

# THE MALTESE GHOSTS OF VALLETTA PAST

ARCHBISHOP STREET IS HAUNTED BY THE GHOST OF A PRIEST LAST SIGHTED IN 2005. MALCOLM HANSON ALSO TRIED TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE GHOST OF OLIVER REED, WHO DIED HERE WHILE HAVING A DRINK AT WHAT IS NOW CALLED OLLIE'S PUB WHILE IN MALTA FOR THE FILMING OF THE GLADIATOR.



*Malcolm Hanson*, GHOST WALKER AND BBC RADIO LEEDS' PSYCHIC INVESTIGATOR, TOURS VALLETTA, THE CITY WHERE THE STREETS HAVE A NAME, AND SO DO THE GHOSTS

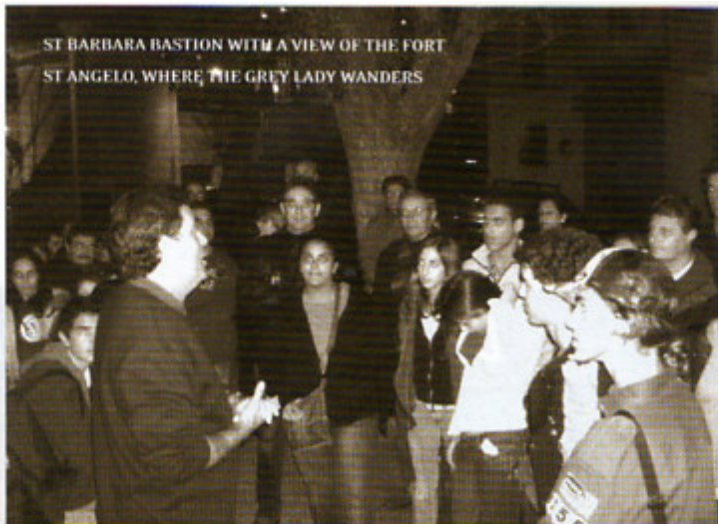
PHOTOS BY ROBERT CAMILLERI AT FOTOCLASSIC

Would you like to walk in the footsteps of a ghost? No? Well, I'm sorry, but that is exactly what you are about to do; it cannot be helped, I'm afraid. You see, if you are standing where I have asked you to, then you are stood on the very spot where, something like one hundred and fifty years ago, a female ghost implored two weary English naval officers to come to her aid - obliging them to follow her through the dark streets of Valletta, to a place that never existed.™

So begins my *Do-It-Yourself Valletta Ghost Walk Book*, a possible world first in that nothing quite like it has, seemingly, ever been written in this fashion before. I wrote it in the style of a letter from a dear friend. In fact, you hear the book rather than read it. It has its own voice and you soon pick up on whether the person addressing you - who in spirit is actually leading you around the dark streets of Valletta - is benevolent or, unfortunately for you, otherwise.

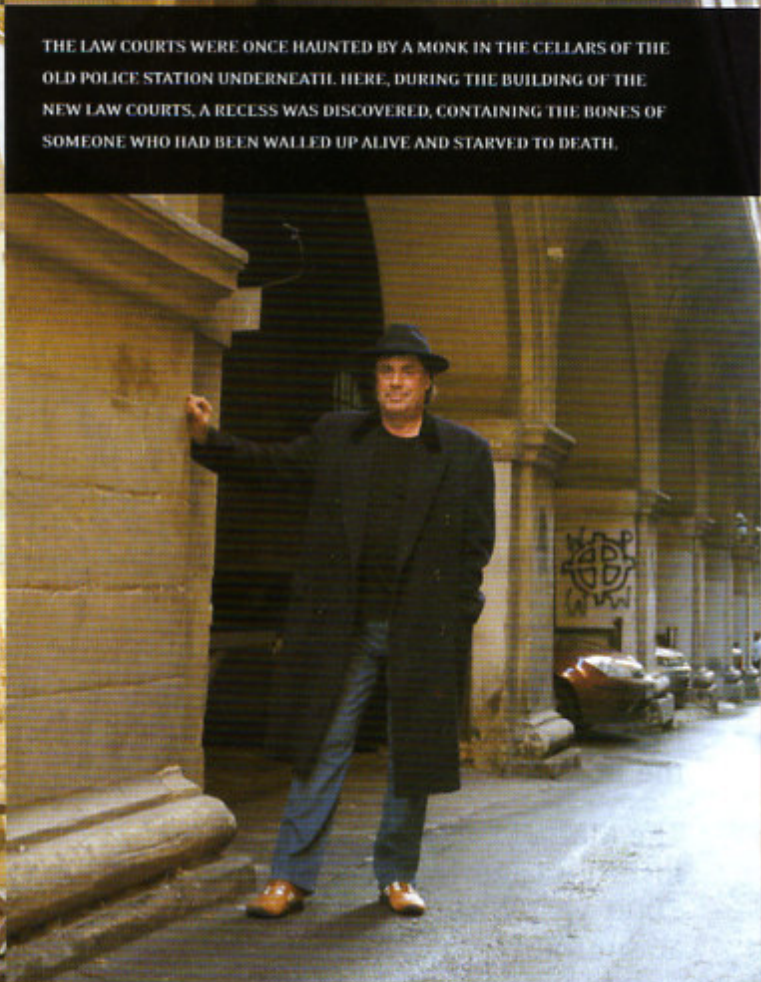
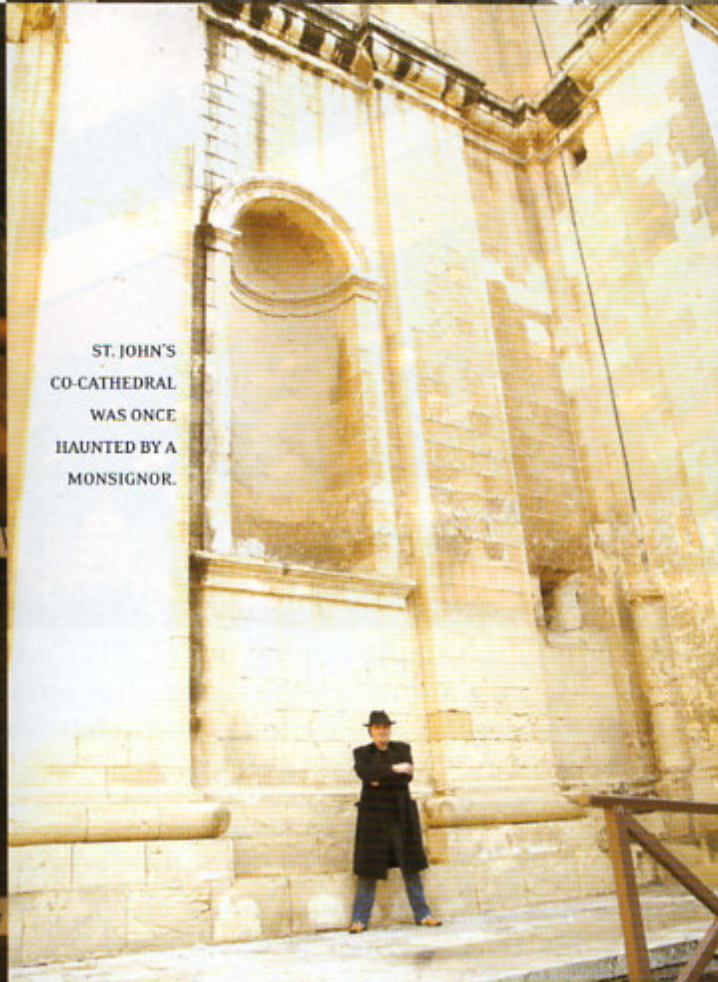


