

The Ramblers' Association of Malta

PO Box 108, Sliema, Malta. SLM 1000

Tel/Fax. 21342121/ 27022777

E-mail: ram205@gmail.com

www.ramblersmalta.org/

<http://ramblersassociation.blogspot.com/>

Newsletter No. 20 April - June 2011

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on Saturday 19th February, once more kindly hosted by the Hotel Phoenicia. We were very pleased by the turnout as well as by the lively and great participation in the discussion part.

Those who could not attend on the day can read the President's and the Secretary's addresses on our website.

You are also asked to go through the short minutes of this meeting; these too can be read on our website but are also attached with this Newsletter because we are asking you to send in any comments on their correctness and completeness.

WALKS: Apart from the Gozo walks, we had seventeen varied walks, all very well-attended. This year we had the first bad weather since we have been organising our Gozo weekends: on Sunday, the rain forced all 55 participants to agree on giving up the walk and take the ferry back home.

Sam also led three walks for a group of Italians from Siena brought over by Maltese Gaby Micallef Trigona.

Recently our Walk Leaders team increased by two, Tess and Michael Hoey, who led two separate walks in the Mellieha area; and after the appeals made during the AGM, we have other new names to whom we all have to be grateful: Josephine Burden, Nancy Borg, Elaine Pirota and Ian Hullahd.

MEETINGS: In these first months of the year our representatives have met:

- (a) Parl. Sec. Dr Jason Azzopardi on various issues some of which we have been repeatedly raising without achieving practically any result at all: Fomm ir-Rih, Simblija and Wied Hazrun, il-Qlejja tal-Bahrija and Ras ir-Raheb, Xrobb l-Ghagin, l-Ahrax tal-Mellieha, Bingemma and Ta' Muxi at Qala. We have made our disgruntlement on this lack of any progress clear to Dr Azzopardi for it looks likely we will have to resort to other actions.
- (b) Parl. Sec. Dr M de Marco: concerning the Water Management Project.
- (c) MEPA: Three meetings at the MEPA on various aspects of the Mepa reform as well as on the Management of Natura2000 sites
- (d) Shadow Minister for the Environment Mr Leo Brincat: we had a cordial meeting on

practically the same issues discussed with the Hon. Dr J. Azzopardi.

(e) Dr Ellis who is leading our two ongoing court cases. In this meeting FAA and FoE, our partners in the Rationalisation suit, also attended.

We attended two court sessions on each suit but there is no real progress to report.

MEPA MATTERS: This term we have been quite busy making enquiries, complaints and objections with the MEPA on various issues:

- a) Jan 10: Objection to PA/04875/10 for development of pigeon loft in ODZ, Qala, Gozo.
- b) Jan 11: Objection to PA/01404/09 for construction of stables and rubble walls at Qala, Gozo.
- c) Jan 30: Complaint to Police re wrecked cars and blocks of stone in Wied il-Kbir. The former were removed a few days later and an investigation on the stones is underway.
- d) Feb 3 Objection to PA 2453/10 to construct baling plant in ODZ at Hal Far.
- e) Feb 5: Objection to PA 4222/10 for development at Santa Marija estate.
- f) Feb 11: Objection to PA 2374/09 - restoration of military structure, dry stone walls, etc. to form part of a Heritage Trail at Selmun; ODZ.
- g) Feb 12: Request to Mepa Auditor to conduct an investigation into the granting of the permit granted to PA 825/07 for the setting up of a fish-processing plant in an ODZ at Selmun.
- h) Feb 21 Complaint: against two brick walls constructed on the rocky shore each side of the Exiles Beach Club – asking for removal.
- i) Feb 24: Letter to Mellieha mayor R.Cutajar for change of stance on Fish-grading plant.
- j) March 3: Requested Auditor report on the extension to the Seminary; received.
- k) March 5: Complaint about possible illegal dumping near Zammitello Palace, Mgarr. No answer yet.
- l) March 6: Objection to PA/03959/07 - the proposed building of a retreat house and parking site on Ghammar hill facing Ta' Pinu, Gozo presented by the Gozo Curia.
- m) March 7: Complaint about a gate denying access to a road in Wied il-Baqqija. The Govt. Property Dept. informs us it is on private property.
- n) March 16: Objection to PA: 05350/10 for dumping and a project in a quarry at Ta' Muxi , Qala.
- o) March 17: objection to PA/03643/10 for a massive project in Wied Incita
- p) March 25: Enquiry about legality of construction of a small enclosure at Wied Incita. No answer yet.

CORRESPONDENCE: On 3 February we were informed by Mr Ian Codescu of the Directorate General Environment of the EU that our complaint regarding various infringement to EU regulations had been registered by the EU Commission. Although this does not mean that steps will automatically be taken by the Commission, it shows that our complaints were found to be admissible, not frivolous.

RAM in the MEDIA

- a) **PRESS:** our monthly contributions to ILLUM, MALTA INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY and L-ORIZZONT are on-going, as is Lino Bugejs's contribution to the online paper ILGENSillum.

b) **RADIO:** our slots with Lilian Maistre's popular programme 'Familja Wahda' on Radju Malta at 11.15 on Friday, every fortnight are also a regular feature. Next slots are due on April 1 and 15. Your occasional phone-ins will be appreciated. On March 15 we took part in a discussion on RTK on the issue of boathouses. For those who are not yet aware: this programme presented by the Kummissjoni Ambjent goes on air every Tuesday from 5.15 to 7.00pm.

SCHOOLS PROGRAMM: We are proceeding with our visits to six Primary schools giving A power point presentation on cultural elements in the countryside and later taking a class out for a two and a half hour walk. It is surprising how little our young know the countryside and how quickly they get tired.

STUDENT RAMBLERS have changed their name: it is now **YOUTH RAMBLERS.** This year they have organised three very successful and well-attended walks. Participants are increasing with every activity; for the last walk there were no less than 54 youths.

TOUR LOIRE VALLEY: Again, this venture abroad has attracted more numbers than it is possible for us to satisfy. Although we had planned to limit the number of participants to 21 (all RAM members) more than 35 expressed interest. When details and cost of the tour were issued 30 of these confirmed their interest. Regretfully we could not increase the number beyond the first 26 to confirm.

The Loire is an enchanting place to visit during the Spring and the tour promises to be a wonderful experience, even though this time no foreign ramblers are involved. There will be many of these, however the next tour will be in October to Almeria in Spain. The walks there will be organised by the Spanish Ramblers Association in connection with the Annual General Conference of the European Ramblers Association (ERA) and the "Eurorando 2011." For more information just browse the name on the internet.

Joe Agius
Hon. Secretary