

## Home is where the heart is

Brian Roberts

2019 was for my wife Kate and I very momentous and emotional year.

The most important, of course, was our decision to move back to the UK after over 20 very happy years living in Malta, which we have been proud to call home. I mean that in a very serious way. We have been asked on numerous occasions if we would ever move from Malta and the answer would be “you never know”, but in reality we would mean never. It just wouldn't happen.

Over the years we have met many wonderful people who have meant so much to us in so many ways. People who have been more than friends, people who have been there during good and not so good times, people who have inspired us with their encouragement to achieve a sense of attainment and contentment. They have allowed us to be part of their families and lives. Unfortunately, many are no longer with us, but their memories will remain forever.

It is true that Malta is a very different country to the one I visited over 50 years ago. The pace of life was much slower and even simpler, but I don't think the Maltese people have changed that much. The night Kate and I walked into the Imperial Band Club changed our lives and the direction of our future forever. The Band was rehearsing under John Mamo upstairs, and I was immediately invited to play. That was in 1998, and the rest is history.

The Maltese people have been very special gifts. They do not prejudice people. You are accepted on face value. Nobody asks awkward questions and provided respect is shown to them, respect will be reciprocated back ten times over. There is of course good and bad in every nation. Malta does have its

share of bad, but thankfully they are in the minority. The Maltese have an ability to be forgiving, which sometimes I couldn't understand. Maybe it's their religious upbringing that allows good and evil to be treated on equal terms. I don't know. Maybe it's part of that legacy we call history which affected so many generations of Maltese people, where forgiveness and acceptance was the only answer to understanding and working towards the future.

Many questions are asked about what the future holds for Malta. Questions rightly asked. What about overcrowding, gridlocked traffic and a demand on resources on such a small island which will inevitably cause massive problems to the wellbeing and prosperity of all who live on this beautiful island. Let's hope that the “power brokers” have the foresight to manage the future to the benefit of all.

Okay, so why did we decide to move back to the UK? It wasn't an easy decision for both of us, but in the end it came down to three little words: “it was time”. It had nothing to do with Malta. It is a strange thing, but as you get older our attachment to our country of birth is stronger than ever. Over the years we have met many expat Maltese who have told us the same. It doesn't matter how long you have lived in Australia or Canada, Malta will always be home.

Yes, we will miss living in Malta. I know I will have a heavy heart when it comes to the time of the Feast. Kate and I will shed a massive tear when we hear of the passing of people who have meant so much to us.

However the future is not dead. One thing is certain, that no matter where the heart is, we will be back.

A very happy Festa to everyone.