



REPORT

on the working of the

MUSEUM DEPARTMENT

for the year

1967

MALTA
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION
1969

Price 6d.

NATIONAL MUSEUM,
Auberge de Provence,
Valletta, Malta.

November 25, 1968.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report
on the working of the Museum Department for the year
1967.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

C.G. Zammit
Director of Museum

The Hon. Minister of Education,
Culture and Tourism.

The Curator of Natural History, Dr. H. Micallef, L.P., Ph.C., B.Sc. Hons. (Lond.), Ph.D. (Lond.), F.Z.S., was appointed to the Chair of Biology in the Royal University of Malta as from February 1; to assist Professor Micallef in organizing and eventually running the Natural History Section of the Museum Department, Dr. G. Zammit Maempel, Ph.C., M.D., F.G.S., and Dr. C. De Lucca, B.Sc., M.D., were appointed Assistant Curators on a part-time basis with effect from July 1.

The custodial staff was increased by three Assistant Custodians and Official Guides; Messrs S.M. Dimech and W.C. Camilleri were taken on in this capacity on January 5 and, similarly, Mr. J.A. Camilleri on January 23.

Following a decision of the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe to conduct a pilot project in Malta for the Protective Inventory of the European Cultural Heritage (I.E.C.H.), a working party of specialists met at the National Museum in the first week of October. They considered a preliminary report and specimen index cards on groups and areas of buildings of historical or artistic interest in the Maltese Islands prepared by Dr. Arch. O. Tognetti, and discussed the explanatory booklet for the I.E.C.H. Card Index. Dr. Tognetti had been specially engaged by the Council of Europe as a consultant expert to initiate work on the pilot inventory project.

The Director of Museum, the Curators of Fine Arts and Archaeology, the Architect i/c Antiquities Section and the Senior Architect-Planner of the Public Works Department, together with Mr. M. Buhagiar, Dr. Tognetti's local assistant, participated in the proceedings of the meeting. Mr. Buhagiar had earlier
/been

A different aspect of the same problem, namely the conservation and enhancement of monuments and sites as a valuable asset for the development of tourism in Malta, was chosen by Unesco as the principal theme for a conference of experts convened at the same venue during the first week in December.

The conference was held under the Chairmanship of Mr. V.J. Castillo, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Culture and Tourism, and discussed papers presented by delegates from the Government Tourist Board, the Public Works Department, the Economic Planning Section of the Prime Minister's Office, and the Museum Department. Besides officials from Unesco, including Mr. Ali Vrioni, Special Assistant to the Director-General, representatives of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union of Architects, the Tourism Branch of UNCTAD and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism attended the conference.

At the closing session, the conference adopted and forwarded to the Government of Malta a set of resolutions aimed at resolving in a satisfactory manner the main problems arising out of the impact of the Maltese Islands' physical development on their historic monuments and sites and natural characteristics.

In March, following representations by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Tourism, Government decided that when the Superior Law Courts would move to the new building in Kingsway, Valletta, the Auberge d'Italie should revert to the Museum Department for adaptation as the National Archaeological Museum. The Auberge d'Italie, which had been the home of the pre-war Valletta Museum for several years, would provide ample scope for a general re-organisation and expansion of the

/main

main functions of the Archaeological Section, i.e. display, conservation and storage of material, study collections and educational services. 3

With the help of Unesco, Professor Dr. Franco Minissi, an Italian architect of international repute in the field of museum planning, visited Malta in October to examine the state of the archaeological collections and to prepare a preliminary report on their future re-organization and display. He took as the starting point of his enquiry the same memorandum prepared by the Curator of Archaeology in December 1966 as had served to justify the return of the Auberge d'Italie to the Museum Department.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTION

TOMBS

At irregular intervals throughout the year under review, building operations were responsible for the accidental discovery of rock-cut Punic and Roman tombs of the single-chamber type and, in one instance, of a section of a Roman catacomb.

