

REPORTS
ON THE WORKING OF
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS
DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR
1911-12.

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THE MUSEUM,
Valletta, 29th May, 1912.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, the report on the working of this Department during the financial year 1911-12.

I have &c.

TEM. ZAMMIT,
Curator.

His Honour

The Lieutenant Governor
and Chief Secretary to Government.

PREHISTORIC ANTIQUITIES.

THE "SANTA VERNA" NEOLITHIC STATION.

I. Dr. Ashby, the Director of the British School at Rome, whilst in Gozo, last June, had his attention drawn to a row of slabs standing on end on the hilltop to the south west of the village of Xghara or Kaccia. Mr. Nicola Said, the District Land Surveyor, showed Dr. Ashby a manuscript in which mention is made of the ruins of a round building at a small distance from the chapel of St. Anthony to the west of the Gigantia ruins.

The late Father Magri, S.J. mentions in his report on the ruins of a megalithic temple at Xeuchia the remains of a circular ruin as the "Torri ta Santa Verna", but his allusion is barely sufficient to trace the ruins in question.

Dr. Ashby in consultation with the Curator of the Museum decided to dig out the site which then consisted of a small central mound with large stone heaps around it to the south and to the east.

The excavation proved very fruitful and the site of what was, probably, a prehistoric village was brought to light and added to the archæological assets of these Islands.

Mr. R. N. Bradley B.A., who volunteered to help in the excavations, had eventually to take charge of the same, owing to a protracted illness of Dr. Ashby.

A detailed report of these excavations was drawn up by Mr. Bradley and will, probably, appear in the papers of the British School of Rome at an early date. Mr. Bradley very kindly placed his notes at my disposal.

The site seems to have been a kind of village protected all round by megalithic fortifications. The stonework is remarkably good and all the floors are carefully laid down. Numerous trenches have shown that the place was used over and over again as a row of floors can be seen at different levels.

The site was repaired and re-shaped in several periods which can well be distinguished in the ruins, and at a later time part of it was used as a burial ground.

There can be no doubts as to the age of the building. The megalithic walls, the potsherds, the flint instruments and the numerous personal ornaments point to a late neolithic age, which in these Islands must have been protracted for a considerable time.

The village was situated in a dominant position as is always the case with similar stations. A fine view is commanded from all directions and the sea is visible all around. The pointed hill of Mirzuk makes a fine landmark to the north.

The numerous objects found can all be seen at the Valletta Museum.

In type these objects differ but little from similar ones found at Mnaidra, Hagiar Kim and Halsaffieni; if anything some of them are more elaborate.

Pottery. The pottery is of various types, but corresponds in the main features to that found at Halsaffieni and Cordin. Some bits, however, are more highly finished than any met with in Malta and samples of painted ware were obtained from the lowest floor. The same thing happened at the excavations at Cordin (No. 3) Malta.

Implements. Mortars or troughs and fragments of same, made of soft or hard stone, were found. Flint scrapers and knives, mostly well finished, were numerous.

Obsidian tools were also obtained at different points of the floors. This stone which is very common in the megalithic ruins at Lampedusa, Pantalleria etc., has never been met with before in our Islands.

Ornaments. Many objects of stone were collected which must have been used as personal ornaments and many fossilized shells used also for the same purpose.

Bones. Animal bones were found in considerable quantity. These proved to be bones of domestic animals, such as the sheep, the bull, the pig, used either for food or for sacrificial purposes.

Human bones were found in one of the small areas. Some of the bones were heaped up as if deposited in an ossuary but, at a certain point, whole skeletons were met with. The skeleton of a child was found and further to the west a whole skeleton of an adult male was buried straight on the back with folded arms, about one foot under the surface. The burial appears to have been made in a rubbish heap, for ashes and stones are found around and under the skeleton.

These skeletons were covered up again and will be studied later on.

The excavation of this site was rendered possible by the constant help of Mr. Nicola Said, P.A.A., of the Public Works Department, and the good offices of Mr. Millard, the Assistant Secretary to Government for Gozo.

The animal bones collected were submitted for examination to Prof. A. Smith Woodward and Dr. Andrews, of the London British Museum, who very kindly placed their valuable knowledge at our disposal. Our best thanks are due to these gentlemen for having helped us in this and other investigations.

BURMEGHEZ.

2. The Burmeghez cave, to the north of Mkabba, was further excavated by Prof. N. Tagliaferro. The main chamber has now been cleared. For 62ft. it runs in an E.N.E. direction and is lighted and ventilated by five shafts which may have been natural in the rock, but which have been, undoubtedly, enlarged and trimmed by tools. At its western end the cave, which is about 6 ft. wide, expands to double this width and branches off to the north and after about 6 ft. it turns sharply to the west and runs in a direction parallel to the main cave.

