

= Fort Manoel =

Fort Manoel (Maltese : Forti Manoel or Fortizza Manoel) is a star fort on Manoel Island in Għira , Malta . It was built in the 18th century by the Order of Saint John , during the reign of Grand Master António Manoel de Vilhena , after whom it is named . The British military took over the fort in 1800 and it remained in use by them until 1964 . The fort was severely damaged in World War II , but it was restored and it is now in good condition .

Fort Manoel is located to the north west of Valletta , and commands Marsamxett Harbour and the anchorage of Sliema Creek . The fort is an example of Baroque architecture , and it was designed with both functionality and aesthetics in mind .

Fort Manoel has been on Malta 's tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1998 , as part of the Knights ' Fortifications around the Harbours of Malta .

= = History = =

= = = Background and failed proposals = = =

In the 16th century , the Marsamxett Harbour was one of the two major harbours in the Maltese city of Valletta . In the centre of the harbour was an island , originally known as l 'Isolotto and now known as Manoel Island after the fort , which overlooked the city . Shortly after Valletta 's construction , the Order of Saint John realised this was a potential vulnerability in the city 's defences . As early as 1569 , it was proposed that a small fort with a cavalier be built on the Isolotto to prevent the enemy from taking the island and building batteries on it . The threat was again highlighted by the Spanish military engineer Scipione Campi in 1577 , and by Giovanni Battista in 1582 .

The next proposal to build a fortification on the island was made by the Italian military engineer Antonio Maurizio Valperga in 1670 . He proposed a roughly hexagonal fort with a hornwork , in the Dutch style of fortification . The proposal was criticized by the Order 's engineers , and a third proposal was drawn up by the Flemish military engineer Carlos de Grunenbergh in 1687 . Grunenburgh 's proposal consisted of a fort with four bastions and a ravelin , surrounded by a ditch , covertway and faussebraye .

Other proposals were made in 1715 , this time by the knight René Jacob de Tigné and a team of French engineers . There were several different plans , including building a coastal battery and a redoubt . Other plans included building a four @-@ bastioned fort , or combining all three (fort , battery and redoubt) for the defence of the island .

= = = Construction = = =

Eventually , the final design was agreed in 1723 , and it incorporated the work of de Tigné as well as Charles François de Mondion , the Order 's military engineer . The new fort was to be square in shape , with four bastions and two cavaliers . The fort was financed by , and named after , the Portuguese Grand Master , António Manoel de Vilhena . He also set up the Manoel Foundation , a fund responsible for the maintenance and garrison of Fort Manoel and its outworks .

The first stone was laid by de Vilhena on 14 September 1723 , and work progressed rapidly . By 1727 , the enceinte , cavaliers and gateway were complete . The ditch had been excavated by 1732 , while the chapel , barracks , magazines and countermines were completed in around 1733 . The fort was an active military establishment by 1734 . When Mondion died in 1733 , he was buried in the crypt under the fort 's chapel .

In 1757 , Lembi Battery was added near Tigné Point , Sliema . The battery was funded by the Manoel Foundation and it was considered to be an outwork of Fort Manoel , since it was intended to prevent an enemy from bombarding the fort 's northern flank . It was decommissioned following the construction of Fort Tigné in 1795 . The construction of the latter fort was also partially funded by the Manoel Foundation .

== French occupation ==

The fort first saw use during the French invasion of Malta in June 1798 , in the French Revolutionary Wars . At the time , it was commanded by the Portuguese knight Gourgeau , and it was garrisoned by the Cacciatori , who were a volunteer chasseur light infantry regiment , as well as a few men from the Birchircara militia . The fort surrendered after Grand Master Hompesch officially capitulated to Napoleon .

A French garrison of a few hundred men took over the fort on 12 June . During the subsequent Maltese uprising and insurrection against the French , Maltese insurgents built Għargħar and Sqaq Cappare batteries to bombard Fort Manoel . The Maltese attacked the fort on a number of occasions , and the French retaliated with their own bombardment at least once . On 12 September 1799 , a company of French troops from Fort Manoel attempted to silence an insurgent gun position in San Vwann , but were repelled by the Maltese insurgents .

