

The National Council of Women



cordially invites you to
an exhibition

A Pictorial Diary of Women in Maltese Society

at

The Palace Hotel, Sliema

28 April - 3 May 2014

inaugurated by the Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici

Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Councils

1964 - Birth of an organisation

When on 3 February, 1964 a group of six women met in the sitting room of the living quarters of the matron at St Luke's Hospital, little did they think that they were making history. These women were Mary Griffin, Matron of St Luke's Hospital, Josephine Amato Gauci, President of Women's Corona Society, Adelina Davison, President of the League of Friends, Maria Testaferrata Bonici, President of the Catholic Women's League, her sister Bice Testaferrata Moroni Viani and Jane Spiteri, Vice-President General of the Malta Catholic Action.



They were listening to Mrs Nora Dean, President of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, explaining the good work women in certain parts of the world were doing for themselves and for their countries, at the same time expressing her frustration that in Malta there was lack of women leaders in society. Inspired by Nora's comments, these ladies felt that it was a golden opportunity to do something about this immediately since Malta was then on the verge of attaining Independence. They agreed to form themselves into a steering committee and made a public invitation to a meeting which took place on 13 February, 1964 at The Palace, Valletta under the auspices of Lady Dorman, wife of the Governor, Sir Maurice Dorman.

The National Council of Women was formed, and they never looked back ...

The National Council of Women

The National Council of Women of Malta (NCW) is an independent, non-governmental voluntary association based on adult, individual membership and the affiliation of other voluntary organisations.

Its aims are to:

- ◆ Present a broad and comprehensive view of women's opinion on matters of public interest;
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity for women in all aspects of private, community and professional activity, and
- ◆ Enable women to participate effectively at all levels and in all aspects of Maltese society.

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2014 – Birth of an Exhibition: *A Pictorial Diary of Women in Maltese Society*

Maria and I had barely downed our robes and caps after graduating B.A. (Hons.) History of Art, we were wondering where our next challenge would take us. Sure enough 2014 did not disappoint us! I felt privileged when Ian Ellis, with whom I had spent hours on end at Richard Ellis archives during my research, referred the National Council of Women to me for ideas about an event that would celebrate their 50th anniversary. Although pressed for time, I immediately accepted to help this prestigious organisation.

After discussing various options, we opted for a photographic collection conveying female progress and development in Malta over the past century or so. I would not have been able to put up an exhibition of around 80 photos without the enthusiastic help of my dear friend Maria, who put aside her own art exhibition to join me in this project, all on voluntary basis.

We used our network of contacts and friends, from archivists to museum curators, to photographers, from people we know to distinguished public figures who soon became fired with enthusiasm as much as we were. The collection of photos captures the widest possible spectrum of female activity and echoes the ideal of NCW, *'to work for the service of the country, not only to witness its progress and development but to help forge it and give it shape, possibly also from the planning tables in decision-taking board rooms'*. We made this message our own to create the idea of a *Pictorial Diary of Women in Maltese Society*, a 'photo album' rich in variety and significance from women tilling land to women becoming President; from women removing war demolition to women reaching the highest echelons in the arts, sciences and professions.

This has been an exciting project and we are grateful to the National Council of Women for entrusting us with organising such a commemorative event. Our special thanks go to Brian Tonna, Managing Partner of Nexia BT financial advisory services, who believed in our project and was immediately supported by his partners to sponsor the exhibition. We also wish to thank Austin Tufigno for his professional service in digitizing old photos and reproducing all the photographic material on display. We remain in debt to all those who trusted us with their prized photos and a heartfelt thanks goes to our families and friends who continuously support us.

Caroline Tonna and Maria Cassar

Exhibition curators