Human skulls to the number of 39 have been met with in the main cave, but it has not been possible, so far, to get a complete one for examination, as the conditions of the soil are absolutely unfavourable to their preservation. Potsherds and personal ornaments have also been obtained.

Animal bones, both in the caves and outside them, are very numerous. The bones are of domestic animals but bones of a deer have also been met with. A full report on these caves will be drawn up later on by Prof. Tagliaferro.

ANTIQUITIES ON THE "TAL GHALIA" PLATEAU.

3. An inspection of the plateau at the top of the "Tal Ghalia" hill was made in search of the antiquities mentioned by Mons. Bres in his work "Malta antica Illustrata" (1816). At page 138 he writes: "Not far from the San Lorenzo Church on the hill called 'Ta Kemmuna' or 'Il Ghalia', there are remains of a large edifice with huge stones, 'in the usual Phoenician style'. No trace of megalithic remains are now visible on this hill. Old walls of what were once large farmhouses are still visible but the stones are not very large. Cisterns exist near the ruins testifying to a large community. The only traces of prehistoric times are a series of cart-ruts extending mainly in a S.W.—N.E. direction. These ruts are 9 cms. deep and 50 cms. apart and are very carefully cut.

On the plateau several well-tombs are visible which, though completely rifled, are in very good state of preservation. They are of the usual Punic type, well finished in spite of the hardness of the rock.

TOMBS AND GRAVES OF THE PUNIC AND ROMAN PERIODS.

4. A number of tombs of the Roman and pre-Roman periods mostly in a dilapidated condition came to light during the year. Our knowledge of the old Maltese burial customs is not much increased by these tombs, which were found already rifled, but their description is important as it leads to the formation of types which can help much in the study of old burial customs. The fact that these tombs are met with so often, at very different points of our Island, shows that the population was very considerable in this period. The people were very particular in maintaining the type of a tomb which they had used for ages, although the cutting of such tombs in the rock necessitated great trouble and labour.

WELL-TOMBS AT TARIEN.

5. A well-tomb was met with on the 11th April 1911 whilst cutting a trench for laying a main sewer. The ceiling of the tomb was broken into about 4 feet under the surface of the road (Str. Santa Maria, opposite the new chapel). The tomb consisted of a shaft, about 9 feet deep, through which the funeral chamber was dug out. This was closed in with a rectangular stone slab 1.6m long by 0.62m wide and 22cms. thick.

The chamber, 1.9m. long and 1.5m. wide, was barely 1.m. high at its centre and the ceiling curved sharply down to meet the floor. This tomb, though found unopened, was half full of dust shaken off from the ceiling. The objects in it were in a crumbling condition, the bones having practically fallen to dust. The pottery and the glass unguentaria obtained were of a late type, but no information could be gathered as to the laying of the bodies or of the grouping of the furniture. The presence of a cinerary urn with its contents undisturbed showed plainly that cremation was still practised at the same time that inhumation was in vogue.

6. In the same village and the same street another tomb was cut through, opposite house No. 25, on the 23rd of May.

The tomb was of the same type as the one described above. The slab had been removed much before our discovery and the tomb had been completely rifled. In time earth found its way into the funeral chamber and filled it up. No objects were found in it and very little information was obtained from this tomb.

TOMB AT BULEBEL IL CBIR.

7. A well-tomb was met with on the 9th of June 1911, in a field, (portion No. 13), in which a trench was being dug for the laying of the main sewer between the villages of Tarien and Zeitun: the field lies between the tenements called "Il Wilgia" and "Ix-xwieki".

The tomb is of the older type with a circular chamber and a roughly circular shaft.

The tomb had been rifled time ago and the slab that sealed the entrance had been broken to pieces.

No signs of incineration were found, but there were evident signs of inhumation. Sherds of Punic pottery were found which did not differ from those of the usual type.

The peculiarity of the tomb was a gutter dug out immediately beyond the threshold. To the right of this gutter a circular depression was cut in the rock and in it a long jar was fixed.

In this tomb of an early type the body was laid up on the kind of shelf left above the gutter, whilst the tomb furniture was deposited in the gutter at the entrance.

TOMB AT NIGRET OF ZURRIEK.

8. On the 1st of August 1911 a farmer reported that whilst ploughing in his field known at "Tal Gharghariet" at Zurriek he came across a depression in the ground. I went on the spot and directed the man to excavate the site.

