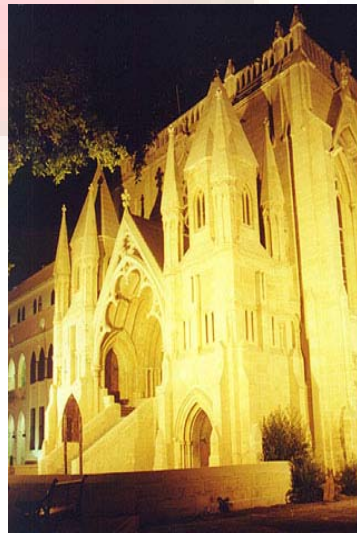




Floriana Places of Interest



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FORM 4S

Introduction

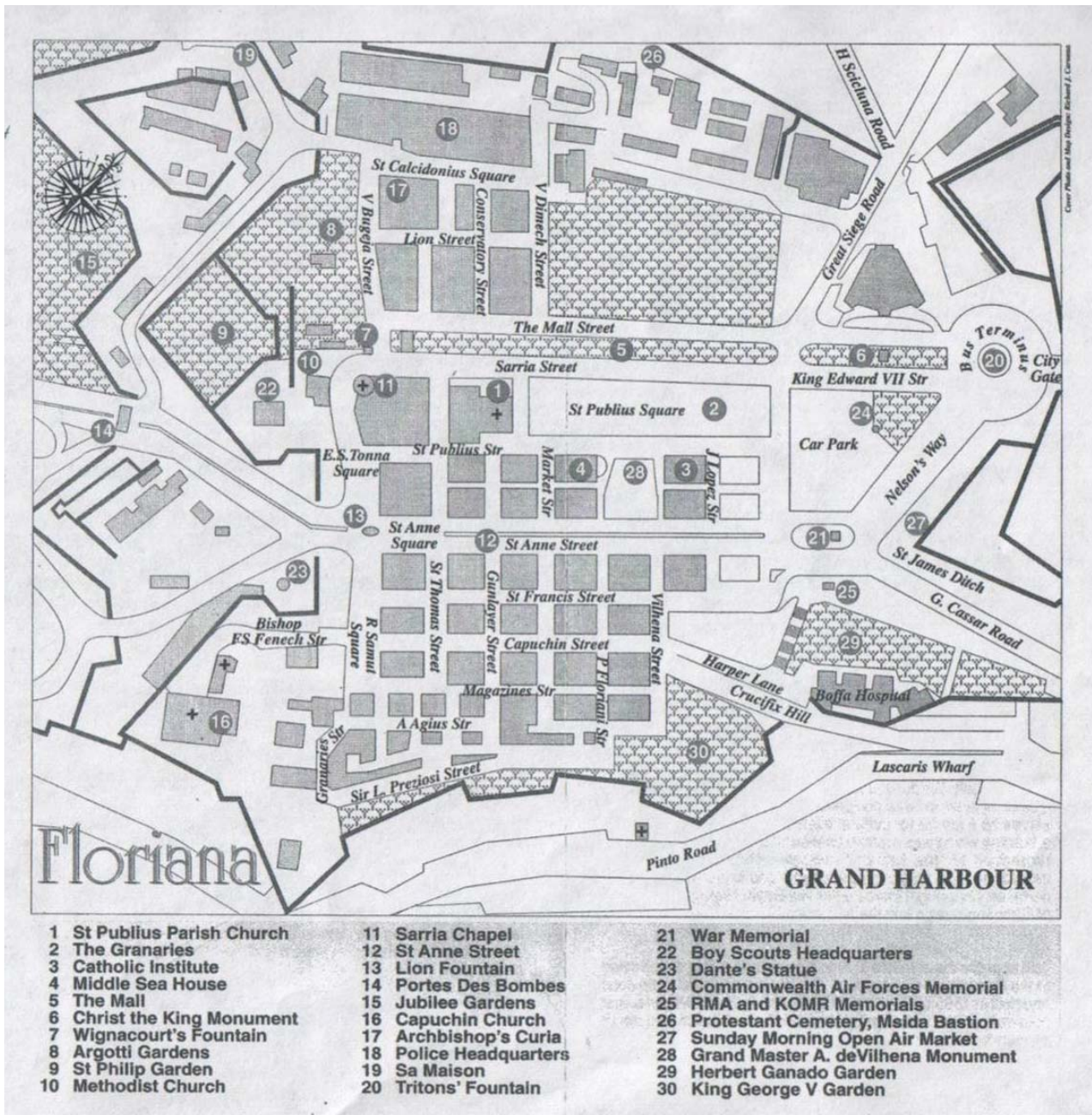
Floriana

is a suburb of Valletta and shares with it the impressive harbour fortifications. It also lies within the capital's landward fortifications which reach as far as the Portes des Bombes on the main Valletta approach road. Floriana is named after the 17th century military engineer Pietro Floriani who was commissioned by the Knights in 1636 to extend Valletta's fortifications. Floriana was conceived as an entire fortress city in front of Valletta.

The town is characterised by open spaces, gardens and some fine patricians' houses. Highlights include the elegant St Publius Church, overlooking Granaries Square and the Argotti Gardens on St Philip's Bastion. The vast flag-stoned Granaries Square hides a number of deep silos which were built in the late 17th century to ensure food supplies for Valletta in times of war.

Places of Interest in Floriana

Places of Interest



□ St. Publius and the Floriana Parish Church (I)

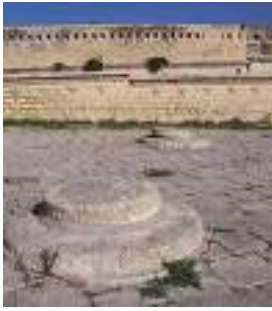
The patron saint of Floriana is St. Publius, who was the governor of Malta when St. Paul was shipwrecked on the Island in 60 A.D. He was converted to Christianity and went on to become Malta's first bishop. Hence St. Publius is also one of the patron saints of Malta. According to tradition, St. Publius later suffered martyrdom in Athens.

The Floriana parish church **(1)** which is dedicated to St. Publius is situated almost in the centre of the town, overlooking the granaries. Work on the current church started in 1733 and the church was extended through the years as the population grew. The church was solemnly consecrated in 1792 and it was given the status of a parish in 1844. The church has a cupola and two steeples housing six bells, the largest of which was manufactured in Naples. Unfortunately, the church was severely damaged during the Second World War when several bombs were dropped.

The church houses a painting started by Favray and completed by a student Filippo Vincenzo Pace, depicting the martyrdom of St. Publius. Also of interest, are the titular statue of St. Publius dating back to 1811, various ceiling paintings depicting instances from the shipwreck of St. Paul and his stay on the Island.

