EXTERNAL FINISH CONSERVATION REPORT

Addendum to the Restoration Method Statement

Location: **1st Hamrun Scout Group, Triq Il-Ferrovija, Hamrun**

Project: **Restoration of Old Hamrun Central Railway Station, including conservation of facades of the Station Building, conservation and repair of the Station Building canopy, new pavement surrounding the Station Building, re-establishing back an entrance door on the western facade of the Station Building from an existing window, Opening up a new door in the boundary wall, next to the entrance gate.**

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1.1- Introduction

Our firm, Bezzina & Cole, Architects and Civil Engineers, has been commissioned to prepare an External Finish Conservation Report which explains the proposed external finishes to be implemented to the previously painted surfaces of the Old Ħamrun Central Railway Station, located at Triq Il-Ferrovija, Ħamrun. The exact location of the building is indicated in red in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Site Plan with Station Building marked in red.

The External Finish Conservation Report is to be read in conjunction with the Restoration Method Statement (RMS) dated 28th January 2020 presented in connection with development application PA/03891/20 and the Stratigraphic Studies Report (SSR) prepared by Zappettini Restoration Ltd.

This report is being compiled in connection with works related to PA/03891/20. The findings and recommendations of this report are applicable solely for this intended purpose. Bezzina and Cole own copyright to this report.

1.2- General description of facades Old Hamrun Central Railway Station

This section gives a description of the facades of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station complex, for which the existing external finishes are to be determined, and thereafter conserved in line with the RMS.

As already explained in detail in the RMS, only the external envelope of the Station Building and a section of the workshop facing the yard are to be conserved. The facades of the station building can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises the surviving façades of the 1882 Station Building, these being Elevation G and around four-fifths of the area of Elevation F, as marked in Figure 2 below. The second group include the facades of the 1904 station building re-development and enlargement, when the existing Station Building was elongated eastward, and extended southwards, to connect the new and re-developed workshop and engine sheds. The latter group incorporates circa one-fifth of the area of Elevation F and Elevation H, as indicated in Figure 2 below.

