



## Going Green – Crafting Workshops at the Imperial

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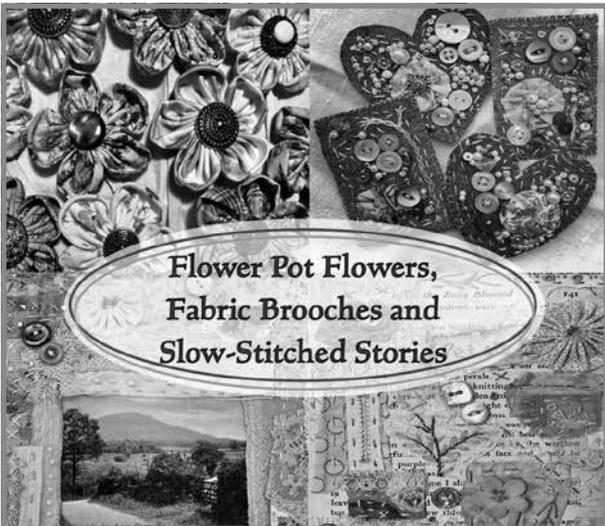
Moving from Shropshire in the UK to Malta early last year was a huge change. The Imperial Band Club soon became an integral part of my life and I extend my gratitude to the Club for the warm welcome and for the friendships that have been formed. As someone who isn't musical, I have been particularly drawn to the uniqueness of banding in Malta and to the social history aspects of the Imperial Band. It has been a real privilege to look through decades of old photographs in the archive detailing past events and social activities. Photographs of faces that smile at us from the past and our unique - often poignant - position of knowing what the future will be at a time when those photographed did not. It is the photographs of these past events which link in with some of the work that I have done previously in the UK and one black and white photograph, in particular, of children at a Christmas party many years ago, wearing handmade paper hats, was especially affecting.

With a local government background in Adult Education and Community Development, I have

for a long time, been interested in the wider social, environmental and economic benefits of creating more sustainably by reusing and repurposing recycled and found resources. Mellieħa is surrounded by a beautifully rich and diverse natural environment, and we are all increasingly aware that we each have a responsibility to lessen the impact that we have upon the natural world. Nothing that we throw away or recycle disappears completely. Things just 'go' somewhere else so perhaps by thinking more creatively about how we can repurpose and reuse, we can all contribute in part to a more sustainable environment. Many of us will remember our parents and grandparents mending things, passing down clothes, buying food that wasn't packaged in plastic and never throwing things away. The concept of being thrifty and recycling isn't a new one and it has been a real pleasure to be able to share these interests and ideas with others at the club through our craft workshops which started at the end of last year.

Our sessions focus upon 'Wellbeing' and the positive aspects of coming together in a safe and relaxing environment to learn and to share ideas in ways that do not harm the environment. The 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (Connect with others, Get Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give) and the rationale behind these 'ways' was, from the outset, an intrinsic part of the session planning. Workshops began in November with a series of Christmas Craft sessions. The idea was to reuse and repurpose everyday items that we would ordinarily throw away. We met on Saturday





mornings, and alongside cups of tea and biscuits, we used pre-loved fabrics, old curtain rings, pine cones, scraps of wood (very kindly donated by a member of the band) and recycled paper to make door wreaths, little wooden houses, gift tags, cards and decorations.

The Christmas sessions were followed in the

spring with four more workshops themed around paper, fabric and metal. We decorated tin cans, embossed used kunserva tubes and used can ring-pulls as picture hangers. Pre-loved fabric was used to weave on to cardboard box looms and we explored making yarn out of old tee-shirts. Recycled paper became paper roses on wooden stems and one of





our group showed us how to fold old paper sheets to make beautiful inserts for cards.

Our final workshop before the summer focussed on fabric. It is estimated that 92 million tonnes of textile waste goes into landfill globally each year (Source: earth.org). All of the textiles that we use during our sessions are pre-loved and sourced from old clothing, curtains, bedlinen, etc. (some very kindly donated by another member of the band). Torn and threadbare sheets were cut up and dyed using natural plant dyes (onion skins, rose petals, avocado stones and seeds) and we used simple slow stitching techniques to create fabric collages and 'stories'. An old pair of jeans, some vintage buttons and thrifted beads became colourful denim brooches and little circles of cotton were stitched together to make fabric flowers on lolly pop stems.

Going forward, we have sessions planned for the Autumn and for Christmas and we are really keen to expand upon our environmental commitment by meeting for a beach clean to gather driftwood and found resources that we can then repurpose during our future sessions. Plans are also underway for a piece of community art as well as 'open' sessions where people can bring along a craft that they are working on at home, and a wider intergenerational project which will look at the sharing of traditional craft skills and thrift ideas with members of the wider community (including ways to mend and repair).



Our workshops at the Imperial guarantee a very warm welcome and we are always open to new ideas of ways to create in a sustainable way. If you have a skill that you would like to share with others, we would love to hear from you so do please get in touch with us. The benefits to our wellbeing of coming together and learning new skills is well documented and if you would like to join us but you're not too sure about coming on your own, we can meet up beforehand. We are also very grateful to accept donations of things that we can reuse in our sessions (for example, old fabrics, buttons, scraps of wood, greetings cards). Together, we really can make a difference.

#### Dates for the Diary:

- Saturday 30 September – Beach Clean (meet at 9am at Marfa, beach entrance opposite the Riviera Hotel)
- Saturday 7 October (10am – 12noon) – Autumn Crafts
- Saturday 14 October (10am – 12noon) – Autumn Crafts
- Saturday 25 November (10am – 12noon) – Christmas Twig Trees and Paper Decorations
- Saturday 2 December (10am – 12noon) – Collage Christmas Cards and Gift Tags
- Saturday 9 December (10am – 12noon) – Scrap Fabric Baubles and Clothing Peg Angels