== British rule ==

When Malta became a British protectorate in 1800 , Fort Manoel was officially taken over by the British military that September . In the late 19th century , the echaugettes on the bastions facing Valletta were dismantled to make way for gun emplacements . Later on , significant alterations were made to St. Anthony Bastion , when its gunpowder magazine was demolished to make way for a battery of three QF 12 @-@ pounder guns .

The British military finally decommissioned the fort 's guns in 1906 , although it remained a military establishment . It was included on the Antiquities List of 1925 . The fort saw use again during World War II , when a battery of 3 @-@ 7 @-@ inch heavy anti @-@ aircraft guns was deployed there . The guns were mounted in concrete gun emplacements and deployed in a semicircle in and around the fort . The fort suffered considerable damage to its ramparts , barracks and chapel as a result of aerial bombing during the war . The fort was eventually decommissioned in 1964 .

== Recent history ==

After being decommissioned , Fort Manoel was abandoned and fell into a state of disrepair . Parts of it were also vandalized . In 1970 , the Royal Malta Yacht Club acquired part of the fort as its club house , and the yacht club remained there until it acquired new premises in Ta ' Xbiex in 2008 .

In August 2001 , the development company MIDI plc began restoration work on the fort . Phase One of the project , which included the restoration of the piazza and the reconstruction of the ruined chapel , was completed in 2009 . The second phase , including the restoration of the outer fortifications and glacis , was approved by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority in 2012 . The restoration of Fort Manoel together with that of the nearby Fort Tigné cost a total of ? 30 million .

== Layout ==

Fort Manoel is built in the shape of a square , with a pentagonal bastion on each corner , giving it the shape of a star fort . The four bastions are called St. Helen , St. Anthony , St. John and Notre Dame Bastions .

St. Helen and St. Anthony Bastions are located on the seaward side , facing Valletta . They originally had echaugettes and gunpowder magazines , but the echaugettes on both bastions were dismantled in the 19th century , and the magazine on St. Anthony Bastion was demolished to make way for three QF 12 @-@ pounder gun emplacements . The magazine on St. Helen Bastion is still intact . The curtain wall linking these two bastions contains the main gate , which is protected by a lunette known as the Couvre Porte .

St. John and Notre Dame Bastions are located along the landward side of the fort . Each bastion is

protected by a low cavalier . The curtain wall between the two bastions is further protected by a pentagonal ravelin , which is largely rock hewn .

A Piazza is located inside the fort , and it contains the rebuilt Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua , several barrack blocks , an armoury and other buildings . A statue of Grand Master Vilhena once stood in the square but it was removed in the 19th century and relocated to Valletta . It was later relocated once again and it is now in Floriana .

= = Ghost story = =

The fort is supposedly haunted by the Black Knight , who wears the armour and regalia of the Order of St. John , and resembles Grand Master de Vilhena . In the 1940s , the knight began to appear out of thin air near the ruins of the Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua , which had just been bombed in World War II . The apparition was reportedly seen by Maltese and English men within the fort . When the rubble from the ruined chapel began to be cleared , the workmen reported that the knight was supervising their work . When the crypt beneath the chapel was opened , it was found that it had been vandalized , and the remains of knights which had been buried there were scattered around . After the crypt was restored and the bones were reburied , the Black Knight stopped appearing . In 1980 , the crypt was vandalized for a second time , and the Black Knight reportedly began to appear again .

= = In popular culture = =

Fort Manoel is featured in the 2007 fiction book *Il Misteru tal Forti Manoel* (The Mystery of Fort Manoel) by Charles Zarb .

The fort served as a location for the shooting of the climactic scene of Baelor , the ninth episode of the TV series *Game of Thrones* , in 2011 .

The fort was also used in the filming of the 2016 films *Risen* and *Assassin 's Creed* .

The fort is also visible in the 2016 film *13 Hours : The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* .