



Artillery Club

2025 Foreign Field Trip – Malta



The Artillery Club's 2025 Foreign Field Trip took place in Malta, from Tuesday 07 October through Saturday 11 October. As with the successful trips in 2015 to Madrid and Segovia, in 2016 to Granada and Malaga, in 2017 to Lisbon, in 2018 to Vienna, in 2019 to Athens, and in 2024 to Jersey, Commandant Michael Flood (Retd) was the Field Trip Coordinator.



Thirty-five personnel participated in the Field Trip, which was open to registered members of the Artillery Club, their respective spouses or partners, and guests. Participants stayed in the Grand Excelsior Hotel, located on the waterfront at Great Siege Road, Floriana, alongside the sixteenth century fortifications of Malta's capital city, Valletta - a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Wednesday: Guided Tour



On Wednesday, the Group availed of a guided tour of Malta conducted by Christina Jones, visiting Mosta, and on route to Mdina calling into the Ta'Qali Craft Village.



While visiting the Rotunda of Mosta, the Group was briefed on its construction which commenced on 30 May 1833, the hosting of the XXIV Eucharistic Congress in 1913, and its elevation to the dignity of a Minor Basilica in 2018.

Christina recalled an unpleasant occurrence on 09 April 1942 when one of the four German bombs which targeted the Church, penetrated the Dome. Thankfully, all the four bombs failed to detonate on impact, and none of the estimated 300 parishioners waiting for Mass were injured. A replica of the bomb remains on view in the left Sacristy.

The Ta'Qali Craft Village was originally housed in Nissan Huts used by RAF during the Second World War. The Craft Village currently provides workshops and outlets for glass, gold, silver, and filigree jewellery. Christina described the filigree process in the company of an artist at work.

During the conducted tour of the stone-walled ancient citadel of Mdina, Christina briefed the Group on its history, architecture, and key sights including Saint Paul's Cathedral, Archbishop's Square, and the Palazzo Falson.

Thursday: Armed Forces Malta – *Tutela Bellicae Virtutis* – Custodians of Military Prowess



Armed Forces Malta was the theme for Thursday, with a visit to its Headquarters in Luga Barracks. The Group was welcomed to the Officer's Mess by the Mess President Lieutenant-Colonel John Stroud, along with Captain Kaylie Gelfo (93 Cadet Class, The Military College) and Captain George Said.



During the Reception, Colonel Pat White (Retd) presented the Club's Plaque to the Commander Armed Forces Malta, Brigadier Clinton J. O'Neill who was appointed in June 2022. Brigadier O'Neill is a qualified fixed wing pilot. He graduated from Military



Training and Educational Colleges in Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. His overseas service included: Senegal with USNAVFOR; in Libia with the Libyan Naval Forces; and in Lampedusa and Sicily with the Joint Operation Nettuno.

Thereafter, the Group was brought on a guided tour of the Officers' Mess conducted by its Mess President.

Lieutenant-Colonel Stroud provided a comprehensive presentation covering the history, il-Militia, organisation, roles, national operations, overseas deployments, and the three battle honours: *MDCCC* awarded to the Maltese Light Infantry for the siege of Valletta in 1800, *Egypt 1882* was awarded to the Malta Fencible Artillery Regiment for the expedition in Egypt. and *Malta 1942* is the battle honour assumed from the King's Own Malta Regiment.



Following Lieutenant-Colonel Stroud's informative presentation, the Group enjoyed the hospitality of the Officers' Mess during a very enjoyable lunch.

Thursday: Courtesy Call on Ireland's Ambassador to Malta

On Thursday afternoon, a Delegation, led by Colonel Pat White (Retd) paid a courtesy call on the Irish Ambassador to Malta, H.E. Caroline Ní Fhaoláin in the Irish Embassy located at Whitehall Mansions, Ta' Xhiex Seafront.



Following discussions on issues of mutual interest, the President presented an Artillery Club Plaque to the Ambassador. The Deputy Head of Mission, Ms Aisling Kearns along with Brigadier-General Paul Pakenham (Retd) and Commandant Michael Flood (Retd) were in attendance.

Friday: Free Day



On Friday, participants were free to organise their own activities in Valletta. Some visited the National War Museum located in Fort St Elmo. Refurbished in 2015, exhibits cover the Bronze Age (+), both World Wars, and contemporary artifacts. The exhibits include the George Cross Medal which was presented in 1942 to the citizens of Malta as a recognition for their bravery during the Second World War.



Other locations visited included: Saint John's Co-Cathedral the location of Caravaggio's *Beheading of John the Baptist*; the Grand Master's Palace and Armoury; Victory Gate, Triton Fountain; Upper Barrakka Gardens; War Memorial; and the National Museum of Archaeology. Unfortunately, the Siege Bell Memorial commemorating those who lost their lives during the Second World War was under renovation.

Friday: Dinner



On the final night, participants assembled in *Nenu, The Artisan Baker*, a traditional Maltese restaurant located in Saint Dominic's Street, for a most enjoyable dinner.

Lieutenant-Colonel John Stroud and Mrs Francesca Stroud were the Club's guests. At the conclusion, the Club's President Colonel Pat White formally thanked Commandant Michael Flood (Retd) for planning and executing the successful and memorable trip to Malta.

Saturday: Noon Day Gun



Before departure on Saturday, ample time was available to visit the Saluting Battery situated in the bastions below the Upper Barrakka Gardens along Valletta's eastern ramparts, and to observe the firing of the Noon Day Cannon.

After restoration in 2004, the Saluting Battery was initially equipped with eight original 24-pounder Blomefield cannon made between 1790 and 1810. These were later transferred to a museum and replaced with eight working replicas of Smooth-bore, Breech-loading 32-pounders.



Photographs courtesy of Brigadier-General Paul Pakenham (Retd. To view slide show, please click on any of the photographs.