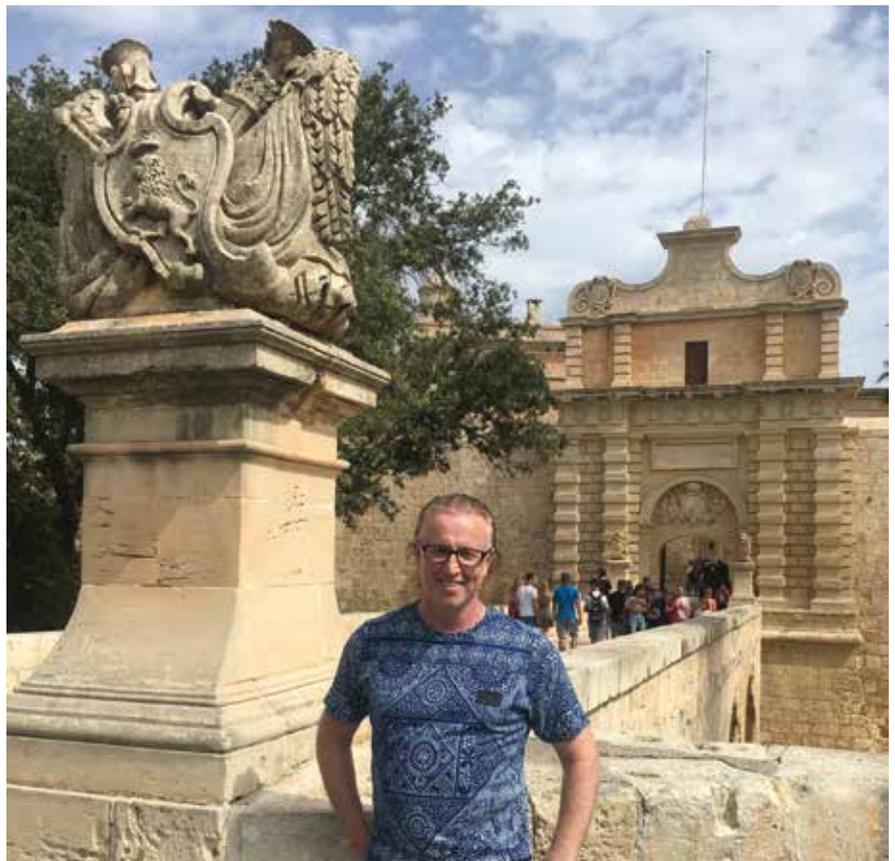


1565 & 1941

Malta is a tiny little island in the middle of the Mediterranean. Centrally located between Sicily and

North Africa, it has been a strategic stronghold for a long succession of ruling powers, from the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans to Arabs, Normans, Spanish, Crusader Knights, French and British. The Maltese have absorbed aspects of them all and, as a result, its richly layered history is fascinating, from 7000-year-old prehistoric ruins to the shipwreck of St. Paul, untouched medieval cities and the fortress city of Valletta named after the Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette of the Order of Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (try putting that title on your business card!). Its most famous period came to a head in 1565 with the 'Great Siege of Malta' by Suleiman the Magnificent as he strove to expand the Ottoman empire westwards from his base in Turkey. After a year-long struggle, the siege was lifted by a relieving force of 10,000 knights from mainland Europe who drove the corsairs of the Ottoman fleet back east. It was a turning point in the history of Europe as even the fate of France and Spain were threatened by Suleiman's westward ambitions. Little Malta played a large part in history; but not for the last time.

Malta is also where my mother was born. I know that my dark, Mediterranean complexion has been a mystery to many of you but now you know why. In 1941 during the air-raid blitzes inflicted on the island by Mussolini and later by Hitler, my grandmother thankfully met her Irish



The Entrance to Mdina in Malta – Another Scene from The Game of Thrones

husband-to-be. Those blitzes continued relentlessly, as often as seven times a day. The King of England, George VI, was so moved by the heroic approach of the people that he awarded the entire island the George Cross. It was the first time in history that this honor had been bestowed collectively (the only other such award was coincidentally given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland in 1999 for their service during the more recent troubles there.) Malta held on throughout the war and was an important staging post for fuel coming through the Suez Canal for the war effort – they are justly proud of

their second great defense of their island. My grandfather was serving in the Royal Irish Fusiliers as part of the British force defending the island; he was subsequently captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war for two years before returning emaciated at the end of the war to his young bride and daughter. He continued to serve in the military around Europe eventually ending up with his large family of 12 children in Belfast serving as chief officer at the highest security prison during the troubles.

My personal history notwithstanding, it is often fascinating how the world

and lives are connected. Just think about it, if Suleiman the Magnificent had won, I wouldn't be here; if the island hadn't been a target for the Nazi's, my grandfather wouldn't have been posted there; if he hadn't survived as a POW, my mother would not have been in Belfast to meet my father. I feel lucky to be alive.

2018

Unfortunately, I'm not aware of any rotomolders in Malta yet. They prefer stainless steel tanks, although some plastic versions are imported. My search has to go further afield and my plans for next year are for Orla and I to attend and present at every rotomolding conference around the world that we can. My early contacts show that India and China continue to grow in leaps and bounds and it will be interesting to see and hear first-hand how they are handling it; activity in Poland has also grown significantly; South African tank molders are facing threats from blow molding; the Australian group has finally bitten the bullet and arranged the fabled South Pacific event Orla has been waiting for (SPE has their meeting on the same dates in Cleveland, OH – what a tough choice that was for Orla!); and the tri-annual ARMO event in Hamburg should be an information

packed highlight for the year. The current schedule so far is:

- New Delhi, India (StAR), 19-21 Jan 2018
- Oslo, Norway (Nordic ARM), 6-7 Feb 2018
- Johannesburg, South Africa (ARMSA), 14-15 Mar 2018
- Shanghai, China (RPC-CPPIA), early May 2018
- Gdansk, Poland (ROTOPOL), 10-11 May 2018
- Williamsport, PA (Penn College), 22-23 May 2018
- Fiji (ARMA), 2-3 Jun 2018
- Hamburg, Germany (ARMO), 16-18 Sep 2018
- Montreal, Canada (ARM), 21-22 Oct 2018

It should be an interesting learning opportunity to catch up on what is happening in each region. The tour t-shirts are being printed as I write...

Rotoplas 2017

What a great show in Chicago. Great attendance, a lot of good technical content and a lot of fresh faces – it felt like ARM conferences of old. Well done to the ARM staff and all the exhibitors. 

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