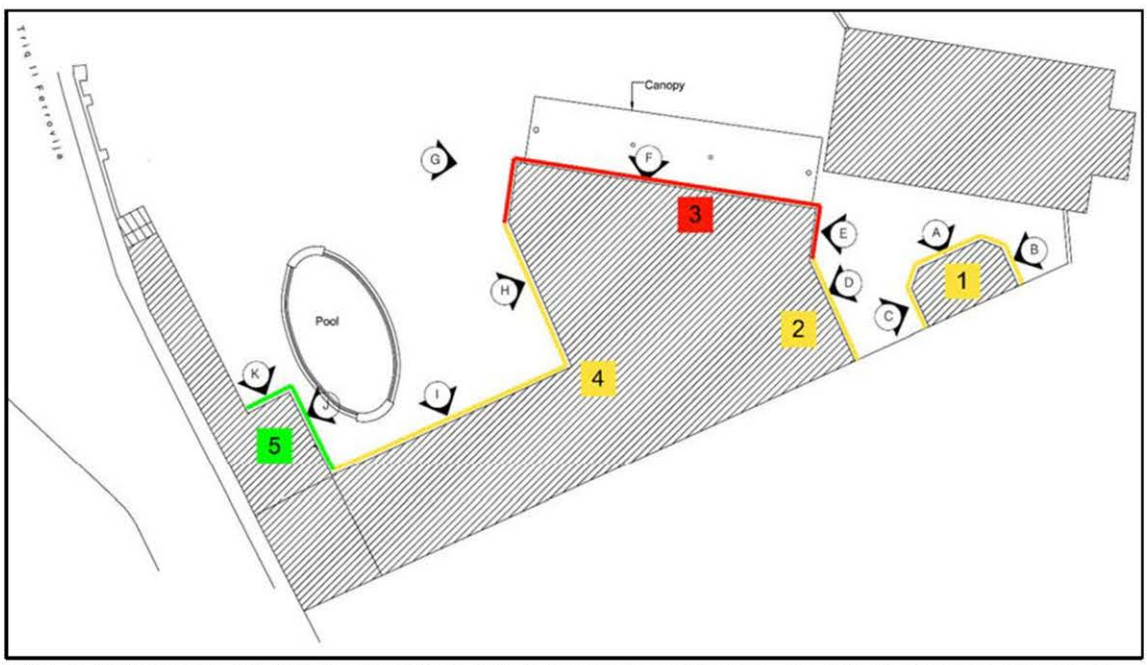


Figure 2 Block plan of Old Hamrun Central Railway Station indicating the notation of each elevation in letters, as indicated in the approved drawings of PA/07848/19, and colour coded elevations as per external finish type.

Most of the facades of the workshop block, that enfront the railway station yard, are also to be conserved, as per approved drawings of PA/07848/19. These Facades can be grouped into three sections. The first section consisting of Elevation J and K, forming part of the pre-1897

workshop complex, as marked in Figure 2 above. The section consisting of Elevation D and Elevation I, forming part of 1904 workshop extension that connected it to the Station Building, as marked in Figure 2 above. While the third section consists of Elevation A, Elevation B and Elevation C, forming part of a 1904 ancillary room built abutting the 1904 workshop extension.

In summary, the facades will be classed into 5 groups (refer to Figure 2):

- Façade Group 1 – 1904 Ancillary room (Elevations A, B, & C)
- Façade Group 2 –1904 Workshop North extension (Elevation D)
- Façade Group 3 – Station Building (Elevations E, F, & G)
- Façade Group 4 – 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension (Elevations H & I)
- Façade Group 5 – Pre 1897 Workshop (Elevations J & K)

1.3- Previous External finishes to the facades, of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station

This section presents the changes to the external finishes of facades of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station, as listed in section 1.2. The information on the previous external finishes of the building under consideration has been sourced from; Site Investigations, the Stratigraphic Studies Report (SSR), the Malta Railway Foundation, 1st Hamrun Scout Group, and the publication 'The Malta Railway' - Revised Edition (1992) by Joseph Bonnici & Michael Cassar. Contributions and references from these sources are acknowledged and appreciated.

1.3-1. Station Building (Façade Group 3)

The Station Building, as detailed in the RMS dates back to 1882, is one of the surviving original Railways stations constructed at the beginning of the Railway operation in Malta. In 1904, the Station building was extended eastwards. From photographic evidence, as cited in the RMS, the Station Building walls which were extended in 1904, were painted. During the compilation of the RMS, it was not clear whether the 1882 Station Building was altered to suit the 1904 extension architectural design, or otherwise. Moreover, it was still unclear whether the 1882 Station Building was painted or otherwise. In view of the aforementioned Zappettini Restoration Ltd were instructed to carry out a Stratigraphic investigation of the surface finish of the Station Building. The findings of this investigation are included in the Stratigraphic Studies Report (SSR).

From the SSR, it was determined that, the original 1882 Station Building was incorporated in the 1904 extension, and that the external finishes present since 1882 to the present day, survived. Moreover, it transpired that, the 1882 Station Building Architectural style was not altered in the extension to follow, with the same style being adopted in the 1904 enlargement of the station. The Station Building, (Façade Group 3) was always painted, as documented in the SSR, and its colour schemes can be grouped into three phases:

- **Phase 1** – Dark (Olive) Green colour scheme using oil paints - 1882 to Pre 1912

The 1882 Station Building was all painted with Dark (Olive) Green oil paint (vide Figure 3 below). Noteworthy is the fact that the Dark (Olive) Green paint was also applied to the walls and apertures.

Figure 3: Photo of the exposed construction joint of the extension of the 1882 Station building. Inset photo shows the 1882 Dark (olive) Green oil paint still preserved.

This Colour scheme was also kept during the period when in 1904 the Station Building was extended (vide Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Photo of paint stratigraphy of 1904 extension showing the Dark (Olive) Green Colour as the base colour for the whole façade.

