

## Santa Marija Tower, Comino

Built in 1618 by Grand Master de Wignacourt, it formed part of a system of towers providing defence and communication between the Cittadella in Gozo and Mdina.

The Santa Marija Tower on Comino formed part of the early system of towers which the Order set up to facilitate defence and communication between the Cittadella in Gozo and Mdina. It later became a key location of the system of towers built along the coast. The decision to build this Tower was taken by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt in 1618, and was financed by the Grand Master himself, by the sale of the brushwood on the island and from the profits made by the resettled farmers. The site chosen was some eighty metres above sea level. The design of the Tower was square in plan with four corner turrets. The bulk of the Tower is twelve metres high and stands on a plinth some eight metres high. A three metre wide strip was laid along the top surface of the plinth to enable the defenders to move easily to any endangered point. The walls of the Tower are about six metres thick and the four corner turrets are extended perpendicularly and crowned with a battlement top. The Tower is surrounded by a thick, high rubble wall made of loose stones, which gave the impression that the Tower was surrounded by a ditch. During the British period the Tower was important for the protection of the anchorage and communications between Gozo and Malta, together with Fort St Agatha (the Red Tower) in Mellieha and Fort Chambrai in Gozo. It was during this period that the internal fabric of the Tower was significantly changed, and it seems likely that it was used as an isolation hospital at some point, while the lower chamber was converted into a stable for animals. St. Mary's Tower has been exposed to the sea and winds for many years and the stone work had greatly deteriorated. The roof waterproofing was cracked in many places and had been crudely covered to stop water leakage. Vegetation had taken root in the crevices and roof, further dislodging stone blocks. In recent years vandalism had taken its toll and there was an almost complete absence of the parapet wall on the roof and turrets. A great number of large stone blocks had been taken from the plinth wall for other uses. Restoration commenced in 2002 and the exterior was completed in 2004. The Tower is open on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from April to end of October between 10.30am and 3.00pm if the flag is flying. Bookings may be made for visits by schools and other groups, as well for private functions. Please contact 9905 1866 or [gozo@dinlarthelwa.org](mailto:gozo@dinlarthelwa.org)