

VENDÔME TOWER

The Vendôme Tower was built in 1715 to serve as a coastal redoubt. It was part of a proactive coastal defence system made up of redoubts, retrenchments and batteries armed with cannons that Philippe de Vendôme, Grand Prior of France and military advisor to his fellow Knights, strongly advocated.

To facilitate the implementation of this system Vendôme advanced a loan of 40,000 *scudi* to the Treasury, his estimate of the cost of the scheme, and offered to reimburse any expenditure over that amount. Vendôme's coastal defence system was built using slave labour: between 1715 and 1716 41,561 *scudi* were paid out to the contractors working on sites along the east coast from Marsaxlokk to the Gozo Channel.

Vendôme's project represented a departure from the 17th century system of a few strategically placed forts (St. Lucian and St. Thomas in the Marsaxlokk area) and a larger number of towers whose primary function was to provide advance warning of the arrival of the enemy.

Once the work advocated by Vendôme had been completed, the defence of Marsaxlokk Bay was entrusted to St. Lucian Fort, three sets of entrenchments, four redoubts and no less than seven batteries.



Vendôme's Coastal Defence System for Marsaxlokk Bay
Diagram adapted from Alison Hoppen
The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St John 1530 – 1798
Scottish Academic Press 1979

As a coastal redoubt the role of the Vendôme Tower was to impede the disembarkation of enemy troops from any vessels that managed to pass through the cannon fire from St. Lucian Fort and the recently constructed batteries.

The Vendôme Tower has a more-or-less square floor plan and massive scarped walls with rows of musketry loop holes on all sides, though some of the loopholes on the western and northern sides no longer exist. The tower used to be surrounded by a dry moat with entrance via a drawbridge on the landward (western) side.

The design of the Vendôme Tower is similar to that of blockhouses or *tour-reduits*, a type of fortification adopted by the French in their Canadian and Caribbean colonies. The Spinola Redoubt that used to overlook Pretty Bay had a similar design.

At present the Tower is the headquarters of the Marsaxlokk Football Club so it is not open to the public. The southern and western walls of the tower need restoration and the immediate surroundings do nothing to valorise this important monument.

PHOTOS OF THE VENDÔME TOWER



**The eastern façade of the tower on the seafront
Photo taken by Victor Fenech**



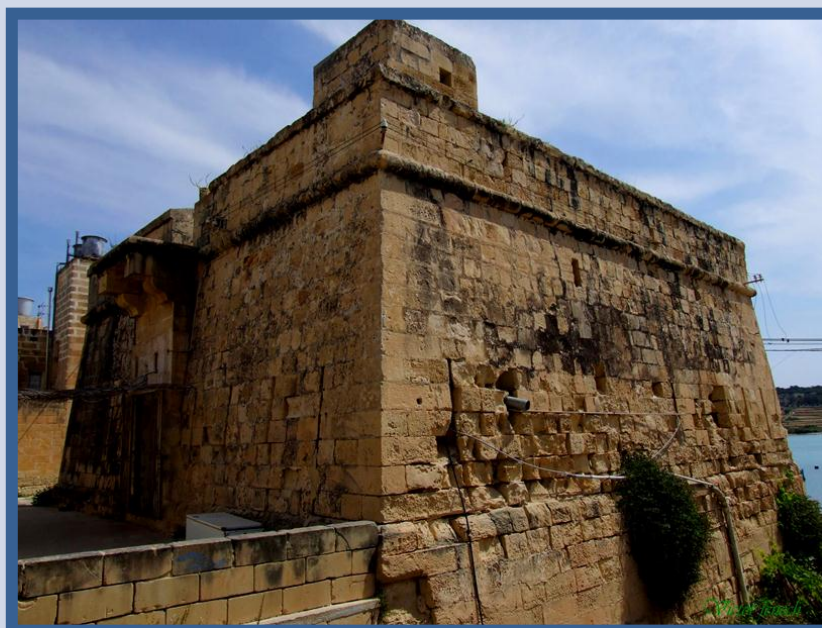
The north-east corner with well-preserved loop-holes



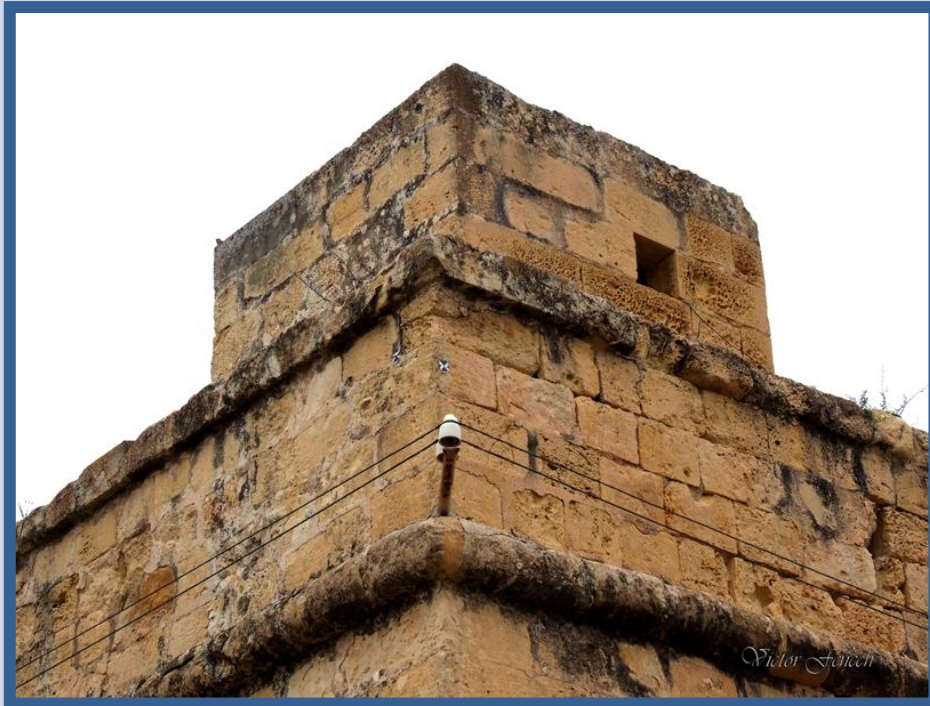
The north-west corner where the loop-holes no longer exist
Photos taken by Victor Fenech



The west wall with the entrance



**South-west corner of the Vendôme Tower
Photos taken by Victor Fenech**



**Detail of the stair-well leading to the tower roof
Photo taken by Victor Fenech**



The southern façade: in need of restoration