



*H. E. President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici reading out his report on the adjudication of the Meritorious Historian Award 2010. Also in the photograph are the Hon Evarist Bartolo M.P., Prof Mario Buhagiar and Prof Roger Ellul-Micallef.*



*His Excellency the President of Malta Dr George Abela presenting the Meritorious Historian Award 2010 to Rev Mgr John Azzopardi.*

## SOCIETY NEWS 2010

2010 was the second year in office of the Committee elected in early 2009 and it also happened to be the Society's Diamond Jubilee, sixty years of continual existence after being set up through the initiative taken by the Very Rev Mgr Professor Arturo Bonnici way back in 1950.

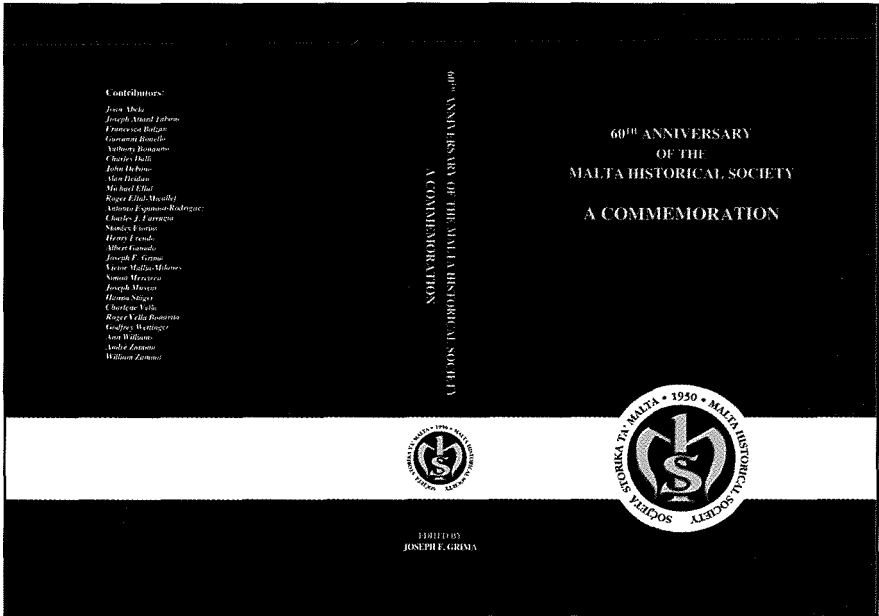
The very well-attended 2010 Annual General Meeting, held on 1 February at the Italian Cultural Institute at Valletta, was preceded by an illustrated lecture by Ms Francesca Balzan on *Maltese Connections in the Libres de Passanties of Barcelona*. Although elections to the Committee are only due in 2011, the meeting itself was characterised by a very lively discussion on two of the three proposed amendments to the statute.

There were no changes in personnel in the Committee but a change was recorded in the ranks of the officials. For personal reasons, Mr Salvatore Mousù decided to step down from the post of Hon Treasurer at the end of June. Efforts to persuade him change his decision were futile and Ms Joan Abela offered to take up his post at least till the next Committee election in February 2011. Mr Mousù had carried out sterling work in the seventeen years he had been the MHS Treasurer and he certainly put the finances of the MHS on a very sound footing. He certainly deserves a resounding vote of thanks for the great work he carried out during his long tenure of office.

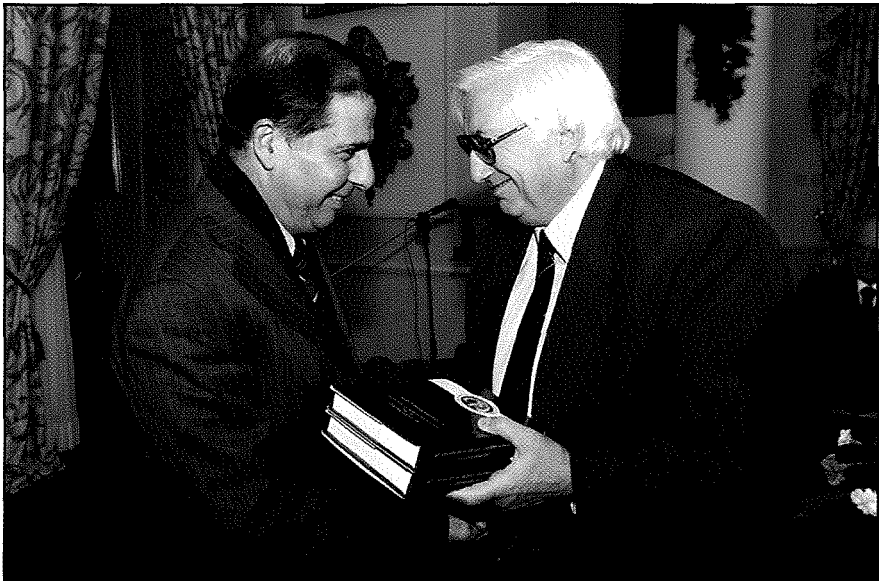
The number of members has now exceeded the 580 mark, mainly due to the efforts of Mr Salvatore Mousù though new members have also been attracted to the MHS ranks after attending one of the commemorative/fund-raising events organised during the year (see below). Contact was kept with members through circulars and e-mails. At the end of the year there were about 370 e-mail addresses in the Hon. Secretary's address book and these members were continually updated not only with MHS news but also with a number of cultural events being organised throughout the year by other entities. This initiative has been well-received by the members and quite a number wrote in to thank the Hon Secretary for keeping them informed on Malta's and Gozo's cultural programme. It is hoped that the other members who have not sent in their e-mail address will do so and help decrease the MHS expenditure in postage expenses. Naturally, there are members who do not have e-mail and they will be kept up-to-date on MHS matters through postal mail.

