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Repairs and Maintenance of
Heritage Architecture IX**

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Preface

The first in the series of conferences, focusing on the structural issues that arise when looking after heritage architecture, was held in 1989, in Florence, Italy, a city synonymous with art, culture and urban beauty. The Conference has now come to Malta, a state that is smaller than many of the cities that this Conference has visited, and yet that is packed, in the full meaning of the word, with a history of heritage architecture that spans nearly six millennia – as far as we currently know! This Volume contains the proceedings of the Conference held in Malta.

The islands of Malta have limited material resources, in fact, only one – limestone, and a rather soft one at that. However, out of this resource, our ancestor builders have fashioned the habitat for their lives, as these unfolded and changed over the centuries. The problems and efforts that are being made to repair, restore, conserve and protect such limestone architectural heritage are considerable.

The problems encountered in Malta includes those of prehistoric megalithic temple structures, which are part of the World Heritage, and which are unique for a number of reasons, including their structural and architectural form, their concentration in such a small island, the lack of significant references elsewhere, as well as the fact that they are reputed to be the oldest surviving free-standing stone expressions of architecture in the world. The rehabilitation of the other main protagonists in the more recent history of the Maltese Islands, namely war, and fortifications are also considerable. The bulk of the intense, and sometimes exotic, fortification systems dates back to the sojourn of the Knights of St. John, or the Knights of Malta, as we prefer to call them, spanning the 17th and 18th centuries, and then to the British period, during the 19th and 20th centuries.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants at this Conference and in particular, the Wessex Institute of Technology for choosing Malta as the venue for STREMAH 05. The support of the Institute of Masonry and Construction Research of the University of Malta, Heritage Malta, and the Ministry for Tourism and Culture are also gratefully acknowledged.

Alex Torpiano
Malta, 2005

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