



MAY 2023 - NEWSLETTER

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GUIDE DOG FOR THE BLIND

Since Lions Club Sliema will soon be procuring a Guide Dog for the Blind from the Lions Guide Dogs Association in Italy, it is appropriate to get to know the history of this Association which was launched in 1959. It all started when Maurizio Galimberti, an extraordinary man who was an aeronautical engineer and an Air Force Pilot during the Second World War became completely blind after a terrible accident. Mr. Galimberti went to Germany to buy a trained guide dog for the visually impaired thus regaining this way life autonomy. Realising how important this was for a blind person, he had the brilliant idea of building a similar school in Italy.

In 1959 the Lions Guide Dog Organisation was established. In the same year Maurizio Galimberti became a member of Lions Club Milano Host (the oldest Lions Club in Italy) thus finding some new and very generous friends who were willing to help him. In 1963 the Organisation hired Walter Hantke, a German trainer, who brought along an innovative training method, to set up a guide dog training centre in the Galaratese District of Milan.

After ten years when the growth of training became intense and space was restricted, the Provincia di Milano decided to assign a new 25,000 square metre area in Limbiate. Thanks to private and public donations the centre was renovated and expanded. By 1975 the renovation works were completed and the organisation became operative. On March 10, 1986 the President of the Italian Republic signed a law that recognised Lions Guide Dogs Association as a "Moral Authority".

The Lions Guide Dogs Association and Mobility Services for the Visually impaired, as a non-profit institution, trains the dogs and gives them to blind people in need on a gratuitous loan.

In 2013 the Lions Guide Dogs Association completed the construction of the new kennels which were inaugurated on May 5 during the “Limbiate Day” celebrations. The Centre includes 38 kennels, each of which can host two dogs and has an indoor and outdoor area used for training dogs, a grooming area, and a storage compound.

In 2014 the Association bought the Limbiate complex from the Monza and Brianza District thus becoming sole owners of the area. Two years later a new nursery was built. The nursery has five delivery rooms, a Veterinary Office, a food preparation area for the weaning puppies and an obstacle course that was specially created for the puppies. In the premises there are also offices for the administrative staff. Besides the administrative staff, the Limbiate centre employs a “Puppy Walker”, a Families Supervisor and two co-workers, two secretaries, a maintenance operator and eight trainers. All the employees have a regular contract that respects the National Laws regarding the “Commerce Services Jobs”.

The Lions Clubs of Multiple District 108 ITALY cover 45% of the costs made with their subscription fees or by the Private and Public donations in terms of estates or inheritance. People who learn about the Lions Dogs Association often decide to leave to the Organisation a donation as a recognition for the important service to those in need by the Organisation.

Training Programme: The duration of the training programme is, on average, about six months. Training starts on the centre’s obstacle course where the dogs learn the basic commands that are necessary. Two years ago, a group of Lions Club Sliema members had the opportunity to visit Limbiate (see photo on page 4). The group were taken round the premises enabling them to learn more about the work required to train a guide dog and followed one of the trainers taking the dog around the training area. In order to prepare them to face the city traffic, which is divided in zones and areas. Training starts with a low level of difficulty to arrive in the end to a higher level, which is called “Intense Traffic.” This involves the use of public transportation, pedestrian crossing and all the other situations that a visually impaired person will have to successfully deal with, while walking with a guide dogs, in order to guide safely the visually impaired.

Lion President Norman Wilson reports on:

THE VISIT TO MARTINA FRANCA

Lions Club Sliema members and wives boarded a Ryanair flight on 12 May, 2023, to Bari, Puglia, having been invited to complete our Twinning with Lions Club Martina Franca Valle d'Itria during their splendid Charter Gala Dinner the following evening.

After a slight delay, we eventually took off on our one-hour flight to Italy to be greeted with hugs on arrival by Lion Edward Zammit, our great friend, who has gone on to join LC Martina Franca Valle d'Itria, his local club.

Boarding our comfortable vehicle, we were whisked off into the countryside, uphill and down dale along narrow tree-lined roads to our welcoming restaurant to enjoy a traditional dinner with local wine. We watched with interest the fromager, cheesemaker to you and I, skilfully producing a large cheese in 95-degree liquid with his paddle and bucket.

