

# What Conservation before Digitisation ?

Mario V. Gauci



9<sup>th</sup> European Heads of Conservation Meeting  
4-5<sup>th</sup> May 2017

- At the moment there is no major digitisation project at the National Archives of Malta
- During 2016 a total of 3079 digital images were produced
- These included items from various collections, architectural drawings, passport applications and the photographic collection

*digitisation is carried out as per demand .....*

- Documents which are in a poor state of conservation that are to be used for research
- Items to be utilised for publication or exhibition purposes
- Digital copies ordered by researchers

before digitisation ..... any damaged items are referred to the conservation lab for assessment

- *why is it being digitised*
- *the age of the document*
- *its historical and intrinsic value*
- *its physical state*

These assessments will determine what kind of interventions will be held to consolidate the item before digitisation, such as the extent and type of work to be applied. This may include one of these two options ....

Basic Treatment or

Full Conservation Treatment

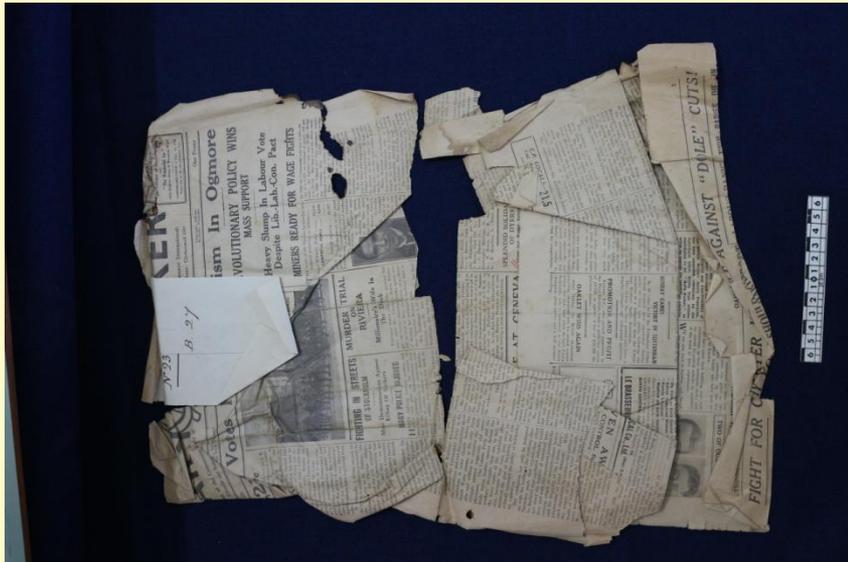
# State of conservation assessment .....to identify & quantify damage

- Check for any text that is obscured by old repairs, or mending tapes
- Blocking of or sticking folios
- Fold lines
- Crumpled or dog-eared edges
- Felting through water stains or mould
- Metal inserts
- Degradation of the paper through acidic ink
- Pest damage
- Tears and splits
- Missing parts or broken down folios
- Detached folios or broken down bindings