A rectangular shaft about 1.5m. deep was cleared. At each end of the shaft a small funerary chamber was excavated, consisting of a ledge cut out of the rock and a gutter just beyond the entrance.

Both chambers were open and completely rifled. Fragments of bones and of cinerary urns, however, showed very clearly that bodies were buried in them and that urns with human ashes were deposited.

The tomb is of a rather uncommon type. It is an early tomb more elaborately cut than usual. The sherds were not so coarse as one would expect from the type of the tomb.

TOMBS AT GHAIN KAJJED.

9. Ghain Kajjed is at the northern ridge of the Nigret hill to the west of Rabat. The Nigret hill is honeycombed with well-tombs which are also found in a great number at Ghain Clieb at the west end of the hill.

In the Government farm of Ghain Kajjed a cattle-pen was in the course of construction, in October 1911, when the workmen reported that a deep-well had been found under a wall.

This proved to be a shaft 3m. deep and at its southern end a funeral chamber was found about 5m. below the floor of the same. The chamber was spacious and well finished with flat ceiling and rounded corners. A lamphole was cut at the back wall a little below the ceiling. The eastern wall of the chamber was found smashed in and the breach led to a second chamber parallel to the first. This second chamber had a separate entrance and a separate shaft which, however, was full of stones; the slab at the entrance was slightly pushed inwards but still in situ. This tomb was evidently entered into through the first one by breaking open the partition wall. Both tombs are well cut and neatly finished. Nothing was found in them as they had been thoroughly rifled a long time before.

WELL-TOMB AT DWEIRA.

10. A well-tomb was accidentally discovered in December 1911 at Dweira to the north-west of Rabat in the field called *Tal cacciaturi*. The tomb was found sealed, but the farmer broke the slab that covered the mouth and carried away the pottery he found therein and swept the bones.

The tomb was of the early type with a roughly round chamber and an elliptical shaft. A deep gutter cut beyond the entrance left a kind of shelf on which the bodies were laid. A round hole on the left of the gutter was cut to allow an amphora to stand. From the information obtained from the man who rifled the tomb we could infer that a skeleton was laid flat on the back with the head to the west. The furniture of the tomb was found grouped near the body and an amphora stood in the hole at the end of the gutter. A lamphole, cut to the right of the entrance in line with the ceiling, contained no lamp.

The following objects were found in the tomb :—

2 amphorae, about 60cms. high, one of which stood to the left of the entrance and was covered with a two-handled patera; one enochoe, two deep conical bowls of fine ware and of a graceful mould. One of these bowls was black at the outside and burnished; one large Punic bilychnes lamp; one shallow saucer covered with a pale yellow

slip ornamented with black lines in the shape of a grating in the centre and crisscrossed on the rim. The ornamentation was also repeated on the outside. No glass or bronze ornaments were found.

WELL-TOMB AT RABAT.

11. A deep well-tomb at Rabat was examined last January through the kindness of the Rev. Prior of St. Dominic's Convent. The tomb is in a piece of land to the west of St. Dominic's square, the property of the Convent and its covering slabs were visible under a few inches of soil. The Curator was allowed to examine the site but unfortunately the tomb proved to have been rifled and very little information as to the mode of burial could therefore be gathered.

Some features of the tomb were however very peculiar. There were really two tombs or funeral chambers connected with each other but each having a separate shaft.

The direction of the tombs was strictly north-south. The thick northern shaft, over 2.5 metres long and about 1 metre wide, was carefully roofed by means of eight slabs; the shaft to the south was full, up to the surface, with stones and earth.

On removing the central slabs it was found that the northern shaft was over 6 metres deep. At the bottom of this shaft it was found that, at a comparatively recent time, an attempt was made to sink a well in the hope of coming to a water-bearing rock. This well was over 6 metres deep and yet the rock bottom was not visible owing to stones and earth having been thrown into it. It is not probable that water was met with, for although a rock in that vicinity is water-bearing, still it is much deeper than 12 metres. A well in the neighbourhood, in fact, had to be sunk about 18 metres deep in order to strike water.

To the north end of the shaft we found that an attempt had been made to dig out a chamber but that the digging was not proceeded with beyond a few centimetres.

To the southern end a large chamber had been dug out about 2.5 metres deep, 1.5m. high and nearly as wide. A low step led to the second chamber which was a little lower than the first one. The northern entrance to this room had still its closing slab in situ.

The remarkable points about these tombs are the depth at which they were cut and the finishing of the walls and the entrances.