Soon this traditional greeting was ready for us all to taste – yum! This was followed by more antipasti - local air-dried ham and salami and a dish rooted in tradition of Puglia known as macco de fave, a much-treasured fava bean puree which was once a peasant dish to have at the end of a long day. Those were only the starters! After all this nosh, a short drive south took us to our hotel in Martina Franca with its lush gardens. Ah – bed

The following morning, we were taken on a guided tour of the tenth century white town of Martina Franca. Being of Catholic tradition, the town is named after St Martin of Tours who, it is said, cut his cloak in half to share with a scantily clad beggar. This legend is apparent on the façade of several of the baroque buildings including the elaborate Basilica where we witnessed a local bride and groom. The name Franca comes from the fact that the inhabitants were privileged to be exempt from tax.



Lions Club Sliema members at Martina Franca

Later we much enjoyed a splendid gala evening shared with many dignitaries, including high level Italian Lions, with a fantastic singer and

electronic keyboard that seems to issue every sophisticated musical sound known to man. Our President signed the Twinning Document along with the President of Martina Franca Valle d'Itria.

On Sunday, we boarded our comfortable vehicle to go to Alberobello, a very famous “must see” small town made up of trulli buildings - whitewashed stone huts, still lived in, with conical roofs that have been around for centuries.



The Trull at Albarello

In the words of UNESCO which declared Alberobello a World Heritage site in 1996, the easily recognisable trulli (the singular form is *trullo*) are remarkable examples of drywall (mortarless) construction a prehistoric building technique

still in use in this region. The trulli are made of roughly

worked technique still in use. The trulli are made of roughly worked limestone boulders collected from neighbouring fields. Characteristically, they feature pyramidal, dome or conical roofs built up of corbelled limestone slabs. They were constructed to avoid paying tax. When the tax collector was approaching, they pulled out the key stone of their trullo and it fell. On the departure of the “dreaded nasty man” they would reconstruct their little compact house. After a marvellous meal at Lion Edward Zammit’s favourite restaurant, we made our way to the regional capital and metropolitan city of Bari on the Adriatic Sea with around half of the Malta’s population spread over 45 sq. km with its Swabian Castle and famous Basilica of its patron St Nicholas, who later become known as Santa Claus. The city has strong influences from Greece (still in evidence) and Rome and is a major port having been used in the past as a major slave centre.

Modern Bari still has its old town quarters not much changed for many years with narrow alleyways and street pumps for water. It is not surprising that Bari’s patron St Nicholas is always represented holding 3 bags/balls of money. He hailed from an extremely rich family and donated his inherited fortune to the needy. The legendary allegory of St Nicholas is told of him having 3 bags

of gold, throwing them during the hours of darkness through an open window of a poor man whose three daughters, because of their lack of dowry, were destined to be prostitutes and who thanks to St Nicholas could now marry.

The previous day, Monday, was spent taking a taxi to Matera, renowned for its ancient rock-cut urban dwellings in the soft limestone that were occupied until well into the 20th century. There are twelve levels in this city clinging to the edge of a canyon for defence. There are around 150 churches carved from the calcarenite rock of the region. A deep ravine divides the territory into two areas and Matera was built so that it was hidden which made it difficult for the water supply. There are several cisterns and water channels. Wednesday, our last day, found us shopping in the car-free area of Bari – well what else! How could you round off a perfect break otherwise?



WOMEN IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY

One of the themes discussed at the 2023 Mediterranean Solidarity Organisation Conference in Tangier was “Supporting the Role of women in the Mediterranean Society. Past District Governor Selva Hulgen from MD118 Turkey presided over this session during which various delegates spoke on this matter.

Following is the final report on this topic: “The situation is not ideal in all countries. There is a need for automatisms to ensure a better and greater participation in political life and in economic society. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to provide better opportunities by offering more education and training, as well as the means to achieve economic independence in order to achieve a fair social balance. In order to raise awareness in society, Lions must be there. Special committees should be created in each district to deal with these problems. There should be a follow-up of decisions and better still, a network. In a spirit of collaboration, we should not only think of a fight but a rapprochement between men and women, working together to reach the same levels. Women often lack autonomy, the Lions experience can be a good example of participation and fight against discrimination. It is also necessary to be firm against violence. Female Lions members are a light to defend the most vulnerable. In Tunisia, Lions have made excellent progress. Lions must focus on the 2030 objectives of the United Nations Agenda on gender parity. The digital revolution can be useful and we must open up this field to women in order to better defend their interests and to be

able to strengthen themselves in society, starting from the family, with laws that help them in this process. Gender parity therefore depends on the family, society and the laws, so in the end it is a question of democracy”.

