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During the past year, adverse circumstances have not allowed the Curator to give the time he desired to research work, but several observations were made which are worth recording.

CAVE AT WIED IL BUNI.

An accidental discovery was made in August 1920 of a cave in the globigerina rock at Wied il Buni, near the shores of Calafra. (South of the Island).

A narrow cave formed along a fissure, was discovered whilst quarrying building stone in a field close to the road. The cave was full of red soil in which animal bones in a semi-fossilized state were found.

The cave is long, but only a few yards of it could be explored from the opening made; Mr. C. Rizzo, L.S. & A. and the Curator, made a rough survey and tried to get as many bones as possible during the short time at their disposal.

The specimens of bones were sent to the British Museum of Natural History, London, where Dr. Smith Woodward, very kindly, undertook to examine them for us.

The bones examined were of sheep, goat, donkey and deer. The donkey (*equus asinus*) was never met in our caves before this, and the antiquity of the bones would have been called in question had it not been mixed with the bones of the deer (*cervus barbarus*) completely extinct in these Islands.

It is to be hoped that in a near future the cave at Wied il Buni may be systematically explored.

HAL TARXIEN.

No further attempts were made to clear the fields about the Tarxien ruins, but with the help of Dr. Thomas Ashby of the British School of Rome, and Miss Dorothy Garrod of Oxford, some investigations were made inside the temple in March 1921.

Trenches were cut at various points where the floor, instead of being flagged, is covered with a layer of beaten earth (torba floor).

A detailed report of the work done will appear later on, but the main facts observed may be here given in brief.

A trench close to the door-sill at the main entrance, showed that the torba floor of the forecourt is 30 cms. (1 foot) thick on the average. The slab forming the door-sill is 60 cms. (2 feet) thick. Buried at its base, close to the slab with the pair of rope holes a spherical stone ball was found. At this depth, a few black potsherds and sheep bones were met with. The torba floors are well made, very hard and of a uniform thickness. They consist of well pounded white clayey stone, laid down in a wet condition, and well beaten. Sometimes lime appears to have been added to increase the consistency. At some points, is the floor, of a white layer over a grey one. In the inner rooms, the torba floor is usually 15 cms. (6 in.) thick, laid down on a more or less thick layer of round field stones and pebbles.

In the room of the earlier temples, the floor was not always at the present level.

In one case, 15 cms. (6 in.) of torba floor was laid on a bed of pebbles 30 cms. (1 foot) thick. Under this, was another torba floor, white, smooth and very hard, 8 cms. (3 in.) thick laid on 30 cms. (12 in.) of pebbles. The rock bottom was level and and bore signs of fire, so that before the first earthen floor was laid, the rock floor must have been in use.

Sherds of neolithic ware were met with under the torba floors. In some cases among the pebbles, under the torba, no potsherds were found whilst in others, there were thick masses of sherds.

Every effort was made to determine whether the potsherds found on the surface or under the first layer of torba differed from those collected at the bottom of the trench. All our efforts were vain, for in no case a marked difference in the quality of the pottery could be found.

Sherds of the finest ware, polished and decorated, were found on the rocky floor, quite similar to sherds found in the rooms above the torba floors, and in some of the rooms, incised, painted or embossed ware, was as abundant on the surface as it was 1 m. (3 feet) under the torba floor.

This was a great disappointment, as it was hoped that a difference in pottery would give us a clue as to the comparative age of the buildings.

When the floor of a small room was cut through, it was found that under about 30 cms. of torba floor the mouth of a cistern appeared covered by a round slab.

HUT FOUNDATION AT NGHIERET.

Whilst breaking the rock surface at Nghieret, to make arable fields in the Leper Asylum, the workmen came upon a circular depression about 1.80 m. (6 feet) in diameter sunk for a few inches in the rock. On the side of the rock, where the surface is at a higher level, the circle was completed by stones built up to that level. The central surface, carefully picked, was of a dull red colour due to the action of fire.

It is probable that this was a hut foundation, but unluckily no objects such, as remains of foodstuffs or potsherds, were discovered in the immediate vicinity.

TOWER AT TAL BAKKARI.

The remains of a round tower made of large stones, exist on the road that from Zurrigo lead to Birzebbugia, at a point known as Tal Bakkari. A mound through which megaliths protrude exists also in the vicinity in the south of the main road.