To cut a shaft 6 metres deep in a compact and rather hard rock for the purpose of digging out a funeral chamber shows a total disregard of labour, but it likewise shows that ancient people were ready to go to any amount of trouble in order to ensure the proper housing of their dead. It is a pity that this deep seated tomb did not escape desecration at the hands of the ignorant riflers for it is probable that it was meant for some important personage.

TOMB AT ZEITUN.

12. Drainage works at Zeitun brought to light a tomb-cave which owing to its peculiar situation could not very well be investigated. The tomb was cut through by a trench in the narrow street (str. San Clemente.) It was full of stones and earth and had its entrance, probably, in the field close by. Potsherds of a Punic type were rather plentiful, but they were hopelessly mixed with bones and earth to be of any value. The deep cave extended under a house so that it was not prudent to carry investigations further. The tomb could not be very old considering the quality of the potsherds.

GRAVE AT COMINO ISLAND.

13. That Comino Island (Maltese name Kemmuna) was inhabited in Roman and pre-Roman times we know from a few cave-tombs which can still be seen at different points of the islet and from the great amount of late Punic potsherds strewn on its surface. We are not sure that the islet was inhabited in prehistoric times, though a few bits of pottery seem to belong to that distant period.

Last January whilst cutting trenches at the east end of Santa Maria bay, about 100 metres from the seashore, the workmen struck a big earthenware jar. Mr. N. Said, the Gozo land surveyor, reported the fact and on the 1st of February I inspected the place.

At a depth of about 1 metre two amphorae were found lying in a south-west direction buried in deep red soil.

On closer inspection it was found that what seemed to be two amphorae were really portions of amphorae split vertically. The two portions of the jars were placed in a line and on closer examination they were found to cover a skeleton. One portion of amphora covered the body from head to waist and the second portion covered the rest of the body, though the feet and a small portion of the legs protruded from the broken end of the jar. The skeleton was embedded in fine sand and red soil which apparently was carried by rain water.

The body, a male adult, appeared to have been laid on the left side with the lower limbs at a slight angle with the body. The bones were brittle but perfectly preserved and with a little care it was possible to carry both skeleton and jars to the Valletta Museum.

Burials in amphorae have been recorded by Dr. A. A. Caruana, but I find no mention of cases in which, to economise material, the body was covered by halves of earthenware jars. Of course it can well be surmised that it was difficult for the family of the poor farmer or fisherman to get proper amphorae at Comino. They had therefore to use old water jars and, by cutting them in halves, improvise a sarcophagus for their relative.

No funeral objects were laid with the body and none were expected to be found in such a lonely place.

OIL PRESS AT "TAL BIDNI".

14. The remains of an oil press were discovered in the fields called "Tal Bidni" to the east of the cluster of farm-houses known as "Hal Dragu" to the North West of Musta.

Below the southern slope of the hill-top called "Ta Garnaggi" the land was once extensively, and now only sparsely, planted with olive trees. The olive fruit given by these trees is small but oily, the quality which is considered best for oil. This kind of olive is called "Bidni", hence the name of the locality.

Near a grove of olive trees it was natural that an oil press should be set up, especially when a spring of water is near, as in this case. Of this oil press we have but the stone troughs left. Oil presses of this description were extensively used in Roman times. The rest of the press, including the platform on which it rested, have been destroyed.

As in all primitive oil presses the olives tied in a bag were pressed on a stone slab by means of a system of levers and pulleys, the oil ran in a deep circular groove and ran out of a leaden spout into a series of troughs which

communicated with each other by means of surface notches. Water was conducted in the press and the oil, floating in the troughs, was conveyed in a big reservoir and therein collected.

A large circular stone, with a hemispherical section, which was used probably as a crusher, was found close by. The stone has at the middle a square hole in which a pole was inserted.

The whole place deserves further study as traces of foundation walls are visible and tiles and potsherds are plentiful in the vicinity.

15. On the 26th January 1912 Her Majesty the Queen showed her appreciation of the antiquities of the Island by paying a visit to the Halsaffieni Hypogeum and to the Valletta Museum.

Her Majesty arrived at the Hypogeum at 10.30 a.m. with His Excellency the Governor and some Members of the suite in attendance and was received by His Honour the Lieut. Governor, the Curator of the Museum, the Director of Public Instruction, Prof. N. Tagliaferro, I.S.O., Dr. Beniamino Bonnici, members of the Committee of Management of our antiquities. Her Majesty was conducted through the hypogeum by the Curator and the visit occupied about one hour. Her Majesty expressed herself highly satisfied with the visit and as a sign of her appreciation signed the Visitors' Book.