Msierah. The first of these to come to light was an early Punic tomb at Tal-Kappara (M.R. 5353 7404)* after its roof was cut through by a water supply trench in February. It consisted of a small rectangular chamber with a draining pit running down the centre from the entrance to within a short distance of the back wall; the two ledges on the longer sides of the chamber thus provided would have served for the interments.

The list of finds, the majority of which came from the draining pit, comprised the following: remains of one cremation and two inhumations; a cup, a saucer,
/two

* As in previous reports since 1963, map references are calculated on the U.T.M. grid on the Map of Malta, Scale 1:25,000, Edition 1, 1962.

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two unguentaria, a plate, two dishes, an urn lid, two lekkythoi, all of pottery; two bronze needles. Parts of the pottery items and of the needles were missing.

Rabat. During the same month, part of the extensive system of Roman catacombs known to exist south of a line coinciding with and joining Victory Street with the junction of St. Francis Street and Buskett Road was revealed when the old buildings in front of St. Paul's Parish Church were demolished to make way for a civic centre (M.R. 4576 7125). The majority of the compartments consisted of arcosolium-type graves, whilst the exceptions were a slab-covered grave and an unusual variety of the latter with a smooth solid top and a low entrance at the level of the adjoining corridor. Sections of the walls had a careful rendering of reddish mortar. By arrangement with the Public Works Department, these remains were preserved and will, later on, be accessible from the civic centre building.

Naxxar. The second tomb of the year was reported in March from the locality known as Sqaq Habel (M.R. 5025 7475). Both shaft and chamber had more or less regular oval plans averaging 2.00 m. in length and 1.30 m. in width, and floors at a depth of 1.10 m. below ground level; the sealing stone was found in the original position, across the wide entrance to the chamber. Inside were the remains of two inhumations and one cremation, accompanied by the following pottery: a deep globular cup with low everted rim, two oinochoi, a collared jar with one handle, a thistle-shaped vase, and a hand-made saucer; in addition there was a copper bracelet with a raised toothed decoration. With the exception of the two oinochoi and the bracelet, these objects lay inside a shallow trench cut into the floor of the chamber immediately behind the sealing slab.

Certain features of this tomb and its contents constitute a reliable basis on which to assign it an early date. The oval plan probably represents a survival from prehistoric times when the few known tombs had a broadly
/similar

toire of collared jar, squat oinochoi and thistle-shaped vase which recall identical shapes from the earliest (8th or early 7th century B.C.) stratum at the Precinct of Tanit in Carthage, Tunisia. In any case, the pottery from Naxxar is typologically ancestral to the punic tomb ware which dominates the local scene from about the 5th century B.C. till well into the beginning of the Roman period.

Siggiewi. On the last day of March, another Punic rock-cut tomb was accidentally discovered on the boundary between two fields at different levels at Ta' Bria (M.R. 4785 6815). The shaft, which was originally intended to have a rectangular plan, had the east side cut away so that the floor was found to be more or less at the same level as the surface of the lower field. When the entrance to the tomb on the south wall of the shaft had been sealed by a large slab of stone, the necessary filling of earth and rocks was retained behind a rubble wall built across the cutting. This same procedure was adopted when reinstating the site at the end of the investigation.

The entrance to the tomb had an average width of .56 m. and a height of .84 m., the sealing slab being of slightly larger dimensions, i.e. about .80 m. x .90 m. It connected with the burial chamber at the corner of the draining trench which run in an east-west direction practically the whole length of the chamber and parallel with a wide shelf having a low headrest along the far side and a raised edge along the side nearer the entrance. The trench measured 1.36 m. by .66 m. and the shelf 1.83 m. x .94 m., while the difference of level between them was in the region of .41 m.

