

# The De Redin Tower

MAJ. DAVID P. ATTARD

Photograph by D. Attard

Towers have for hundreds of years been associated with the defence of the Maltese Islands against external aggression as well as with the security and protection of the civilian population.

With such a close association with Maltese national and military history, it is not surprising that a tower was selected as the emblem of the Maltese Armed Forces. On April 1, 1965, a few months after Malta achieved her independence from Britain, the regiments that formed part of the Malta Territorial Force, namely 3rd and 11th Regiments, Royal Malta Artillery (T) and 1st Battalion, The King's Own Malta Regiment ceased to be part of the British Army. These territorial units became the first units to form part of the Malta Land Force under the Maltese Government.

It was during this period that a three dimensional design believed to have been drawn by Brig. (then Capt.) Claude M. Gaffiero and based on one of the De Redin Towers was adopted as the formation sign of the newly set up Force. The De Redin Tower was initially placed on a French grey background, but within a few months this was changed to red. This formation sign was retained by the Malta Land Force when on October 1, 1970, the regular element of the Royal Malta Artillery ceased to form part of the British Army and the Maltese Government assumed responsibility for the RMA, as well as individual members of the Royal Engineers and Royal Signals.

To understand the military traditions associated with the chain of De Redin Towers, one has to travel back to 1637 when Grand Master Lascaris commissioned the building of four coastal towers, namely Gnejna Tower (also known as Lippija Tower), Ghajn Tuffieha Tower, Qawra Tower and St Paul's Bay Tower. An additional tower was commissioned in the 1640s at Wied Iz-Zurrieq. This tower, also known as Xuta or Sciuta Tower, eventually served as the design to be followed for the 13 coastal towers built by Grand Master De Redin during the period 1658-59.

De Redin Towers were designed to serve as look-out posts. They were manned continuously by regular soldiers to observe the sea approaches and to report any sighting of incoming peril. This was achieved by

relaying information to the nearest towers on the left and right. These towers would in turn relay the message to the rest of the towers until the whole of Malta was alerted. The use of smoke signals by day and fire by night gave enough warning to allow the Maltese to seek refuge within the fortified cities.

The De Redin tower's association with the Armed Forces of Malta did not stop at being the recognised emblem of the Force. It has since found itself featured in the badges of rank and in the National Colours. After Malta became a democratic republic in 1974, the Queen's crown in the badges of rank worn by members of the Armed Forces of Malta was replaced by a tower. A new isometric design based on the De Redin Tower was made by Brig. (then Maj.) Gaffiero.

On December 1, 1978, the tower was officially featured on the badges of rank of Staff Sergeant, Warrant Officer Class II, Warrant Officer Class I, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel and Brigadier.

The De Redin Tower was also placed on the National Colour when on June 23, 1988 the Armed Forces of Malta were for the first time officially presented with new Colours by Acting President Paul Xuereb.

A miniature silver replica of a De Redin tower adorns the Officers' Mess at Luqa Barracks. It was commissioned and paid for by the serving officers to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the regular element of the Armed Forces of Malta under the Government of Malta. Today, it serves as the main centre piece of the mess.

The De Redin Tower has withstood the test of time as the emblem of the Armed Forces of Malta, an emblem that represents the qualities associated with the main roles of the Force, namely the security and defence of the Maltese islands in peacetime and in crisis. ●

*The author would like to thank all those who contributed in any way towards this article. Any reader who has additional information on the origins of the De Redin Tower as the formation sign and emblem of the Force is kindly requested to make contact with the author at Headquarters, Armed Forces of Malta or via email at [afinjournal@gov.mt](mailto:afinjournal@gov.mt).*