Thanks to Dr David Mallia, the MHS website (<http://melitahistorica.t35.com>) has been kept up-to-date. Members are reminded that it includes all the MHS publications except those published during the last two years which means that there are new insertions every year. This is a service to members and other researchers who may want to consult MHS publications that are out of print and have been so for a number of years.

The end of January saw the publication of *Melita Historica 2009* on schedule, which means that our annual journal has been kept up-to-date. Edited by Dr Joseph



*The jacket of the MHS's 60th Anniversary Publication which includes the list of contributors on the back page.*



*Editor Dr Joseph F. Grima presenting two copies of the MHS's 60th Anniversary commemorative publication to H.E. Dr George Abela, President of Malta.*

F. Grima, this latest edition included five original papers and a number of book reviews. The next number, for 2010, is scheduled for the end of January 2011 and will bring Volume XV to a close. On the other hand, *Proceedings of History Week 2009*, originally scheduled for June, has not seen the light of day and it is now hoped that it will be published in the first half of 2011. However, December 2010 witnessed the issue of another MHS publication (see below and page 342).

Regretfully, once more, I have to register the Committee's failure to secure premises for the MHS. The committee had earmarked a rather dilapidated *polverista* at Floriana and had high hopes of securing the premises after fruitful talks with the Floriana mayor and the resources ministry. However, when eventually the premises were put out for public tender, the MHS was unable to meet the conditions set out and the project had to be dropped. Again, no public lectures were organised during the first half of the year mainly owing to Mr Mousù (who had organised the lectures during the previous nine years) being unable to do so due to health reasons at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010. This lacuna was partly remedied at the end of the year (see below). On the other hand, the Committee involved itself in the discussion about the conservation of the book holdings at the National Library and also decided to donate an air-conditioner to be set up in a particular room where important Melitensia publications are housed.

As already mentioned, 2010 was the MHS's Diamond Jubilee, an anniversary commemorated mainly during the second half of the year. A very successful and very well-attended fund-raising activity was a sunset harbour cruise on board the *Fernandes* on 26 August which included buffet dinner on board and a commentary on the fortifications by Dr Stephen C. Spiteri. The annual dinner, held on 4 November at the Hotel Fortina Brasserie, was also well-attended and added to the MHS's funds as well. The guests of honour were the Parliamentary Secretaries Dr Mario de Marco and Dr Jason Azzopardi. Both activities were organised by Ms Charlene Vella.

A series of three lectures were organised in November/December and held at the Auberge de Castile by kind permission of the Hon Prime Minister. The lectures were delivered by: Ms Joan Abela on *The Archives, the Notary, the Corsair, and the Slave*; Ms Charlene Vella on *Sculpture in Late Medieval Malta: The Crusader and French Influences*; and by Prof Godfrey Wettinger on *Malta in the High Middle Ages*.

The first days of December saw the publication, on schedule, of a book commemorating the MHS's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Titled *60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Malta Historical Society – A Commemoration* and edited by Dr Joseph F. Grima, this hard-cover 540-page illustrated book includes twenty-four original contributions – by established and emerging historians – covering aspects from the whole spectrum of Maltese History, from prehistory to the twentieth century, including historiography and research. A short first part also includes information about the origins of the Society and a complete list of all its officials and Committee members till 2010. It was offered to members at a special price which just covered the cost of each copy.



*H.E. Dr George Abela, President of Malta, addressing the guests at the Meritorious Historian Award 2010 ceremony.*

Just over 240 copies were ordered but, for a Society with 580 members, one would have expected a much larger number of orders.

The last activity to celebrate the MHS's Diamond Jubilee was the Meritorious Historian Award 2010 organised at San Anton Palace under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency Dr George Abela, President of Malta. An independent board made up of H.E. President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, the Hon Evarist Bartolo M.P., and Prof Roger Ellul-Micallef chose Rev Mgr John Azzopardi to be the first recipient of this award which is expected to be an annual event. H.E. Dr George Abela was then presented with two copies of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative publication by the editor. The event also included an opening speech by MHS President Prof Mario Buhagiar, a report by H.E. Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici and a closing speech by H.E. Dr George Abela who then hosted the assembled guests – who included H.E. President Emeritus Dr Edward Fenech Adami and Parliamentary Secretary Dr Mario de Marco – to a reception. Sincere thanks are due to all who contributed to the success of the evening but special thanks go to H.E. Dr Abela for his genuine interest in this activity in particular and in the MHS's other activities in general.

**Dr Joseph F. Grima**  
**Hon. Secretary**