On the shelf were found one adult male skeleton, a footed cup near the skull, and a squat two-handled jar, a plate and two thick-lipped bilychnis lamps near the feet; two oinochoi came from the trench below. Although the skeleton was in a fragmentary state, important medical evidence had survived in the clear bridging of six of the vertebrae, indicating that in life the individual had
/suffered

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Imriehel. Early in July a Roman tomb was discovered at the site of the new Girls' Grammar School behind the Technical School (M.R. 5110 7250). The two principal features of the tomb - a shaft 1.98 m. x .91 m. x 1.75 m. deep and a burial chamber 1.83 m. x 1.45 m. with a very low roof - were cut in the friable rock so typical of the area, as were a trench running down the middle of the chamber and flanked by two platforms, and a lamp-shelf on the wall opposite the entrance. The chamber was sealed by a large block and a number of smaller stones.

The tomb yielded nine inhumations and four cremations, the last contained in an equal number of cinerary urns with lids. Two of the inhumations lay on the left-hand platform, but the remaining seven were piled up in a heap in the inner right-hand corner of the chamber where, presumably, they had been stacked when the cremations were introduced at a later stage. Besides the urns, there were a number of small bottles and jars, a lamp, a bowl and a large oval amphora.

Birkirkara. The last casual discovery of the year was reported from a building site in Valley Road (M.R. 5295 7258). A rough oval pit, .84 m. wide by 1.35 m. across, led into an irregular chamber of slightly smaller dimensions and containing an assembly of earthenware vessels, comprising two large cinerary urns, one globular jar, two plates, two bilychnis lamps, two oinochoi, a kylix and a dish. The shapes represented in this pottery group date it to the early Punic period.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges the co-operation extended to it by the following in connection with the above investigations: Msierah: Dr. G. De Giorgio, LL.D., of Kappara; Rabat and Imriehel: the Public Works Department; Naxxar: the Malta Police, Northern District; Siggiewi: Mr. J.P. Vassallo and Master S. Farrugia of Siggiewi; Birkirkara: Mr. E. Pickup of Tarxien.

/Roman

An opportunity presented itself in April to complete the excavation of the remains of a Roman building in Żurrieq Road, Safi (see M.A.R. 1966). About one-third of the floor and foundations of a room behind the principal (outside) wall of the building was identified; in addition, a T-shaped layout of rough foundation blocks was located to the north-east of the room and at depths varying between .44 m. and 1.28 m. below it. Due to recent disturbance of the site, the pottery yield was rather poor.

During October and November, the Italian Archaeological Mission carried out its fifth campaign of excavations at Tas-Silg and San Pawl Milqi in Malta and at Ras il-Wardija in Gozo. A report on the previous (1966) campaign was published by the University of Rome.

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY

In the sea around Malta and Gozo, suitably-equipped groups and individuals continued voluntarily with their search for ancient relics, particularly during the summer months. The outstanding underwater operation of the year was carried out on behalf of the Museum by Miss Honor Frost at the site in the middle of Mellieħa Bay where a Roman shipwreck had been located in 1965. The wreck area was accurately surveyed and a number of soundings made, resulting in a considerable body of information and material evidence being obtained from the site. At the time of writing, Miss Frost's investigation is being prepared for publication as a monograph by the Gollcher Foundation.

Three more Roman anchor stocks of lead came to the notice of the Museum during 1967. One of them 1.07 m. long, had been recovered by the R.A.F. Sub-Aqua Club (leader: Mr. M.R.J. West) from a depth of 120 feet approximately 300 yards from the shore at Delimara in May 1966. In September, another stock, .62 m. long,
/was

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donated to the Museum. The third stock was salvaged from Marsalforn Bay, Gozo, by Mr. V. Micallef Decesare in August; it had an overall length of 1.97 m.

To the Museum collection of 4-pronged iron anchors of comparatively recent times, Mr. Peter Dick added another good specimen which, with the help of others, he had recovered from half-a-mile out to sea off Dragunara Point. Its length of 2.65 m. makes it the largest in the collection.