NOTE: The 2024 Mediterranean Solidarity Organisation Conference is being held in Bologna in March. It has now been confirmed that the 2025 Conference will be held in late March at Antibes, France. Further information about these Conferences will be promulgated nearer to the dates of each conference. By attending these conferences, Lions get to know each other better and also learn a lot about how Lions Clubs in other countries manage to keep adhering to the motto “WE SERVE” in their particular environment which at times differ from one country to another, while adhering to the International motto.



EYE SPECTACLES

Thirteen boxes of new and used spectacles together with many lenses and sun glasses were despatched to the “Centro Italiano Lions Raccolta Occhiali Usati” at Baraggino, Chivasso, Italy. Express Travel kindly agreed to transport the consignment to Italy.

This was made possible through the good offices of Lion Dr. Valhvor Zammit who made the necessary arrangements with the Company.

After being classified at the Centre, the glasses are then sent to various African countries and given to people who need to improve their eyesight and cannot afford to get new spectacles.

Our Club has been doing this humanitarian service since way back 1980 when eye glasses were first sent to Harare, Zambia.

The Director of the Italian Centre speaking to Lion Tom Restall stated that the Centre is always pleased to receive the big number of spectacles sent by our Club as there is always a great variety of spectacles which can be sent to many people in African countries in dire need of spectacles which they cannot afford to have.

“WE SERVE”

ART AND SOUL

The monthly talk in April was given by Ms. Joan Barnewell who dealt with “Art and Soul” the Jesuit Influences on some of the Arts of Imperial China.

Ms. Barnewell spoke on the “Journey to the East” which recreates one of the great stories in the history of Christianity and brings to life the Jesuit China Missions.

The speaker explained in detail the Jesuit Journey to the East. Her interesting talk was complimented with various slides depicting the arts of Imperial China.

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JESUITS IN MALTA

A handout prepared by Ms. Barnewell, gave a chronological story on the Jesuits in Malta. The Jesuits came to Malta in 1592 at the request of the Pope to open a college in Malta with the right of conferring academic degrees. When Grand Master Pinto suppressed the Jesuits in Malta in 1768 their college became the University of Malta.

The Jesuits returned to Malta at the request of the Pope in 1845 and tried unsuccessfully to open a college at Valletta. In 1860 several Italian Jesuits, expelled from Palermo, came to Malta and the Bishop of Gozo committed his Seminary in their care.

In 1877 the English Jesuits opened a college in St. Julians. However, this college was closed in 1906. A year later, the Sicilian Jesuits left the Gozo Seminary and by order of Pope St. Pius X opened St. Aloysius College at Birkirkara.

Since 1945 the Jesuits have opened a novitiate in Naxxar, a retreat house in Mosta, and residences in Floriana, Senglea, Valletta, Msida and Zeatin, while they were also entrusted with the running of Manresa House as a retreat house in Gozo. In 1999 the Jesuits set up Paolo Freire Institute in Zejtun and took over the Church of St. Ignatius in Sliema, which once formed part of the old college. The contemporary apostolic priorities of the Society of Jesus in Malta are the intellectual ministry and the university, educational ministry, Ignatian spirituality, the Faith-Justice Centre, the social apostolate, the vocation pastoral ministry, the youth ministry and the laity and collaborators.

PEARLS OF WISDOM: I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there can be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.
William Penn

Lion Doreen Davis recounts her visit to Alessandria

BOSCO MARENGO CHARTER ANNIVERSARY

Our visit to Bosco Marengo Santa Croce was from 11 to 14 May

Lion George, Lion Alexander and their wives and myself and a friend, Nadya German flew to Milan. On arrival we hired a van, which was kindly driven by Lion Alex. He took us everywhere and I would like to thank him again for this. On arrival at Due Buoi Rossi Hotel Rosalba and Paolo were waiting for us. They accompanied us to the Duomo Restaurant where some 25 Italian Lions were waiting for us. And oh, what a warm welcome we received and what a delicious dinner. The next day was a favourite for many-wine tasting at the Coppo Cellars. Here one of s told me that I drink like a mouse and was more than glad to drink part of my share of the wine! Have a guess who it was? In the evening we dined again with Italian Lions, at a college restaurant where we were served by young students. The food was super delicious.

