

= Fortifications of Valletta =

The fortifications of Valletta (Maltese : Is @-@ Swar tal @-@ Belt Valletta) are a series of defensive walls and other fortifications which surround the capital city of Valletta , Malta . The first fortification to be built was Fort Saint Elmo in 1552 , but the fortifications of the city proper began to be built in 1566 when it was founded by Grand Master Jean de Valette . Modifications were made throughout the following centuries , with the last major addition being Fort Lascaris which was completed in 1856 . Most of the fortifications remain largely intact today .

The city of Valletta , along with Nicosia in Cyprus , was considered to be a practical example of an ideal city of the Renaissance , and this was due to its fortifications as well as the urban life within the city . The fortifications were well known throughout Europe by the 17th century , and might have influenced the designs of part of the Fortress of Luxembourg . In an 1878 book , Valletta was described as " one of the best fortified [cities] in the world . " Today , Valletta 's fortifications are regarded as the most important of the fortifications of Malta , and they form part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

The construction of a fortified city on the Sciberras Peninsula was first proposed in 1524 , when the Order of St. John sent a commission to inspect the Maltese Islands . Back then , the only fortification on the peninsula was a militia watchtower built by the Aragonese in 1488 . The tower was strengthened in 1533 , but the proposed city was not built since the Order focused on building the fortifications of Birgu , which had become their base .

In 1551 , an Ottoman force briefly attacked Malta , and then sacked Gozo and captured Tripoli , and as a result , the Order set up a commission to improve the island 's fortifications . In 1552 , the Aragonese watchtower was demolished and Fort Saint Elmo was built in its place . The fort played a significant role in the Great Siege of Malta of 1565 . It eventually fell after a month of fierce fighting (in which the Ottoman general Dragut was killed) . The knights held out in Birgu and Senglea until a relief force arrived , and the siege was lifted .

= = = Construction = = =

After the Order emerged victorious from the siege , it received financial support from Europe , which was used to construct the new capital city on the Sciberras Peninsula . The Italian engineer Francesco Laparelli was sent by the Pope to design the city 's fortifications , which were designed along the Italian bastioned system . Laparelli 's original design consisted of a bastioned enceinte , with nine cavaliers and a ditch . The city was to be designed along a grid plan , and was to include a naval arsenal and a Manderaggio (a harbour for small ships) .

The city 's first stone was laid by Grand Master Jean de Valette on 28 March 1566 , and the new city was called Valletta in his honour . The city walls were among the first structures to be built within the city , and were largely complete by the 1570s . Some changes were made to the design while the city was being constructed , and only two cavaliers were constructed , while the arsenal and Manderaggio were never built . Fort St. Elmo , which had been severely damaged in the 1565 siege , was also rebuilt and integrated in the city walls .

The city of Valletta officially became the capital city of Malta and the seat of the Order on 18 March 1571 , although it was still unfinished . By the end of the 16th century , Valletta was the largest settlement in Malta .

= = = Improvements and modifications = = =

In the 17th and 18th centuries , Valletta 's fortifications were strengthened with the construction of various outworks , consisting of four counterscours along the land front , as well as a covertway and a glacis . The northern end of the peninsula , including Fort St. Elmo , was also enclosed in a bastioned enceinte (known as the Carafa Enceinte) in the late 1680s to prevent a landing from the sea .

Despite the modifications , it was realized that the walls of Valletta were not strong enough to withstand a long siege . In 1635 , construction of the Floriana Lines commenced , enclosing Valletta 's land front . The Floriana Lines were also modified until the 18th century . Later on , the suburb of Floriana developed in the area between the Floriana Lines and the Valletta Land Front , and it is now a town in its own right .

The flanks of the city were further protected in the 17th and 18th century , with the construction of the Santa Margherita Lines , Cottonera Lines and Fort Ricasoli on the Grand Harbour side , and Fort Manoel and Fort Tigné on the Marsamxett side . Further proposals , including construction of fortifications on Corradino and Ta ' Xbiex , were also made but were never implemented .

= = = French occupation and British rule = = =

The fortifications of Valletta first saw use during the French invasion of Malta on 9 June 1798 . The Order capitulated only three days later on 12 June , and Valletta and its fortifications were handed over to the French . Upon viewing the fortifications , Napoleon reportedly remarked " I am very glad that they opened the gate for us . "

A couple of months after the beginning of the French occupation , the Maltese people rebelled against the French and blockaded them in the Harbour area with British , Neapolitan and Portuguese support . The French managed to hold out in Valletta until September 1800 , when General Vaubois capitulated to the British , who took control of the islands .

Various modifications were made to Valletta 's fortifications during British rule . The most significant of these was the construction of Fort Lascaris between 1854 and 1856 . Other alterations included the addition of batteries and concrete gun emplacements , changes to parapets and their embrasures , and the construction of gunpowder magazines . All three original Hospitaller gateways to Valletta were demolished , and two of them were replaced by larger gates .