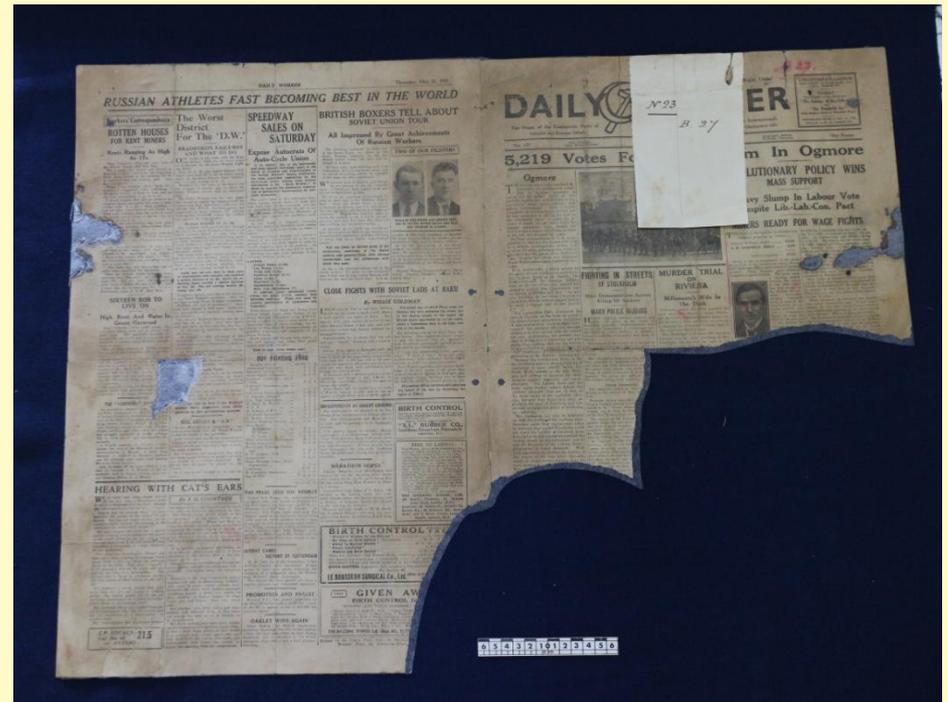
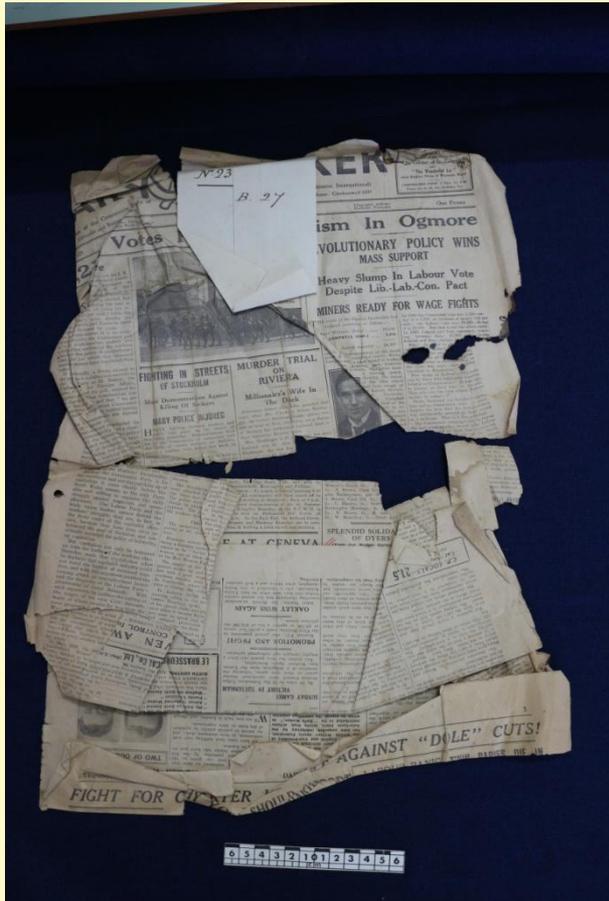
## The basic treatment will include:

- Dry cleaning
- Removing of all iron inserts
- Straightening of creases and folded edges
- Reinforcing of split and missing areas with (a) Japanese tissue (5gsm) on old documents (mostly paper made from cotton/linen fibres) or (b) Filmoplast R on maps, architectural plans and modern registers, (mostly paper made from mechanical wood pulp)
- No filling in of missing areas is applied and the repair is cut out along the edge of the damaged part

A typical example of a basic treatment on newsprint dated back to the 1920's.

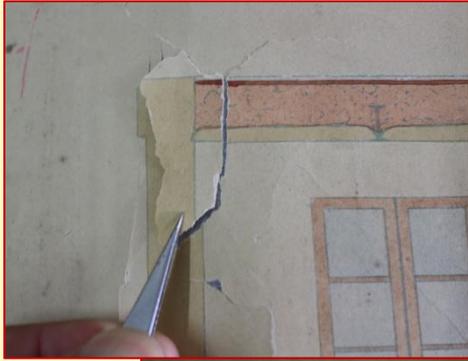


A typical example of a basic treatment on newsprint dated back to the 1920's.



A series of Architectural plans of Fort St. Angelo, made from mechanical wood pulp





## Full conservation treatment will include:

- All the stages up to dry cleaning
- Washing and de-acidification as necessary
- Reinforcing, backing and filling in of split and missing areas
- Rebinding in original structure after digitisation

Documents of National importance are subjected to a full conservation treatment before digitisation