On Saturday morning we drove to Ovada to watch a show by guide dogs from Limbiate. Also, in Ovada we attended a game of golf played by disabled but very talented men. These two events were organised by Ovada Lions. Ovada Lions.

And then comes the big night - Bosco Marengo Charter Night. This time we were driven to the venue in a luxurious Merc! Villa Pomelo is a magnificent place with beautiful gardens. The food was exquisite. We were given a lottery ticket with fantastic prizes, included in the price of the dinner. Sunday morning was a leisurely one. Having said our goodbyes to the lovely Italian people, we headed to the airport and were back on the rock at 3am Monday! A wonderful experience where I made many friends. To the next one!! Lion Doreen

CONCERT AND AFTERNOON TEA

On Saturday 20 May Lions Club Sliema held a Concert and Afternoon Tea in the Phoenicia Hotel ballroom in aid of very poor Filipino children. The event was inspired by Lions Lilian and Mario Galea and taken on board by the club in the presence of Fr Martin Galea, Rector of MSSP in the Philippines, Fr Karm Debattista MSSP and two of the older children who have now grown to become professional musicians Michaela De Guzman Daluyot who plays viola and Carlos Gian Santos who plays double bass.

They are on a three-year scholarship with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra and Malta Youth Orchestra.

The Filipinos we are helping are children who come from a very deprived area where drugs are rife. Fr Martin Galea has built a centre in the Philippines for the children, where, amongst other things, they teach music and have now developed a full children's orchestra there.



Michaela, the Filipino Violist, spoke after the concert saying *"I will devote myself to music and learn as much as I can here in Malta from musicians in the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. On my return to the Philippines, I will spend all my time teaching the children music at the school"* a sentiment echoed by her countryman Carlos.

The stunning concert, given by two of Malta's top musicians, Fiorella Camilleri (flute) and Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta (Harp), consisting of classical and light music was enjoyed by over 100 guests Prosecco in hand provided courtesy of the Phoenicia.

Afterwards everyone tucked into a sumptuous Phoenicia-style afternoon tea with delectable sandwiches, scones with home-made jam and clotted cream, and yummy cakes.

Fr Martin later wrote "Hello everyone. Many thanks for the good work done today. May God bless you all."

CLUB NEWS

CLUB MEETINGS: Since June 7th is a public holiday in Malta, the first meeting for June is now being held on THURSDAY JUNE 8 at 1830. Venue the Victoria Hotel. This will be the Club's Annual General Meeting during which the President shall give a summary of the activities and achievements during his presidential year. Lion Lorna Farrugia, the Club Secretary will submit an administrative report while Club Treasurer Lion Alex Arena will submit a statement about the Club's Finances. A Club meeting is also scheduled for Wednesday June 21st.

WINE TASTING: Friday June 16 at Meridiana Winery Ta' Qali. Number of guests limited to 40.

AWARDS NIGHT & PRESIDENTIAL HANDOVER: By the roof top pool of the PALACE Hotel on Friday June 24. This is an event not to be missed. Further details will be sent soon.

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION & SPORTS: A delegation of members led by Lion Secretary Lorna Farrugia and Lions Louis Sciberras and Tom A. Restall met the Minister of Education & Sports Dr. Clifton Grima to discuss the Lions International Peace Poster Competition. The Minister was presented with documents regarding the Competition. The delegation informed the Minister that in the past several students participated in this competition and that a Gozitan student had also won third prize. The Minister agreed to bring to the attention of the Education authority responsible for art so that Maltese and Gozitan students participate in this competition.

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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW: Occasionally new Club Members ask: Why is Malta not considered to be a District within Lions Clubs International? The simple reason is that there are not enough Clubs in Malta to be classified as a District.

The Statute of LCI (Lions Clubs International) states that: *“On formation, a District will consist of thirty-five (35) clubs in good standing and a total membership of at least one thousand two hundred and fifty (1250) Lions Clubs members in good standing unless otherwise approved by a two thirds (2/3) vote by the International Board of Directors).*

MALTA is Undistricted like a few other European countries namely Gibraltar, Monaco, and San Marino.

It is interesting to know that at a few years ago the Lions Clubs in Malta had considerable pressure to join District MD108YB SICILY. However, this was never considered despite a few members (not from Lions Club Sliema) wanted the Lions Clubs in Malta to join this Multiple District.

At present since there are three Clubs, MALTA is considered as a ZONE with its Zone Chairman.