The Dark (olive) Green colour matches the Dark (Olive) Green colour scheme used for the trains; Dark olive Green (Federal Standard 595a colour code 24097(6) / Methuen colour code 30/F/4) (Bonnici & Cassar, 1992 pg. 145) which colour is reproduced in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Train Colour Scheme based on Bonnici & Cassar, 1992.

- **Phase 2** – Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Dark Cyan (Blue) / Greenish Grey colour scheme, using oil paints - Pre 1912 to Post 1968

This Colour scheme of the station building uses two main colour hues (vide Figure 6) compared to the previous colour scheme which uses only one hue, this being Dark (Olive) Green. This change in colour scheme came about during that epoch, when in Malta, it was customary and popular to paint important buildings in red, this colour being reminiscent of the red brick buildings in Britain. Notwithstanding, the building was not painted all in red. The Earthy Red was used for the plain surfaces of the walls, the Dark (Olive) Green was used for the apertures and canopy structure, while Dark Cyan (Blue), which later on was changed to Greenish Grey, were used for the wall decorative surfaces (base, frame and cornice).

Figure 6: Photo of the Station Building Main Façade with the Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Dark Cyan (Blue) colour scheme as exposed on site.

On closer observation, it becomes apparent that, the dark (olive) green, dark cyan, and greenish grey colours, can be considered as hues of green, and it could be that both colours were intended to represent the dark (olive) green. The colour of the wall decorative surfaces was slightly modified on two instances, so as to distinguish them from the apertures and canopy structure. The colour combination of Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Dark Cyan (Blue) / Greenish Grey also matches the colour scheme used for the trains, Dark olive Green (Federal Standard 595a colour code 24097(6) / Methuen colour code 30/F/4) and Dark red (Federal Standard 595a colour code 21136 / Methuen colour code 10/D/8) (Bonnici & Cassar, 1992 pg. 145) which colours are reproduced in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Train Colour Scheme based on Bonnici & Cassar, 1992

After the closure of Malta Railway in 1931, the Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Greenish Grey (Blue) colour scheme was retained, and most probably not even repainted. When in 1968, the Old Ħamrun Central Railway Station started to be used as the 1st Ħamrun Scout Group Headquarters, this colour scheme was still present, as indicated in the colourised photograph, Figure 8 below. This was also corroborated from anecdotal information relayed by old scout members.

Figure 8: Coloured image of post 1950's photo of the Station Building.

- **Phase 3** –Beige background colour scheme using acrylic paints - Post 1968 to present.

When the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station started being used as the 1st Hamrun Scout Group premises, after 1968, the building was repainted in a beige colour using acrylic paints. The Colour of the wall decorative features was painted in different colours post 1968, in the following chronological order (vide Figure 9):

(A) Light Blue;
(B) Dark Green (simulating the original colour);
(C) White and;
(D) lastly Brown Beige.

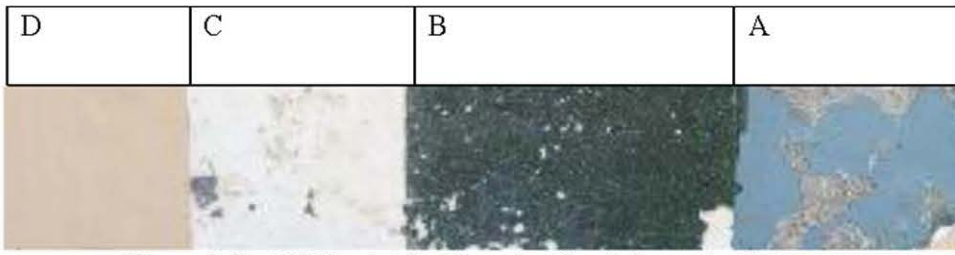


Figure 9: Post 1968 paint Stratigraphy of wall decorative features.

The colour of the apertures and canopy remained Dark Green.