□ [*The Granaries \(2\)*](#)

Walking around Floriana one cannot miss the extent of the granaries in the centre of the town. These granaries, commissioned by Richard More O'Farrell, Governor of Malta between 1847 and 1851, spread over much of Floriana in olden times and were used primarily to store grain.



Today the main concentration of these granaries is in the area in front of St. Publius Church and total 76 in all.

□ *The Catholic Institute (3)*

Around St. Publius Square, are a number of important buildings. The Catholic Institute was built to commemorate those Maltese who died during the war. Today it houses a number of cultural and Catholic organisations.

□ *Middle Sea House (4)*

Montgomery House or as it is known today 'Middle Sea House', was originally used as a market and was the third block built in Floriana during Vilhena's reign. When Alexander Ball was governor it was used in connection with the grain trade. It was here that British Field Marshall Montgomery finalised the plans for the invasion of Sicily during the last war and it was in this building that British Prime Minister Churchill and American President Roosevelt met in January 1945, prior to their meeting with Stalin in Yalta. Today this building houses the offices of a Maltese insurance company.

□ *The Mall (5)*

'The Mall', a garden of around 400 metres in length was constructed by Grand Master Lascaris in 1656 as a place for recreation for the Knights, where these used to play a ball game called 'Maglio'. The garden used to be totally enclosed by a wall, which was removed just after the last war after it was also extensively damaged. Here one can find a number of monuments commemorating prominent personalities in the Islands' political and social history.

At one end of this garden, in front of the Hotel Phoenicia, is an area known as 'Biskuttin', where one finds a monument by renowned Maltese sculpture Antonio Sciortino dedicated to Christ the King (6), erected to commemorate the International Eucharistic Congress of 1913.

□ *Christ The King Monument (6)*



The titular statue of Christ the King is made out of *cirmolo* which is a very light type of wood particularly suitable for statues that are to be shoulder-carried as part of a procession.

