

The drawing room in the former Prime Minister's Sliema house is full of antiques, some of which were bought at auctions.



George Borg Olivier's children used to love hiding things in the circa 1800s secretaire.



Peter Borg Olivier holding an election poster of his father, found in one of the pieces of furniture.

Items belonging to ex-Prime Minister George Borg Olivier to be auctioned

Cynthia Busuttil

A desk where former Prime Minister George Borg Olivier spent hours poring over papers will be among 300 or so of his belongings going under the hammer on Sunday.

"I remember him sitting at the desk, looking at documents," one of his sons, Peter, recalled.

Opening the drawers of the portable desk, dating back to about 1800, Mr Borg Olivier points to documents still tucked inside. His father's spectacles were in one of the drawers, almost 30 years after he died.

In the same way, almost every drawer in the Sliema home is packed with documents. Christmas cards, cheques, which had not been cashed, and election posters have been stored away for years.

"Almost nothing has been moved. A camera, which was on that chair when papa died, was still there," Mr Borg Olivier said, pointing to a chair in the corner of a room.

Just like almost everything in the 19th century house, built by Mr Borg Olivier's grandfather, the chair is decades old. Mr Borg Olivier said his father was a keen art lover.

"He used to go to auctions whenever he went to London and would always bring something back with him. He loved looking for a good bargain," he said, walking around the house that looks just like a museum.

Opening the small drawers of a secretaire in the corner of the drawing room where Dr Borg Olivier used to entertain, his son remembers how, as a child, he used to love hiding things in there. The circa 1800 piece of furniture is still full of treasures, including an uncashed Lm5 cheque dating back decades.

Also going under the hammer is one of the former's Prime Minister's favourite possessions: an early 18th century painting of the Last Supper, which auctioneer Pierre Grech Pillow, from Obelisk, said was painted by an old Italian master.

Among the treasures to be auctioned is a piece of the heat shield of Apollo 13, which had failed to make it to the moon, encased in glass. The memento was given to Dr Borg Olivier by the astronauts who had visited Malta as part of a world tour.

Viewing for the auction will take place between tomorrow and Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. with the auction kicking off on Sunday at 10 a.m.



Part of the heat shield of Apollo 13 will also be auctioned. *Photos: Darrin Zammit Lupi*

On the dot

Candidus II

Fishy?
▪ Lamya Essemlali of the conservation society Conservation Society Sea Shepherd was quoted as saying that Greenpeace had been right to target a ship fishing legally because, whether legal or not, "it's all endangering stocks of the fish". Such a statement appears to give *carte blanche* to activists and vigilantes to take the law into their own hands.

Breathless
▪ It is often said that consumers are given adequate breathing space when coming to pay their water and electricity bills. Well, this one consumer received a remittance advice with invoice date indicated as being May 13, 2010 and noting that the sum due was payable by May 28, 2010!

Bargaining
▪ With trumpets blaring, the government announces a huge leisure and sports village project for White Rocks, selling it is a win-win situation that would put Malta way up there in terms of sports facilities and that the country could really do with something like this. Thank God that, finally, the White Rocks shambles is being given due attention but, in selling the project in such a way, does the government not risk losing much of its bargaining power, seeing that talks proper are still at the very early stages?

Money...
▪ No one would be so mean as to deny bank clerks their well-earned break. But when there are three cashier desks and a queue of 30 people, it ought to be all hands on deck. This would be preferable, surely, than having clients grumble because only two desks are manned.

...Talks
▪ Banks are still cold calling clients in order to encourage them to make appointments with financial advisers from the bank itself. This has happened several times in the past, even when clients leave specific instructions that, should they require such advice, they would contact the bank themselves. Staff from the call centre insist the branch would have asked them to make the call.

Loans
▪ Meanwhile, the campaign to get clients of all ages hooked on never-never payment plans thrive on. What is particularly annoying about these is that the adverts are made in a combination of Maltese and English. Since we have the vernacular for both "loan" and "car", one wonders why they are not used. Would it sound crass to have "*self ghal karozza*" rather than "loan *ghal* car"?

Offence
▪ A foreigner was jailed for eight years for raping a child twice. The child is now a young man and, no doubt, he will suffer for more than this amount of time. In cases like these, seeing that it is the Maltese taxpayer's money that pays for the upkeep of prison, is it not high time to see whether persons guilty of crimes against nationals be deported to their homeland?

Drugs
▪ In another court case, a person who was found to be dealing in heroin was imprisoned for one year and fined €1,500. Of course, the person who supplied him with the drug to sell will find other agents. In such cases, it would be infinitely better to transmute the sentence into long hours of community service; that way, the persons committing such crimes would know what it is like to actually work rather than rely on what seems to be an easy way of earning money.

Arts
▪ The organisers of *Notte Bianca* intend to produce an open air art gallery in the city. Weather permitting, visitors would be able to immerse themselves in a world of multi-media art made up of installations, sculptures, paintings, photography and other types of art. This is a wonderful way for new artists to showcase their talents, seeing that when it comes to exhibitions in enclosed public places, the chances are that it is always the same few who are chosen, again and again.

Hygiene?
▪ A hawker at the Żurrieq Thursday morning street-market sells skinned poultry (frozen or fresh). His stall is by the bus terminus. Surely, even fowl frozen to sub-zero temperatures would quickly become unsafe in the scorching sun! Such health hazards must be curbed immediately.

Signals
▪ Over a year ago, a one-way sign was placed in the new extension of Sacred Heart Avenue, in St Julians. This was meant to prevent cars meeting in the narrow road. Parents who pick their children up from the Sacred Heart School, situated further up the road, and other drivers who use this arterial road often met midway, to the frustration of both. The sign indicates times when the street is closed to traffic from one side, yet, it is ignored by those who treat the street as a short-cut.

Questionable
▪ One of the many substances touted as giving a legal high is incongruously marketed as a plant food and, therefore, may be innocuously purchased as such. And, yet, this party drug has been known to kill and indeed is cited as being responsible for the deaths of 26 people in England and Scotland since the beginning of the year. The public eagerly awaits a decision to declare not only mephedrone but all similar substances in the cathinones group illegal as soon as possible.

Engaging
▪ The idea of having students in their last years of senior school shadow people in their daily jobs is a magnificent one. This initiative makes good use of the natural enthusiasm of youth, while showing them what life in the workforce is like. It would be a good idea, also, were young people who are not keen to find a summer job at which they would have to attend every day, to be encouraged to explore the world of voluntary work, to which they could contribute at least one day a week, for their own good and that of others.