The Colour scheme of the Station building, per se, has no historical significance. In some cases, it only reinterpreted the colour schemes of the building when it was used as a railway station, such as the use of the Dark Green for certain surfaces, while opting for a white background, with no historical meaning.

1.3-2. 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension (Façade Group 4)

From site investigations it transpired that, the original surface of the 1904 extension was intended to be natural stone ashlar (vide Figure 10 below). At some point in time, it was painted over with a limewash, yellowish in colour more like a stone colour. Over the limewash, different layers of White/beige colour scheme using acrylic paints, were identified.

Figure 10: Photo of stratigraphy of external finish of 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension next to the door converted into a window.

Noteworthy is the fact that the first paint layer consists of a limewash rather than oil-based paint as in the case of the Station Building (Façade Group 3). Furthermore, the colour does not follow any colours associated with the Railway. This makes it difficult to date when the limewash was applied, however it is highly likely that it was applied post 1931, when the door facing the pool, was altered into a window (vide Figure 11) and the northern windows facing the pool were all blocked off (vide Figure 12).

Figure 11: Photo of wall constructed to change the door into window,

Figure 12: Photo of stratigraphy of paint layers of blocked-up window.

Thus, the façade, when the building was used by the Malta Railway, consisted of Natural Stone Ashlar. Only After 1931, the facades started being painted, with the colour selected bearing no reference to the Malta Railway.

1.3-3. 1904 Workshop North extension (Façade Group 2)

Unfortunately, the 1904 Workshop North extension was cleaned in recent times, thus eliminating any trace of paint layers (vide Figure 13). During the site investigation, no traces of paint were found, not even in the crevasses.

Figure 13: Photo of the 1904 Workshop North extension façade.

However, given that the room behind this façade is similar to the 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension (Façade Group 4), it is highly probable that even the façade under consideration consisted of natural stone ashlar, and it was painted, only after the closure of the Railway station, in 1931.

1.3-4. Pre 1897 Workshop (Façade Group 5)

The Pre-1897 Workshop façade (Façade Group 5) is the remnant of the pre-1897 workshop (vide Figure 14 below), which was retained and integrated in the 1904 extension. In fact, the architectural style of the facade under consideration is simpler in composition when compared to the rest of the building.