A bound copy of the Curator's report on the Halsaffieni Hypogeum and of Prof. Tagliaferro's description of the pottery found in the same were offered to the Queen. Late in the afternoon Her Majesty paid a visit to the Valletta Museum. On leaving the Museum, Her Majesty expressed regret for being unable to spend more time among the exhibits.

Her Majesty's appreciation of our antiquities has greatly stimulated people to visit our monuments and our museums, which up to this time had not received the attention which they deserve.

ADDITIONS TO THE MUSEUM.

16. The Valletta Museum was enriched by a good number of exhibits some of which were bought and some were presented.

All the objects found in the course of excavations during the year went, of course, to increase the collection, and very valuable additions were made to the Mnaidra, Hagiari Kim, Cordin and Santa Verna show-cases.

17. Prehistoric objects came to light so plentifully lately, that some of the Punic collections had to be removed to make room for the more important exhibits.

At this rate of increase the Museum will have to be enlarged and the show-cases will shortly become so congested as to lose much of their beauty and order.

18. The following new additions are worth a special mention:—

2 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze Coronation medals of King George V.

1 set of gold and silver coins of King George V.

1 oil painting representing Valletta and Fort Manoel in the early part of the 19th century.

1 obsidional silver coin of the French occupation.

19. The two following inscriptions are also worth mentioning :

1. Inscription of Grand Master Lascaris : (Found in the Public Works stores at Casal Lia, taken probably from a fountain at Casal Attard).

M. MAG. LASCARIS
REGIONEM HANC AQUARUM INOPIA
LABORANTEM
AQUAE A SE DEDUCTAE
UBERI DISPENSATIONE
PRINCIPALI MUNIFICENTIA
LOCUPLETAVIT AN. MDCL

Translation:

Grand Master Lascaris, with princely munificence, supplied abundant water to this district which was languishing for want of it.

2. The second inscription is cut on a tablet found in a house at Floriana, Strada Sant'Anna, the property of the Government. The tablet was fixed probably under a cross close to the Convent of the Capuchins. A modern cross exists but without any inscription.

The inscription runs thus:—

HUMILUS PLANTA XYLON
NON EST VOBIS UMBRA
LATRONES
MISERIS AMICTUM DAT
SEMINE QUOQUE VICTUM
FR. P. BIUNDUS AUDR. D

Translation :

The humble tree of the cross is not meant to shade thieves but it shelters the distressed and its seeds give them nourishment.

Brother P. Biondo
Auditor of Theology.

Both translations were made by Prof. V. Laurenza.

DONATIONS.

20. The following is a list of donors :—

Rev. Gaetano Sammut, D.D.	2 old prints.
Enrico Calleja, Esq. P.A.A....	2 old prints.
Fr. Calleja, Esq. of Algiers...	5 Phœnician coins, viz: 1 silver double stater, 1 silver sicle, 1 silver half-sicle and 2 bronze coins.
	2 vols. Lenormant Phœnician alphabet.
	1 vol. Menant. La Langue Assyrienne.
	1 vol. Oppert et Menant. Documents de l'Assyrie.
	15 translations of Phœnician inscript.
C. Formosa, Esq.	1 vol. Transactions Soc. Bib. Archaeology.
Capt. Leslie, R.A.M.C. ...	Earthenware cup and clay ball from Knossos.
Rev. C. Griscti	1 ornamented old bone whistle.
Prof. Tagliaferro, I.S.O. ...	Earthenware objects from Hyppona North Africa.
W. England, Esq.	1 official seal of the Consulate of Sweden, Norway and Denmark at the time of the Order.
The Hon. the Superintendent of Public Works	1 marble inscription of Grand Master Lascaris found at Lia, and 1 inscription found at Floriana.
Fleet Surg. A.W. Weightman, R.N.	16 brass British coins.
The Rev. Father Guardian Santa Maria di Gesù of Rabat	1 old marble fount and one ornamented marble pedestal.

21. During the current financial year the number of visitors has increased, testifying to the interest that people are taking in our antiquities.

	Total 1910-11	Total 1911-12
Valletta Museum... ..	5,709	5,849
Rabat Museum (Roman Villa) ...	341	384
St. Paul's Catacombs	305	258
Halsaflieni Hypogeum	250	501
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	6,605	6,992
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The Revenue collected under Head VI. A. Fees of Office, 9 Admission fees and Head XIII 2 Miscellaneous Receipts (sale of books, guides etc.) amounted to £60. 13. 9 an increase of £10. 10. 9 over last year.

The principal items of Expenditure were as follows :—

Personal Emoluments	£ 308
Exploration & preservation of antiquities	233
Purchase of objects of antiquity	78
Miscellaneous expenses	59