The statue is made out of a number of boards bonded together and pressed with special machines. This was done to avoid possible cracks which may have resulted had the statue been worked out of one single trunk. The statue measures two metres (6 feet 6 inches) from the toes to the top of the head. When carried its total height will be about sixteen feet four inches. The statue fits exactly on the pedestal which was previously used to carry the Holy Sacrament. It is a silver globe representing the earth being lifted by the four symbols representing the four evangelists.

The Maltese artist Ganni Bonnici first made a life-size fibreglass model of the statue. It was sent to Ortisei, in the province of Bolzano, Italy on 26th March, 1999. The actual statue was made by four Italian artists - each one of them a master in his line of art. Matteo Insam was responsible and made the main sculpting and carving of the statue. It was completed in two months. Another artist who specialises in fine sculpting made the work on the border of the mantle and of the dress in August. During September, another artist took care of the gilding whilst in October yet another artist took care of painting the statue. The statue arrived in Paola on the 19th October, 1999 packed in a container. All expenses for the statue were paid by an individual in memory of a person who always had the welfare of the parish on his mind and heart and who worked relentlessly to improve the feast, both the internal celebrations and well as the external ones.



The statue represents Jesus Christ after the resurrection and before He went to heaven. The style and colour of the mantle and tunic is very delicate and it symbolises Christ's spirituality in the glory of God. The position of both arms is also particular. Christ is King because during his life in Person he gathered all human beings and united them with God. With the left arm lifted up and the palm of the hand open He is receiving the energy, life and blessing of God, collecting it in His body and transmitting it with the right hand

which is in a blessing position. His look is calm and radiates forgiveness and brotherly care.

The statue shows Christ as the sole Mediator between God and the human being.

□ *Argotti Gardens (8)*

At the other end of The Mall lies Wignacourt's Fountain (7) erected to commemorate the arrival of the water



supply to Floriana in 1615. Next to the fountain are the Argotti Gardens (8). In 1774 a palace was built on the site of the garden, which today houses a herbarium, and now serves as an important botanical garden. Other parts of this garden contain medicinal plants, fruit trees and various other plants. Another attraction is an old cave decorated with coloured corals and pebbles, sea shells and a mosaic floor. The herbarium, on the other hand, houses marine plants, fungi and leaves, as well as a collection of stuffed animals. Just below Argotti Gardens one finds St. Philip's Garden (9).

□ *St Philips Gardens (9)*

St. Philip Garden, is one of the main Botanic gardens in Malta. It was constructed to the order



of Bailiff Ignatius Argote in 1774. It located on the lower ten ace, which is an extension of Argotti. It is a pleasant formal garden with wide paved passages and many fruit trees and decorative plants. Rose bushes and other flowers bloom beneath the bastion face.

In the centre is a tall ornate fountain which, until 1927, stood on the north side of St. John's Cathedral where the Great Siege monument is now located.

□ *The Methodist Church (10)*

Next to Argotti Gardens is a Methodist Church **(10)** built in Neo-gothic Style which was completed in 1883. Today this building serves as a centre for cultural events. This Church lies next to a building which was erected between 1908 - 1909 as a place of recreation for the British Services. This has today been transformed into an old people's home and is also known by the name of 'Connaught Home' after His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who laid the first stone.

□ *The Sarria Chapel (11)*

Just opposite the entrance to Argotti Gardens is a chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. This chapel replaced a previous one built in 1585 by the Knight Fra Martin de



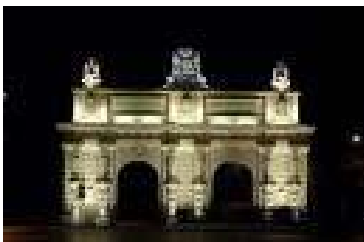
Sarria Navarro, and houses important painting by Mattia Preti. The church was rebuilt by architect Lorenzo Gafa'.

□ *The Entrance to Floriana*

Before coming to St. Anne Street **(12)**, which passes right through the centre of Floriana, lies a fountain with the statue of a lion **(13)**. This was built by Grand Master Vilhena around 1728 and its majestic position 'guards' the entry into Floriana.

The entry into what today is St. Anne Street was, until 1898, through a gate known as St. Anne's Gate. This gate underwent various modifications until it had to be removed to accommodate the increasing traffic into Valletta. Today a niche dedicated to St. Anne recalls the existence of this gate.