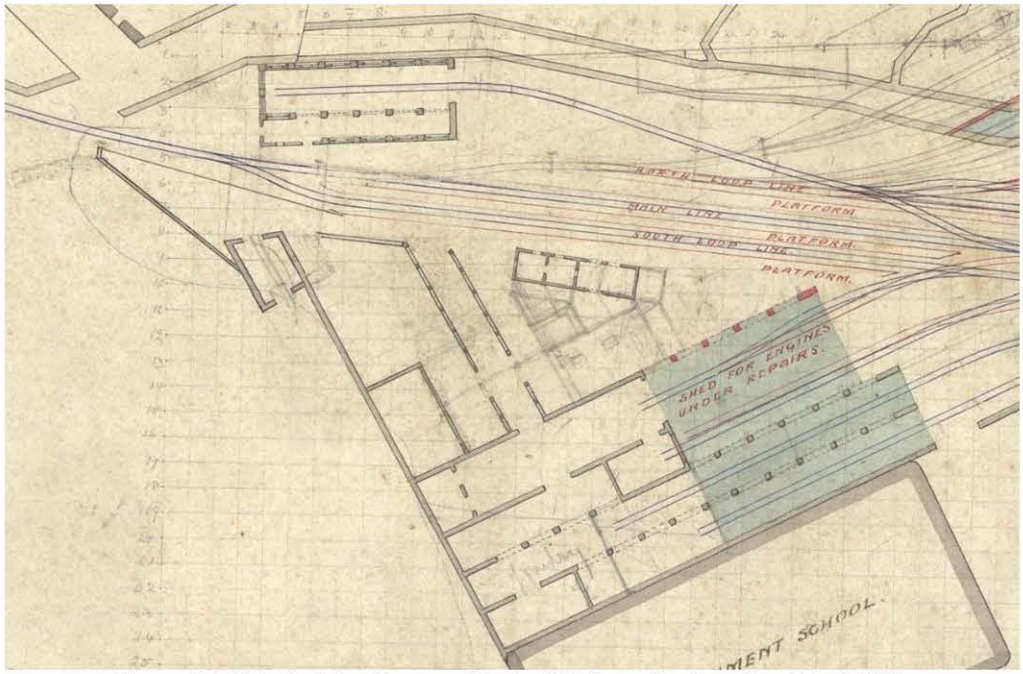


Figure 14: Detail of the Hamrun Central Railway Station plan dated 1897.

It also became apparent that the original surface of the pre-1897 workshop was intended to be natural stone ashlar (vide Figure 15 below) and remained like so for a long period. On the lower courses of the façade, where the stone masonry had deteriorated, a cement render was applied. All the paint layers applied over the facade were acrylic paint using a colour combination similar to the post 1968 Station building colour scheme (vide photo below).

Figure 15: Photo of stratigraphy of paint layers of Pre-1897 Workshop

Thus, the façade when the building was used by the Malta Railway, consisted of Natural Stone Ashlar. The facades were painted, only after 1968, with the chosen colour bearing no reference to the Malta Railway. Unlike the Station/Workshop North Extension (Façade Group 4), the natural stone facade had been exposed for a long period, as may be corroborated by the strong patina present.

1.3-5. 1904 Ancillary room (Façade Group 1)

On the facades of the 1904 Ancillary room (Façade Group 1), only patches of whitewash were traced, this having been applied over a natural stone ashlar surface which had already formed a patina. Additionally, when the existing pavement was removed, no traces of whitewash or paint were encountered (vide Figure 16 below).

Figure 16: Photo of stratigraphy of paint layers of Pre 1897 Workshop, 1904 Ancillary room

Thus, the surface finish of the façade under consideration consisted of Natural Stone Ashlar. The whitewash seems to have been introduced after the railway closure, when the surrounding pavement level was altered and the damp proof course of the facade was bridged over, resulting in deterioration of the lower courses of the façade.

1.4- Proposed External finishes to the facades of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station

This section presents the proposed external finishes to be adopted for the facades of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station. The proposed external finishes are based on the archival and on-site investigations descripted in section 1.3. Based on the historical development of the complex, the facades may be classified into 5 groups (refer to Figure 2):

- Façade Group 1 – 1904 Ancillary room
- Façade Group 2 –1904 Workshop North extension
- Façade group 3 – Station Building
- Façade Group 4 – 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension
- Façade Group 5 – Pre 1897 Workshop