On the 6th September 1920 the Curator, who happened to be passing, saw the remains of the round tower being broken to build a farmhouse on the site. Action was at once taken under the provisions of the Antiquities Ordinance of 1910, and the site, with what remains of the ruin, was acquired by the Government.

The tower was a perfectly circular structure about 13 m. (43 ft.) in diameter. It is of the type of those that can still be seen at "Tal Giawar" and "Tal Wilgia", (1) probably of the Bronze Age or early Punic period. A large cistern is hewn in the rock in the middle of the building. This can be reached through two rectangular shafts but its extent could not be, so far, determined being full of stones to nearly its mouth.

Both these ruins and the mound on the road are worth excavating and studying.

TOMB CAVE AT TAL HERR.

Tal Herr is the name of the hill on which the Addolorata Cemetery, to the S.E. of the Marsa, is built. Several early graves were met with when the hill was cleared and now and then, whilst digging the rock for the construction of modern graves, old burials are met with. On the 4th March 1921, a gravedigger reported the discovery of a cave in the rock containing bones and potsherds.

On inspection, it was found that the cave was about 1.5 m. (5 feet) long and 68 cms. (2 ft. 3 in.) wide at its central part; its roof was curved and the vault springing from the floor, at the back, met the shaft at a height of 76 cms. (2 ft. 6 in.) A shaft about 90 cms. (3 ft.) wide, led to the burial chamber, and the entrance, about 90 cms. (3 ft.) square, was closed by a stone slab.

The cave was full of soil caked into a solid mass by secular periodical floodings. In the soil, the bones of a male adult were found and a few sherds of Punic type, together with a large and heavy bilychnis clay lamp of an early shape.

1. See Excavation in 1908-11. Papers of the British School at Rome Vol. VI page 123.

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES.

On the 20th September 1920, arrangements were made to clear part of the ground to the north east of the Roman Villa at Rabat. This Roman House, which was discovered in 1881 in the course of planting a row of trees outside the Notable fortifications, had fallen into ruins as early as the 9th Century for, when the Saracens occupied the Island (870-1120), they found a mound of earth, under which the remains of the Roman House lay concealed, which they utilized as a burial ground. A good number of bodies, duly covered with tombstones decorated with Kufic inscriptions, were met with during the cleaning of the mound.

Of this fine Roman House a small part only was uncovered in 1881. To complete the destruction of this important, Roman monument, a road leading to the Railway terminus was, in 1899, cut through the left side of the house, of which every trace was destroyed down to the foundation, in which water tanks and water channels were cut by the Romans.

As no notes were kept of the parts destroyed, important information was lost which would have thrown light on this rich monument of the early Roman occupation of the Island. Looking up from the Road, one sees sections of two of the water tanks and the remains of a staircase cut in the rock. On the opposite side of the staircase, a large boulder, detached from the rock overhead, was embedded in the soil and blocked a passage cut in the rock. The ground under and around the boulder was cleared, at the level of the road, and continued higher up close to an outwork of the time of the Order of St. John, which appears to have been hurriedly built over the remains of the Roman House.

Although it was rather late in the year to make extensive excavations, the following important points were made out:—

1. The Roman House extended in a North-Eastern direction and as the ground sloped very distinctly to the north towards the valley of Gherixem, horizontal terraces were laid on large stone blocks built up for the purposes.

2. Under the outworks, a platform made of large stone blocks, has the appearance of having been built out of the remains of some old temple; a large water tank is cut in the rock at the end of the platform. The tank, which is shaped like the letter L, is rendered with a thick layer of a dark grey mortar and roofed over by large stone blocks 20 cms. (8 inches) thick. Except for the mouth, the covering slabs were buried under 30 cms. (1 foot) of well made torba floor. The tank was half full of soil and stones. Sherds of pottery of various degree of fineness, from coarse household pots to the finest Samian ware, were obtained.

A stone head 22 cms. (9 in.) high and 15 cms. (6 in.) wide at the base, was found in the rubbish, about 1 foot from the bottom. It is made of the ordinary Maltese building stone (globigerina limestone) and appears as if broken from a bust. It represents a male face with flowing locks. The lips are rather thick and clean shaven, while a pointed beard adorns the chin.

