

MALTA – THE AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION

Submitted by: Marathana Marketing and PR Ltd

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Despite being separated by over 8,800 miles, the connections between a tiny Mediterranean island and its huge antipodean cousin run deep.

Australia and Malta share a history rich in the blood sweat and tears of their peoples. Each now provides a mutual home for the other's expats, keen to build a new future for them and their families.

Today however, it is increasingly the Aussies who are heading for Malta, rather than the other way around says one Malta Property specialist.

The modern links began during World War 1. There are 204 war graves of Australian men on Malta from that war, cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves commission - and a building reflecting that period is at the heart of an unseemly local political row on the island.

Pieta Military ceremony near the Malta capital of Valletta hosts an annual remembrance service on 25th April each year to the young men of Australia and New Zealand who gave their lives in the unsuccessful allied campaign in Gallipoli – in eastern Turkey.

8 months after the landings in 1915, it is estimated that Australian casualties had reached 8,700 dead with over 19,400 wounded and they were taken to Malta which had been a British colony since 1800.

Australia Hall was officially opened in January 1916 by the Red Cross as an entertainment centre for the Australian and New Zealand survivors of this horrific period - and remained in use until 1979 when British troops withdrew from the islands. In late 1998, it was badly damaged by fire and has remained an unloved and derelict shell ever since. It is situated on the St Andrews Barracks site and adjoining Fort Pembroke near St Julians.

In August 1979, the property was transferred to Malta's Labour Party in exchange for property that the Party owned in the docks area and in 2010 – some 31 years later, the Nationalist Government of Malta demanded its return.

This very public wrangle remains unresolved and Australia Hall still languishes as an empty hulk, echoing only with the twin memories of bloody conflict and comradeship – which were resumed when Malta resumed its military role as the guardian of the Mediterranean once again during the Second World War facing the combined air and sea power of the German and Italian forces...

The first Maltese to arrive in Australia around 1810, were convicts. In 1881, 61 Maltese labourers and 9 stowaways attempted to settle in Queensland, but the extreme conditions proved too much and the plan failed.

By 1911, there were 248 Maltese in Australia. Today, it is reported that nearly every family in Malta has an immediate relative living in Australia.

Despite having British passports however, the Maltese were treated as non-white and excluded from

Australia for over 30 years - and it was only in 1948 in the aftermath of another war that the conditions were relaxed and economic emigration from Malta to Australia took off on a large scale.

Today, the tide is turning says one Malta property specialist.

Ray Woods of www.maltabuyproperty.co.uk says that while North Africa holds sad memories for those of previous generations. The building of the new Libya is one example of how Malta is benefitting from its proximity to the North African coast.

He said, "The spirit of enterprise is strong in the Maltese psyche and there have been a number of commercial delegations from Malta to Libya which always enjoyed strong ties even under the Gaddafi era. Malta is also at the cross roads, between Africa, Europe and the southern Mediterranean. Its membership of the EU led to a mini property boom several years ago and the economy generally remains in good shape compared to many of its European neighbours, both large and small."

Increased air travel links to Malta have transformed it from an erstwhile British colony beloved of the ex-forces personnel to a more forward looking and cosmopolitan playground enjoying glorious weather that would be familiar in Australia - but lacking in the extremes of bush fires and drought!

For many, English speaking Malta provides a place of rest and recreation for groups of professionals who make their living around the globe – encouraged by a generous tax regime and business incentives.

Today, more than a dozen airlines fly into Malta each week including Emirates.

The growth of the financial services sector has been one of Malta's notable successes.

Bloomberg noted late last year that the number of hedge funds located in Malta had grown from 165 funds with less than €5 billion under management in 2006 to more than 500 with \$10.7 billion.

Record levels of investment are flowing into Malta as the international business community discovers the advantages of doing business there. Proof of this are the major accomplishments of winning much coveted investments from Dubai Internet City's Tecom and Lufthansa Technik, puts Malta at the top of its class.

Malta offers a highly competitive investment location for niche manufacturing as well as the services sectors, particularly in Bio-technology, Pharmaceutical & Healthcare, Automotive, Maritime Activities - Transport & Logistics, Call Centres, ICT and Electronics, Financial services, the Furniture Industry and Real Estate. The island is the main centre of manufacturing for the highly successful Playmobil range and has a strong local food and drink manufacturing sector.

A feature of recent high profile investments in real estate on Malta is the mixing of commercial and residential developments to provide balanced communities.

SmartCity a planned technology park on the models of Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City, will cost at least €275 million, create over 5,600 jobs and eventually cover an area of 360,000 m². It is

expected to be fully completed by 2021. It will when completed, feature a state-of-the-art ICT and Media Business Park, tourism accommodation, entertainment areas, shops and a recreational area taking up around one-third of the area.

Ray Woods of www.maltabuyproperty says, "We see an increasing number of Australians on Malta who may have links with the UK for example and who may also want to see more of Europe. In Malta, they can get to the UK faster than it would take them to cross from one side of Australia to the other! The ready availability of mortgage finance at affordable rates also encourages many to put down roots and there is a great choice of properties for long lets – to suit all budgets. Malta is of course tiny compared to Australia, but many value the fact that you can get from one of the island to the other in 45 minutes – and be in Sicily in 90 minutes by high speed ferry.

The North African coast is only 150 miles or so away and with many cruise liners calling in at Malta, the travel possibilities are endless."

For more information, go to www.maltabuyproperty.co.uk or email raywoods99@yahoo.co.uk.

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USEFUL LINKS AND SOURCES:

<http://www.maltamigration.com/history/maltese-australian/prohibited6.shtml?s=5EA90576-5775C087-7DC611152350-7CB9>

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100204/local/government-to-take-legal-action-to-recover-australia-hall-from-the-p>

<http://www.expatsblog.com/en/nationalities/australian/in/europe/malta/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Malta#Malta_in_the_British_Empire.2C_1800-1964

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maltese_Australians

Notes to Editors:

www.maltabuyproperty.co.uk was founded in 2004 by husband and wife team Ray and Elaine Woods - who after a love affair with the island that began nearly 40 years ago, purchased their own holiday home on the site of Fort Pembroke a large colonial garrison. They work in association with Frank Salt Real Estate, the largest agency on the island and both sell and rent residential and commercial property.

Malta Enterprise

Malta Enterprise is the agency responsible for the promotion of foreign investment and industrial development in Malta. Its mission is to sustain Malta's overall competitiveness to create the right environment for successful enterprise in Malta. It offers assistance and advice to those who seek to

learn more about the multitude of business and investment opportunities available on the island. Likewise, Malta Enterprise offers investors the best possible service before, during and after they decide to invest. Malta offers a highly competitive investment location for niche manufacturing as well as the services sectors

Further information can also be obtained by e-mail at info.bd@maltaenterprise.com

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