA MITTENS  
OBIT III NONAS OCTOBRIS MDCCCIII  
THE ABOVE INSCRIPTION WAS ERECTED  
TO THE MEMORY OF ARTHUR BAYNES ESQUIRE  
BY HIS NUMEROUS FRIENDS IN THIS ISLAND  
AND RE-ERECTED IN THIS LOCALITY  
BY HIS SON GENERAL SIMCOE BAYNES  
COLONEL OF THE 35TH ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT  
BY PERMISSION OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
SIR CHARLES THOMAS VAN STRAUBENZEE K.C.B.  
GOVERNOR OF MALTA

It has not been possible to discover any details of Mr. Baynes other than those given in the inscription, but the motto indicates that he came from the same family as Sir Christopher Baynes, Bart (1755-1837). The original situation of the memorial is unknown; its transfer to the Barracca was presumably made between the arrival of General Van Straubenzee (June 1872) and the death of General Baynes (September 13th 1875). (36)

The next arch but one is also filled in, and in front of it is a memorial to Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Hotham, K.C.B. (1777-1833). He saw much distinguished service in the Napoleonic Wars, chiefly in the Mediterranean and off the French coast. In May 1812, when in command of the *Northumberland*, he destroyed two French frigates which had been a constant danger to British shipping in the Atlantic, an action involving great courage and outstanding seamanship. After the war, he served as a Lord of the Admiralty on two occasions. In 1831 he became Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, a post which he held until his death, after two days' illness, on April 19th 1833. He was buried in one of the cemeteries on the ramparts of Floriana (37). His memorial was designed by R. C. Sconce, Agent-Victualler to H.M. Dockyard, whose daughter wrote:

"During part of the summer of 1833 my Father was engaged in a *new* work — the preparing a monument to Admiral Sir Henry Hotham, who died very suddenly at Malta, as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station.

"The officers of the fleet subscribed £600 or £700 for a monument to their beloved and revered Admiral, and begged my Father to help them in getting it executed.

"Besides designing the whole and putting it in train to be duly accomplished, he modelled with his own hand, in clay, a basso-relievo, to form the front of the sarcophagus. This basso-relievo was four feet long and about three deep, most elaborately worked. I think I see it now, on the easel, in our drawing room at St. Julian's, and my father standing before it, eagerly at work at his novel occupation.

"It represented an English line-of-battle ship destroying two French frigates,—an action fought by Sir Henry Hotham. The sea and the ships were

(36) Zammit; *Malta* pp. 432, 436; *Burke's Peerage* 1953 p. 158; *Laferla* Vol. II p. 1; *Army List* November 1875.

(37) *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol IX pp. 1300-1301; *MacGill* pp. 75-6.

very much praised. My Father excelled in drawing ships; and as he says, speaking of the monument, in a letter to his brother, at Jamaica, "It is *new*, because sculptors are never *seamen*, and I am something of a seaman, and have made myself a modeller".

"The sarcophagus, in clay, was sent to Rome to be transferred to marble. This was surmounted by a colossal bust; and, I believe, the inscription was simply the word "Hotham", with the date. The monument, when completed, was placed in the 'New Barracca', overlooking the harbour.

"I have lately heard that it has been moved to a more conspicuous place, under one of the arches, which has been walled in; that it is in good repair, and looks just as fresh as when it was first erected" (38).

Whatever the original intention, the monument bears the inscription:

SIR HENRY HOTHAM  
BY THE OFFICERS OF HIS FLEET  
MDCCCXXXIII

His great-nephew, Captain C.E. Hotham, D.S.C., R.N., served on the naval staff at Malta, where he died on January 31st, 1940. (39)

At the end of the arcade is an elaborate statue of Sir Giuseppe Niccolò Zammit, who served as Secretary to Government at the beginning of the 19th century and became a Judge of H.M. Superior Court in 1814. His services were recognised on the foundation of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, of which he was made a Knight Commander on December 16th, 1818. He died at the age of 52 on September 7th, 1823, and was buried in the Chapel of St. Sebastian in St. John's Co-Cathedral. (40)

This monument was erected from public funds in 1824, at the instigation of Sir Thomas Maitland. To make room for it, a marble bust of Grand Master Clermont Gessan was removed to the exterior of the Gardens. The statue, is the work of a Maitese artist. Flanking the pedestal, which has fasces at the four corners, are two couchant lions, modelled after that of Canova, a copy of which in clay (now in the Malta University) was brought from Rome for the purpose. (41)

There were originally four inscribed tablets, but all have been damaged, two so badly as to be quite unreadable. Those that remain are:

MEMORIAE  
IOSEPHI NICOLAI ZAMITT  
MELITENSIS  
U.T.D. ET DIST. ORD. EQUEST.  
S.S. MICHAELIS ET GEORGIS  
COMMENDATORIS

(38) Bunbury, Sarah. *Life and Letters of Robert Clement Sconce...* 1861. Vol. I pp. 298-294.

