



Behind the scenes

The creation of 'The Virtual Museum: Underwater Malta' came to fruition through the collaborative work of a number of individuals and institutions. The aim behind the launching of the webpage revolved around public outreach, and more specifically the creation of a bridge between a cultural heritage that is often forgotten and the wider non-diving public. Underwater cultural heritage (UCH) is often the victim of an out of sight, out of mind mindset, brought about by the very nature of these sites. 'The Virtual Museum – Underwater Malta' online platform brings underwater cultural heritage to the surface and into the homes of the general public.

In order to provide this online experience, powerful cameras and underwater lights were used to systematically record the sites, whereby high-resolution images were converted to 3D and virtual reality models. In order to obtain full coverage of the sites multiple dives were often required, ranging in depths from a few metres to approximately 100 metres. Once the high-resolution imagery of the sites was obtained and converted for 3D and VR, the work on the presentation of the online platform really started. The design of the platform itself was centred around creating a user-friendly experience for all sectors of the general public, be it for younger children, the elderly or heritage professionals. Each site is presented through photography, video, 3D models and the option for VR. Additionally, a historical background is provided through texts and short annotations for specific interesting features on the individual sites. A less academic and technical approach was chosen for the texts since the intended audience of the virtual museum is not to be limited to the academic world.

Once all the various elements for each UCH site had been completed, the online platform needed to be tested. This was done to ensure that the various components functioned as intended and that the final product was as user-friendly as originally conceptualised. This entire process, from conceptualisation, to the various dives, processing of data, and setting up of the platform, to the actual launch, took a total of 18 months. The work behind the platform is far from over, with more sites to be added throughout 2020 and into 2021, with the intention of bringing more and more UCH sites to the 'surface' for all members of the public to enjoy!