

= Wignacourt Arch =

The Wignacourt Arch known as the Fleur @-@ De @-@ Lys Gate ( Maltese : L @-@ Arkata ta ' Wignacourt magħrufa b'ala l @-@ Bieb ta ' Fleur @-@ De @-@ Lys ) is an ornamental arch located on the boundary between Fleur @-@ de @-@ Lys ( a suburb of Birkirkara ) and Santa Venera , Malta . The arch was originally built in 1615 as part of the Wignacourt Aqueduct , but it was destroyed between 1943 and 1944 . A replica of the arch was constructed in 2015 , being inaugurated on 28 April 2016 .

= = Original arch = =

The Wignacourt Aqueduct was constructed between 1610 and 1615 to carry water from springs in Dingli and Rabat to the Maltese capital Valletta . It was named after Alof de Wignacourt , the Grand Master of the Order of St. John , who partially financed its construction .

The aqueduct was carried through underground pipes or over a series of stone arches where there were depressions in the ground level . To commemorate the construction of the aqueduct , the Wignacourt Arch was constructed at an area where the aqueduct crossed the road leading from Valletta to Mdina . The Baroque archway had a large arch in the centre , and a smaller arch on either side . It was decorated with three fleurs @-@ de @-@ lis , a relief of Wignacourt 's coat of arms , and two marble plaques with Latin inscriptions . The plaque on the side facing Santa Venera reads :

HAC VALLETTA TENUS FUNCTUM JACUISSE CADAVER  
VISA EST NUNC LATICIS SPIRITUS INTUS ALIT  
INCUBUIT PRIMUS OLIM CEU SPIRITUS UNDIS  
SPIRITUS ENIXA SIC MODO FERTUR AQUA

( meaning So far Valletta lay as a corpse . Today the spirit of water has brought life to her . The primordial spirit floated on water . Now water has been drawn to her and that spirit reappears . )

The plaque on the side facing Birkirkara reads :

FRI . ALOPHIO DE WIGNACOURT  
MAGNO MAGISTRO  
VALLETTAM URBEM  
ET ARCEM DULCISSIMIS AQUIS  
VIVIFICANTI AETERNA SALUS  
REN . IN 1739

( meaning Fra Alof de Wignacourt , Grand Master . Valletta city and citadel , the sweetest waters revive eternal salvation . Renovated in 1739 . )

The area around the arch remained rural until the early 20th century . A tram used to pass near the arch between 1905 and 1929 . After World War II , the suburb of Fleur @-@ de @-@ Lys developed in the area , and it got its name from the heraldic symbols on the arch .

= = = Destruction = = =

On 18 April 1943 , a Royal Air Force breakdown lorry heading to the airfield at Ta ' Qali hit the arch and severely damaged its Santa Venera @-@ facing façade . The central arch was dismantled by military personnel under the supervision of the Public Works Department about two months later . The arch was completely destroyed on 12 February 1944 , when a Royal Army Service Corps truck hit the remaining parts of the structure . A roundabout with a fountain was later built on the site of the arch . Some arches of the aqueduct were demolished in order to widen the road and make way for this roundabout . The arch 's two marble plaques reportedly survived its destruction .

= = Reconstruction = =

The surviving arches of the Wignacourt Aqueduct were restored between 2004 and 2005 . The

chairman of the Bank of Valletta , whose headquarters is located close to the arch , promised to build a replica of the arch but initially nothing materialized .

In 2012 , the Fleur @-@ de @-@ Lys Administrative Committee and the Birkirkara Local Council announced that they were planning to rebuild the arch to the same dimensions of the original . The plans were approved by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority in October of the same year , but they were placed on hold since a tender appeal had to be sorted out . In April 2013 , the tender was awarded to Vaults Ltd instead of V & C Contractors who had originally won the tender . The replica arch cost ? 280 @,@ 000 to build , and ? 100 @,@ 000 of these were donated by the Bank of Valletta . ? 40 @,@ 000 were taken from the Good Causes Fund , while the remaining ? 140 @,@ 000 were paid by the Birkirkara Local Council .

While preparations were being made for rebuilding the arch , a dispute arose between the Birkirkara and Santa Venera Local Councils on what to call the arch . The former said that it should be called Fleur @-@ de @-@ Lys Gate , while the latter insisted on using the name Wignacourt Arch . In September 2013 , the Santa Venera council took the Birkirkara council to court and accused it of causing " historical damage " by calling the arch with an incorrect name . The councils agreed on using the name The Wignacourt Arch known as the Fleur @-@ de @-@ Lys Gate in August 2014 .

Reconstruction of the arch began on 1 August 2014 , but work stopped soon afterwards after part of the original arch 's foundations was found . Reconstruction continued in January 2015 , and it was complete by the end of November 2015 . Some finishing touches were made in February 2016 , including the installation of two marble plaques . The arch was inaugurated on 28 April 2016 by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and mayor of Birkirkara Joanne Debono Grech .

A plaque with the coat of arms of Birkirkara and the following inscription was installed to commemorate the reconstruction :

IL @-@ KUNSILL LOKALI  
TA ' BIRKIRKARA  
IL @-@ PRIM MINISTRU  
JOSEPH MUSCAT ,  
FLIMKIEN MAS @-@ SINDKU , IS @-@ SINJURA  
JOANNE DEBONO GRECH ,  
INAWGURAW DIN L @-@ ARKATA TA'  
WIGNACOURT MAG?RUFA  
B?ALA L @-@ BIEB TA ' FLEUR DE LYS  
ILLUM 28 TA ' APRIL 2016

( meaning Birkirkara Local Council . Prime Minister Joseph Muscat , together with the mayor , Mrs. Joanne Debono Grech , inaugurated the Wignacourt Arch known as the Fleur @-@ De @-@ Lys Gate , today 28 April 2016 )

= = Commemorations = =

In 2015 , the Central Bank of Malta minted a ? 10 silver coin , and MaltaPost issued a set of two stamps to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Wignacourt Aqueduct . The Wignacourt Arch is depicted on the coin and one of the stamps .