The British proposed the demolition of the fortifications a number of times in the 19th century . The first proposal was made by Major @-@ General Henry Pigot at the beginning of the century . In 1853 , a proposal was made to demolish Saint James Cavalier to make way for a military hospital . In 1855 , Sir John Lysaght Pennefather proposed the construction of a citadel on the high ground of the Sciberras peninsula , on the site of the Valletta Land Front and the surrounding area . In 1872 , the demolition of the city 's outworks was proposed , while the demolition of the entire land front was suggested in 1882 . Eventually , the fortifications were left largely intact , and the only part that was demolished was St. Madeleine 's Lunette , which was located near the entrance to the city (on the site now occupied by the Triton Fountain) .

The fortifications were eventually decommissioned between the late 19th or early 20th centuries . Some parts , such as Fort St. Elmo , Fort Lascaris and the Saluting Battery , remained in use until after World War II , with Fort St. Elmo being decommissioned in 1972 . The fortifications were included on the Antiquities List of 1925 .

In the 1960s , the 19th century Porta Reale was demolished to make way for a modern City Gate .

= = = Present day = = =

The first plans to restore the fortifications of Valletta , along with those of Birgu , Mdina and the Cittadella , were made in 2006 . Restoration started in 2010 , with the project being described as " the biggest in a century " . Squatters were evicted from public lands around the fortifications . The upper part of Fort Saint Elmo has been restored , while its lower parts have been cleaned up . The Chapel of St. Roche on St. Michael 's Counterscours , which was bombed in World War II , was rebuilt in 2014 as part of the restoration .

In 2011 , the City Gate which had been built in the 1960s was demolished , and a new City Gate was completed in 2014 .

= = Layout = =

= = = Land front = = =

The Valletta Land Front is the large bastioned enceinte enclosing the landward approach to the city . It consists of the following :

St. Michael 's Bastion , also known as Spencer 's Bastion ? a demi @-@ bastion on the western extremity of the land front . Two windmills were built on it in 1674 , but they were demolished in the 19th century . The bastion now forms part of Hastings Gardens .

St. John 's Curtain ? the curtain wall linking St. Michael 's and St. John 's Bastions . It now forms part of Hastings Gardens .

St. John 's Bastion ? a large obtuse @-@ angled bastion with a reconstructed echaugette at its salient angle . It now forms part of Hastings Gardens.St. John 's Cavalier ? a pentagonal cavalier overlooking St. John 's Bastion . It is now the embassy of the SMOM to Malta .

Porta Reale Curtain , also known as St. James Curtain ? the curtain wall linking St. John 's and St. James Bastions . The city 's main gate is located within the curtain wall . The gate was rebuilt five times , with the present one being constructed between 2011 and 2014 to a design by Renzo Piano .

St. James Bastion ? a large obtuse @-@ angled bastion with an echaugette at its salient angle . Its thick parapets with embrasures have been dismantled . The bastion is occupied by the Central Bank of Malta and a car park.St. James Cavalier ? a pentagonal cavalier overlooking St. James Bastion . It is now a cultural centre .

Castile Curtain ? the curtain wall linking St. James and St. Peter & Paul Bastions . Its parapet has been largely dismantled to make way for the road leading from Floriana to Valletta .

St. Peter and St. Paul Bastion ? a two @-@ tiered corner bastion on the eastern extremity of the land front . The upper part is now the Upper Barrakka Gardens , while the lower part contains the Saluting Battery . The 19th @-@ century Fort Lascaris is located below the bastion .

The entire land front is surrounded by a deep ditch . Remains of a flanking battery within the ditch were unearthed in 2012 .

The bastions are further protected by the following outworks :

St. Michael 's Counterguard ? a three @-@ tiered counterguard built in 1640 near St. Michael 's Bastion . Its lower tier contains an echaugette at its salient angle , and a small chapel dedicated to St. Roche . The chapel was destroyed in World War II , but was rebuilt in 2014 .

St. John 's Counterguard ? a pentagonal counterguard built in 1640 near St. John 's Bastion . Its salient angle contains an echaugette , and it also contains a gunpowder magazine . It is currently used as a football ground .

St. Madeleine 's Lunette ? a lunette that protected Porta Reale Curtain and the entrance to the city . It was dismantled in the 19th century , and its site is now occupied by the Triton Fountain .

St. James Counterguard ? a pentagonal counterguard built in 1640 near St. James Bastion . Its salient angle contains an echaugette , and it also contains a gunpowder magazine . Its central platform houses the Central Bank of Malta annex .

St. Peter and St. Paul Counterguard ? a two @-@ tiered counterguard built in 1640 near St. Peter and St. Paul Bastion . Its salient angle contains an echaugette , and it also contains a gunpowder magazine and a concrete observation platform .

The outworks were surrounded by an advanced ditch , but only a part of it remains since most of it was filled in with rubble .