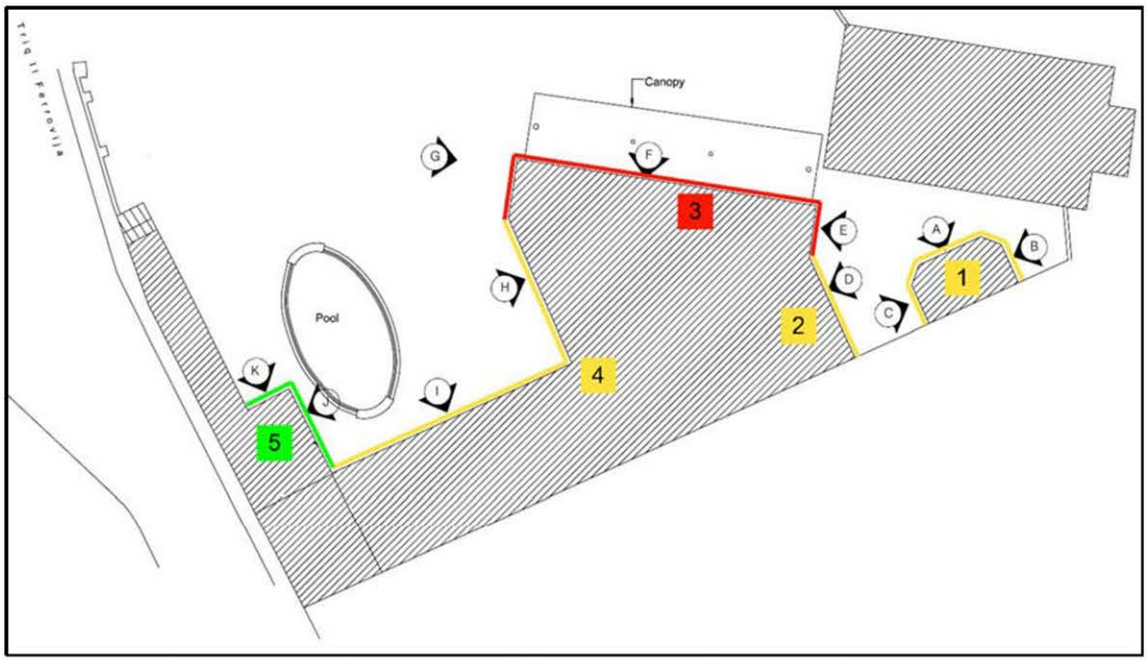


Figure 17 Block plan of the Old Hamrun Central Railway Station indicating the notation of each elevation, in letters, as indicated in the approved drawings of PA/07848/19, and colour coded elevations as per external finish type.

1.4-1. Station Building (Façade Group 3)

It is recommended that, the Station Building is painted using a water thinned alkyd resin paint system adopting a colour scheme consisting of an Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Dark Cyan (Blue) / Greenish Grey colours. The reasons for the latter mentioned are the following:

- The Station Building, in its current form, was the result of the 1904 expansion, which, for the longest period, was painted in Earthy Red, Dark (Olive) Green / Dark Cyan (Blue) / Greenish Grey colour.
- The colour scheme is associated with the Railway colour brand Insigna red/Dark Green.
- This colour scheme was the latest one applied to the building, when serving as a railway station,
- It also seems that this colour scheme survived right up to post 1968, when the 1st Hamrun Scout Group started to use the Old Hamrun Railway Station as their Headquarters.
- This proposed colour scheme is so also associated with living memory of the place.
- Water thinned alkyd resin paint system is visually similar and compatible with the existing oil paint.

The exact colour scheme and the paint product are to be determined at a later stage after being approved by the appointed Conservation Officer.

1.4-2. 1904 Station/Workshop North Extension (Façade Group 2 Façade Group 4)

The Natural Stone Ashlar finish for the above-mentioned façades is being recommended for the following reasons:

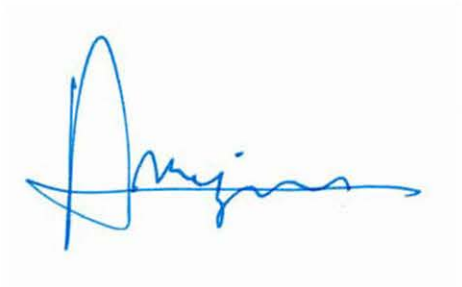
- The external surface finish of the facades when used as a Railway station, consisted of natural Stone Ashlar
- The paint layers and renders of these facades have no architectural or historical significance.

1.4-3. Pre 1897 Workshop (Façade Group 5)

For the longest time, even after the closure of the Malta Railway, the external finish of the Pre-1897 Workshop (Façade Group 5), consisted of Natural Stone Ashlar. However, given

the deteriorated state of the lower stone masonry courses, it is recommended that the façade is rendered in a lime-based render and painted with a mineral paint. The colour to be used for the mineral paint, will be stone colour to match existing stone finish, as approved by the appointed Conservation Officer.

The works to be carried out on the facade will respect the existing fabric of the same façade. As such, the type of material to be used has to be compatible with the existing fabric. Any diversions from this external finish conservation report and the restoration method statement are to be discussed on site with and decided upon, to the satisfaction of the appointed Conservation Officer.



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24th April 2023