



This morning the Formentera Council issued the final draft of plans to restore the Sant Francesc Xavier cemetery, known in Catalan as '*el cementiri vell*'. Councillor of culture and local heritage Sònia Cardona presided over the event, at which Miquel Àngel Riera, representing the Bishopric of Eivissa and Formentera, Marià Castelló, head architect of the project, and Jaume Escandell, Council specialist on matters of local heritage, were also present.

Councillor Cardona and PP Miquel Àngel Riera explained that the restoration of the old Sant Francesc burial ground – '*el Fossar Vell*' – will be conducted in concordance with article 4 of Royal Decree 12/1998 [21 December] concerning historical patrimony in the Balearic Islands – to wit, restoration must have the collaboration of both the Church and the different branches of the Balearic public administration. In this way, restoration of the local heritage site – property of the Bishopric of Eivissa – can be assumed by the local Formentera Council.

Patrimonial specialist Jaume Escandell noted that “this sort of burial ground is an architectural element typical of the XVIII century. In our case, the Sant Francesc '*fossar*' was already in use in 1757 and remained active until 1940. From that point on, burials began to take place at the current cemetery, whose construction had begun two years prior.” '*El Fossar Vell*' sits very near the primeval centre of Sant Francesc, which is why it is considered a cultural interest site – part of the town's '*historical centre*'.

Marià Castelló, architect for the project, explained: “We had three main objectives here. First, using physical elements already in place at the original construction, to establish this site as a true monument. Second, to reclaim the site for public-use; to turn the site – previously closed to the public – into a place where residents could stroll about and visit. Third and lastly, there is an important educational factor. We wanted the transformed Sant Francesc burial ground to reflect the site's original demarcating role: '*el Fossar Vell*' is cut in half by an imaginary line that divides the original territory ceded to Marc Ferrer.”

Conscious of the cemetery's cultural relevance, the Formentera Island Council commissioned a historical study before drafting any plans. Such is in fact the required action as established by the Formentera Subsidiary Regulations concerning buildings with patrimonial protection. The study, coordinated by Dr Antoni Ferrer Abárzuza, found that the original cemetery was smaller,

but that in 1839 expansion occurred at the northwest and southwest sides, bringing the site to its present size. The small sanctuaries – known as 'capilles' – that form part of the physical construction also date back to the end of the XIX century.

The findings of the study indicated that the remains conserved at the site were indeed of acute scientific interest, even more so because they belong to an extremely precise chronological period. Limited to the period beginning in the XVIII century and extending through 1940, the remains at the Sant Francesc cemetery offer a glimpse at Formentera's forgone population – its demographical aspects, physical characteristics, living conditions, illnesses and pathologies. Such was the goal of the study, directed by Dr. Nicolás Márquez-Grant and based partly on analysis of the ossuary remains using physical anthropology and forensic anatomy.

The study was then used as the basis of the draft plans for restoration, headed by Marià Castelló. A total of €57,000 in funding – covering both the preliminary historical study and the subsequent restoration – was contributed by the Formentera Island Council for the 'el Fossar Vell de Sant Francesc Xavier' project.