(39) *Times of Malta* February 1st 1940.

(40) Zammit; *Malta* pp. 300, 436, 439; Rutter 108; Scicluna pp. 81, 276.

(41) *Malta Blue Book* 1824 p. 10; Montefiore 74; MacGill 45; Brocktorff (gives only the first inscription).

VIR ILLUSTRIS  
 MIRO QUODAM INGENII ACUMINE  
 PRAEDITUS ASSIDUO LABORE ET  
 CULTURA LITERARIA ADAUCTUS  
 LINGUA MORIBUS LEGIBUSQUE  
 ANGLICANIS- QUAM PLURIMUM  
 VERSATUS QUICQUID IN ILLO  
 A NATURA INSITUM QUICQUID  
 STUDIO COMPERTUM EXSTITIT  
 SERVITIO REGIAE MAIESTATI  
 ET UTILITATI PUBLICAE CONCIVIVM  
 FELICITER ADHIBUIT

EXCELLENTISSIMUS ET PRAEHONORABILIS  
 THOMAS MAITLAND  
 REGIAE MAIESTATI A PRIVATIS CONSILIIIS  
 INSULARUM MELITENSIVM PRAEFECT  
 ORDINISQUE DISTINCTISSIMI  
 S.S. MICHAELIS ET GEORGII  
 MAGNUS MAGISTER  
 HOC CENOTAPHIVM  
 SIMIL ET HONORIS MONUMENTUM  
 . . . . PUBLICIS P.C.

There are a number of tablets on the uprights of the arcade to the right.  
 The first of these commemorates another distinguished Maltese:

1847 — 1947

LILL-

MONS. F.S. CARUANA  
 ARCISQOF TA' RODI U ISQOF TA' MALTA  
 DIFENSUR QALBIENI TAL-GZEJZER TAGHNA  
 IN-NIES TA' ART TWELIDU  
 B'TURIJA TA' MĦABBA  
 B'HEGGA TAL-KAZINI  
 F'GHELUQ IL-MITT SENA MINN MEWTU

This is the only inscription in the gardens in Maltese, and may be translated:

1847 — 1947

TO

MGR. F.S. CARUANA  
 ARCHBISHOP OF RHODES AND BISHOP OF MALTA  
 BRAVE DEFENDER OF OUR ISLANDS  
 HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN  
 AS A MARK OF LOVE

ON THE INITIATIVE OF BAND-CLUBS  
 ON THE FIRST CENTENARY OF HIS DEATH (42)

Francesco Saverio Caruana (1758-1847) became prominent in Maltese history in 1798 when, as Canon Caruana, he took a leading part in the rising of the Maltese against the French, who had expelled the Knights of St. John.

He was not only active during the ensuing two years of struggle, but continued to act in public affairs in such a way as to draw from Sir Thomas Maitland the tribute "through all the discordant times which have agitated the world for the last 31 years (he) displayed a degree of zeal, talent and perseverance for the real honour and interest of the Catholic Faith and for the welfare of his countrymen that does him the highest honour". In 1831 he was appointed Bishop of Malta on the recommendation of the Governor, Sir Frederick Ponsonby. He filled this office until his death at the age of 89, though latterly in failing health, and was highly respected by both Maltese and British for his forthright character, piety and learning (43). It is interesting that the initiative in erecting this belated memorial came from band-clubs, which play a part in Maltese social life greater than their title would suggest.

The simple tablet on the next upright is self-explanatory:

IN

MEMORY OF

MR. EDWARD SMITH GUNNER R.N.  
 FREDERICK WHITE P.O. 1 CL  
 WILLIAM JONES P.O. 1 CL  
 JOSEPH NORTH P.O. 2 CL  
 ARTHUR EDWARDS A.B.  
 RICHARD FIDDICK A.B.  
 WILLIAM MCCLURE A.B.  
 WILLIAM RYAN A.B.  
 JOHN FROOD A.B.  
 WILLIAM BROOKS A.B.  
 WILLIAM BOYCE A.B.  
 WILLIAM MAYOR A.B.  
 WILLIAM MCCORMACK L.SIG.  
 WALTER ORRIN QUAL. SIG.  
 WILLIAM PERRY LDG. STO. 1 CL.  
 OF H.M.T.B. DESTROYER "ORWELL" WHO  
 LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE COLLISION  
 BETWEEN THAT SHIP AND H.M. SHIP  
 "PIONEER" OFF CAPE VARCAM ON THE  
 30TH JANUARY 1903

ERECTED BY THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE FLEET

(42) J. C. P.

(43) Laferla Vol. I pp. iv. 118, 142-144.

(To be continued).