□ *Portes des Bombes (14)*



Walking down the main avenue one comes to the gateway known as Portes des Bombes. This was once the principal entrance to Floriana and was built together with the other fortifications in the year 1721 by Grand

Master Perellos, whose coat of arms has been placed at the top of this gate. The entrance has seen several modifications particularly as a result of the gradual increase of traffic into Floriana and Valletta through the years.

Looking towards Floriana on the left hand side of Portes des Bombes, one can see what was once the tunnel through which the train service leaving Valletta to Mdina used to pass. The first trip was held in February 1883 and took approximately 20 minutes. This service was discontinued in March 1931. The stone bridge is still clearly visible.

The tract of fortifications in the Portes des Bombes area is characterised by a wooded area. This is known as Jubilee Gardens (15) and offers some greenery in an otherwise urban area.

□ *The Capuchins' Church (16) and the Archbishop's Curia (17)*

Floriana is endowed with a number of other interesting landmarks. The Capuchins' Church (16) marks the arrival of the Capuchin Order in Malta, and is made up of a number of smaller chapels. There is an interesting church museum and a crypt where Capuchin monks used to be buried in an upright position. Another majestic building in Floriana is that which houses the Archbishop's Curia (17). Completed in 1751, it has also served as Malta's first seminary.

□ *The Police Headquarters (18)*

Opposite the Curia one finds the Malta Police Headquarters. This building, erected in 1848, has served this purpose since 1954 and was previously a hospital. Down the road from the Police Headquarters one arrives at a very interesting public garden, called Sa Maison (19), which overlooks Pieta' Creek.

□ *Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial (23)*

During discussions where to site a memorial to the airmen of the



Commonwealth who died during World War II in the Mediterranean area but who have no known grave, it was felt that Malta was the most suitable choice.

So the matter was put in hand and the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Floriana was the result. It was designed by the architect Sir Hubert Worthington and consists of a column of travertine marble, from the Tivoli area near Rome, fifty feet high, incised with a light reticulated

pattern. The column stands on a circular base to which twenty large bronze panels are attached. Nineteen panels display the names of the 2,301 men who sacrificed their lives:

Royal Air Force

1,545

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Royal Canadian Air Force | 286 |
| Royal Australian Air Force | 211 |
| Royal New Zealand Air Force | 85 |
| South African Air Force | 171 |
| British Overseas Airways Corp. | 3 |
| | ----- |
| | 2,301 |



On top of the column is a gilded bronze eagle 7'9" high by the sculptor Charles Wheeler, sometime President of the Royal Academy, who exhibited this work at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1953.

The date for the unveiling was set for Monday 3rd May 1954, and suitable invitations were sent out to members of the Commonwealth, and local dignitaries.

From the U.K. the Royal Air Force Association arranged for many next of kin to be present. Just over 200 went by air, with around 275 going by rail from London to Venice, and onwards to Malta on board the s.s.*Mediterranean* which had been specially chartered.

It was decided that the ceremony itself would be of a secular nature, but that on Sunday the 2nd, a Mass 'De Requie' would be held at St.John's Co-Cathedral at 9 a.m., by the Archbishop of Malta, Sir Michael Gonzi, with a Memorial Service at St.Paul's Anglican Cathedral at 10.15 a.m. being conducted by the Chaplain General of the Royal Air Force, Canon Alan S. Giles. Many of the next of kin and high ranking Commonwealth Air Force officers with their wives, attended both services.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II performed the unveiling on Monday morning at 11.45.

□ *Montgomery House*



Montgomery House is situated in Floriana. During World War 2 at the time when plans were being made for the Allies to invade Sicily and Italy, General Montgomery the Chief of the Armed Forces was staying here

and the plans for the invasion were done here.

□ *Public Library*

The last major structure built by the Knights of Malta in Valletta before their departure from the Island is the Public Library called the 'Bibliotheca Publica'. The National Library has on show unique historic documents, with various illuminated manuscripts in glass cases. There are also priceless archives of the Order of St John and 60 incunabula i.e. books printed before 1500.

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Information was also gathered from leaflets from the local council of Floriana.

Conclusion

C O N C L U S I O N

As we see Floriana is one of the old city of Malta. It is one of the cities which has the unique history and it plays an important role in the finest culture of Malta. We hope that with the information that we found, you will find it interesting and of knowledge about a historic city like Floriana.