ST BARBARA BASTION WITH A VIEW OF THE FORT ST ANGELO, WHERE THE GREY LADY WANDERS



THE LAW COURTS WERE ONCE HAUNTED BY A MONK IN THE CELLARS OF THE OLD POLICE STATION UNDERNEATH. HERE, DURING THE BUILDING OF THE NEW LAW COURTS, A RECESS WAS DISCOVERED, CONTAINING THE BONES OF SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN WALLED UP ALIVE AND STARVED TO DEATH.

ST. JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL WAS ONCE HAUNTED BY A MONSIGNOR.



The idea behind this do-it-yourself book is that when I created the Valletta ghost tour, I realised I would be very restricted to lead tours in Malta due to all my commitments back in England. However, I could not ignore the fact that hundreds and thousands of visitors to the island are British, and would go mad for a ghost tour with Valletta as its back-drop. So I came up with the idea of a book that would quite literally replace me. When I am not around to lead a walk, visitors can buy the book for exactly the same price as a ticket and set off on the walk themselves.

My preoccupation with ghosts is all to do with that great British national pastime of ghost-hunting. My idea of ghost-hunting or, as I prefer to call it, ghost-walking, is that I visit towns and cities, study their supernatural histories, put out my own feelers and then attempt to create a custom-made ghost tour for that place.

Despite having been a musician, songwriter and recording artiste, the supernatural has always been my first love. It is a family thing: I had two aunts who saw and heard things all the time. I grew up with ghost stories and then, around twenty years ago, a leading psychic told me I had the 'gift' and would one day 'open up'. This happened naturally and it eventually became part of my work.





HOUSE OF THE BLUE DOLPHIN IN ST. URSULA STREET WAS ONCE HAUNTED BY A DARK LADY WEARING A BLACK *FALDETTA* WHO APPEARED TO TWO ENGLISH NAVAL OFFICERS. ORSON WELLES' 1951 FILM *RETURN TO GLENNASCAUL* IS A DIRECT LIFT OF THIS TALE.

ABOVE: THE CORNER BETWEEN MERCHANTS STREET AND MELITA STREET IS VISITED BY THE NOTORIOUS VALLETTA VAMPIRE, LAST SEEN HOVERING TWENTY FEET UP IN THE AIR IN 2000.



In the last five years I have developed my skills as a ghost-walker and created tours in my native Yorkshire. I am regularly on the radio, where quite often I get sent out to snoop around haunted buildings. But do not misunderstand me - I am not a medium. I do not talk with spirits; I only 'feel' them.

With Valletta, it all began when I came for a holiday and fell in love with the place like everyone else. However, the moment I began to walk the streets of Valletta I picked up on all kinds of psychic energies still lingering around, and it did not take me long to realise that here was an opportunity to create a great walk. So I spent my holiday studying at the local library, delving into old press reports and reading what books there were on the supernatural, then listening to people's own stories. Afterwards it was just a case of linking them all together.

So, where and what are the most haunted sites in Valletta? Ah, now that would be telling, wouldn't it? However, I will only say that for me, the spookiest of all places is St. Ursula Street. In fact, I am right at home there. On the other hand, I certainly would not hang about on the corner of Merchants Street and Melita Street for too long - not unless you want to meet a seven-foot-tall vampire. ■