Beyond the platform and the cistern, the ground sinks rapidly to the east and to the north, and over 10 feet of soil covers the rock surface. All this soil was deposited after the collapse of the Roman House. Following the outwork to the east, the rock was found to be worked at different depths. A deep channel cut in the rock, in a north-west direction, has the appearance of a foul drain.

The great depth of the soil, the absence of landmarks in the northern direction, and the approach of the unfavourable season, were some of the reasons why the work was stopped in this direction. The excavation at the road level gave very encouraging results. On cleaning the loose soil and removing the boulders that encumbered the space to the east of the road, it was found that, to the right, the overhanging rock formed once a deep recess which was probably artificially enlarged by the building of walls. A system of water works was discovered, which points out to an abundant supply of water that once ran at the base of these rocks and was subsequently led into a system of channels and galleries.

It is evident that a deep fissure, running in a north east direction, yielded water in abundance, which in part fed the Ghain Hammam spring and in part was let into channels for the use of the Roman House. A vaulted gallery hewn in the rock runs out from the fissure in a north direction. It is fully 1.50 m. (5 ft.) high and 90 cms. (3 ft.) wide, now full of blue clay carried, probably, by the spring water from the fissure.

A deep stone channel runs in a north direction off the surface of the fissure and from this, two stone channels branch off towards the west. One of these channels apparently ends in the gallery just mentioned, whilst the other which is 45 cms. (1 ft. 6 in.) wide and carefully

plastered, crosses the road which is 7.5 m. (25 feet) wide, and enters a deep gallery cut in the rock at the opposite side of the road, having first a western and then a north western direction.

The exact plan of these water works could not be made out under present circumstances.

Some of the water must have been heated on the spot for the use of the house. The space cleared so far, at the level of the road, shows that a fairly large room was in a close vicinity of a furnace, as the floor of the room is covered, for about a depth of 2 feet, with light grey ashes, similar to wood ashes. The rock surface to the right is also discoloured by fire.

To the left, the remains of what appears to be a water cistern, with walls rendered with a smooth, hard mortar, can still be seen. It is difficult to understand the presence of four pillars standing in a row to the right of the room. These pillars, made of a coral limestone, are badly worn out; they stand close to each other in a line. Their base does not reach the bed rock and as not one of them is whole, no idea can be formed as to the object they could have supported. It is probable that these pillars, taken from some other part of the building, were placed there, at a later time, to support wooden beams fixed at right angles in the face of the rock, which curved out at this point from the water-bearing fissure.

Further investigation will probably show the connection of this part of the Roman House with the Ghain Hammam fountain to the north-east. Everything seems to point out to the probability of the existence, somewhere near this spot, of the baths which were a particular feature of a respectable Roman House. The House, of which a small portion only is contained within the walls of the Museum, must have had its luxurious baths and its richly adorned gardens and, although the place was knocked about ruthlessly for over sixteen centuries, a systematic excavation of the ground all round the Museum cannot fail to bring to light much that is worth seeing, studying, and preserving.

During the year, 5159 persons visited the Valletta Museum, of whom 3983 on Sundays.

The following objects were presented to the Museum :—

Seven volumes by Rev. Sim; 13 engravings and 4 plans of Valletta, by Prof. Lor. Manché; 1 framed photo, by Notary C. Micallef De Caro; 152 engravings, old prints, etc., bequeathed by Count Giovanni Messina; 9 framed oil pictures, by the Hon. the Comptroller of Charitable Institutions; 4 small brass medals, by Mr. Emmanuele Xerri; 48 books about Malta, by H.R.H. Princess Victoria, Marchioness of Milford Haven; 1 set of Malta stamps, by the Superintendent of Posts; and 3 oil pictures by the Superintendent of Public Works.

The following objects were acquired for the Museum :—

Thirteen books; 25 engravings; 34 maps; 4 pictures; 1 manuscript; 76 coins and Medals, including 1 gold Roman coin (Constantin II); 1 brass old cross; 1 gold decoration of the Order; 1 bronze medal of Zondadari; 1 set of old Russian costumes; 2 stone coat of arms of Grand Masters; 2 models of Maltese boats; 1 old sporting knapsack; 2 old seals; 1 marble inscription and 1 old balance.

T. ZAMMIT,
Curator.