= = = Marsamxett enceinte = = =

The enceinte along the side facing Marsamxett Harbour starts from St. Michael 's Bastion of the Valletta Land Front , and ends at St. Gregory 's Bastion of Fort St. Elmo . It consists of the following :

St. Andrew Tenaille ? a small tenaille beneath St. Michael 's Bastion .

St. Andrew 's Bastion ? an asymmetrical pentagonal bastion . It is two @-@ tiered , with its lower part originally containing the Marsamxett Gate , which was demolished in the early 20th century . A small faussebraye is located beneath the bastion . Ponsonby 's Column was built on the bastion in 1838 , but it was destroyed by lightning in 1864 .

Manderaggio Curtain ? the curtain wall linking St. Andrew 's and San Salvatore Bastions . It was originally divided into two parts , to allow ships to enter the Manderaggio , but the breach was walled up when work on the Manderaggio was abandoned .

San Salvatore Bastion ? a flat @-@ faced artillery platform . Various World War II air raid shelters were dug within the bastion .

German Curtain ? a small curtain wall north of San Salvatore Bastion . Air raid shelters were also dug within its walls . It is sometimes referred to as a bastion .

St. Sebastian Curtain ? a small curtain wall north of the Germain Curtain . Air raid shelters were also dug within its walls . It is sometimes referred to as a bastion .

English Curtain ? a long curtain wall near St. Elmo Bay , overlooked by Auberge de Bavière . It contains the Jews ' Sally Port and a number of air raid shelters . A reconstructed echaugette is located between the English and French Curtains .

French Curtain ? a long curtain wall near St. Elmo Bay , linked to Fort Saint Elmo .

== Grand Harbour enceinte ==

The enceinte along the side facing the Grand Harbour starts from St. Peter and St. Paul Bastion of the Valletta Land Front , and ends at St. Ubaldesca Curtain of Fort St. Elmo . It consists of the following :

Fort Lascaris , also known as Lascaris Battery or Lascaris Bastion ? a casemated battery near St. Peter & St. Paul Bastion , built by the British between 1854 and 1856 . The Lascaris War Rooms are located nearby .

Marina Curtain , also known as Liesse Curtain ? curtain wall linking St. Peter & St. Paul and St. Barbara Bastions . It originally contained Del Monte Gate , which was demolished and replaced by Victoria Gate in the 19th century .

St. Barbara Bastion ? a flat @-@ faced bastion with a low parapet . An echaugette is located at the bastion 's south corner .

St. Lucia Curtain ? curtain wall linking St. Barbara and St. Christopher Bastions .

St. Christopher Bastion ? a two @-@ tiered pentagonal bastion , today breached to make way for the Valletta ring road . The upper part contains the Lower Barrakka Gardens , while the lower part contains the Siege Bell War Memorial and the Monument to the Unknown Soldier . A low battery was built near the bastion in the 1680s , but most of it was dismantled to make way for the ring road .

St. Lazarus Curtain ? curtain wall linking St. Christopher and St. Lazarus Bastions .

St. Lazarus Bastion ? a flat @-@ faced bastion containing several British gun emplacements and a magazine .

== Fort Saint Elmo ==

Fort Saint Elmo is the oldest part of the city walls , and it commands the entrance to both the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett . The fort and the surrounding area consists of the following :

Upper St. Elmo ? the original star fort , consisting of two demi @-@ bastions , two flanks and two faces , a parade ground , barracks and a large cavalier .

Vendôme Bastion ? a bastion built in 1614 linking the French Curtain to Fort St. Elmo , containing an echaugette . After being surrounded by the Carafa Enceinte , it was converted into a magazine ,

and later an armoury . The bastion is now part of the National War Museum .

Carafa Enceinte ? the bastioned enceinte built around the fort after 1687 . It consists of the following bastions :

St. Gregory Bastion ? an asymmetrical bastion with a long left face . It was altered by the British to house QF 6 pounder 10 cwt guns .

St. Gregory Curtain ? a curtain wall linking St. Gregory and Conception Bastions . It contains various British gun emplacements .

Conception Bastion , also known as Ball 's Bastion ? a small pentagonal bastion , containing a number of gun emplacements , magazines , and gun crew accommodation . Sir Alexander Ball was buried in the salient of the bastion .

Sta . Scholastica Curtain ? curtain wall linking Conception and St. John Bastions . It contains a gun emplacement for a RML 12 @. @ 5 inch 38 ton gun , as well as other British modifications .

St. John Bastion , also known as Abercrombie 's Bastion ? a large asymmetrical bastion at St. Elmo Point , the tip of the Sciberras Peninsula . The bastion contains several British gun emplacements and magazines .

St. Ubaldesca Curtain , also known as Abercrombie 's Curtain ? a long curtain wall linking St. John and St. Lazarus Bastions . It contains a number of British gun emplacements .

Some barrack blocks are located in the area between Upper St. Elmo and the Carafa Enceinte .