GOZO

A two-week campaign of excavations lasting from June 2 to 16 was carried out in the ruins of the Citadel, Victoria, thus initiating an investigation which had for long been considered of primary importance for the history of Gozo.

The digging was concentrated in the western perimeter of the large area of demolished buildings due north of St. Joseph's Church, and four rooms which had belonged to three different tenements were cleared of a considerable depth of rubble down to the level of their ground-floor pavements. As it is known that the mounds of debris on the Citadel have been shifted on a few occasions in recent times, no reliance could be put on the portable finds to help date the buildings; the antiquity of the structures exposed was, however, in no doubt. Better results are expected once the investigation will be carried into deeper levels.

The local authorities in Gozo, represented by the Civic Council and its sub-departments, extended their co-operation throughout the investigation.

ACCESSION

Female head (marble, 18 cm. high) in classical style.

(donated by Roger Vella Bonavita, Esq., B.A.)

FINE ART SECTION

Amongst the most important activities of the art section, in the course of the year under review, were the restoration works to the Matteo Perez frieze in the Throne Room of the Magisterial Palace, Valletta.

The frieze in the said room painted in fresco very late in the 16th century, was very coarsely repainted in the late 19th century.

The restoration works comprised the removing of the old overpaintings, thorough cleaning of the surface of the frescoes and the retouching of same where necessary.

After several years the restoration works to the whole cycle of frescoes was brought to completion, and now one may enjoy the scenes painted by the master in their original fresh colours.

Besides the above-mentioned works, restoration works were carried out to several paintings belonging to Government as well as to the collection belonging to the Cathedral Museum in Mdina.

Amongst the most important works restored during the year under review, one may mention a large painting of the martyrdom of St. Agatha by a Florentine master of the XVII century in the National Museum and the Expulsion from Eden by Bernardo Strozzi as well as three genre subjects by Eberhard Keil of a considerably high quality from the Cathedral collections.

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pp. 15-52, figs. 1-5, pls. I-XIII.)

APPENDIX II

RESTORATION OF PAINTINGS

National Museum

After Nebbia: Martyrdom of a Saint.

Roman School, XVII century: Rape of Europa.

S. Spirito Hospital

(?) G.N. Buhagiar: The Christ Child.

(?) G.N. Buhagiar: Death of St. Joseph.

XVIII century art: SS. Cosmas and Damian.

School of Erardi: Holy Family.

The Palace, Valletta

Portrait of Grand Master Vasconcelos.

Two panels from the "Cantoria" in the Throne Room.

Portrait of A. Ball.

Mental Hospital, Attard

School of Preti: Dismissal of Hagar.

School of Preti: Doubting Thomas.

The Cathedral Museum, Mdina

Flemish School, XVII century: Landscape with animals.

Favray: The Satyr at the peasant's table.

Favray: Interior with Orientals.

Favray: Greek costumes.

Favray: Turkish costumes.

Palma Giovane: Flagellation.

Genoese School XVII century: Genre subject.

Anonymous artist XVII century: Putti.

De Coninck: Still life.

De Coninck: Still life.

E. Keil: Three genre subjects.

APPENDIX III

ACCESSIONS

By Presentation

Presented by the Capt. O.F. Gollcher Foundation:

of St. Agatha by a master of the Florentine School,
XVII century - 8 ft. 7.5 in. x 5 ft. 7.5 in.

An inlaid chest of drawers, Italian, XIX century
36 in. x 48 in. x 22 in.

Presented by Mr. J.M. Spiteri

A collection of British coins of the 20th century.

By Purchase

Paintings

Roman School XVII century: Rape of Europa, canvas -
64 in. x 45.5 in.

Stefano Erardi: Immaculate Conception, canvas -
7 ft. 1.5 in. x 5 ft. 2 in.

(?) French School, XVIII century: Portrait of Grand
Commander Fra Henri de Chalvet, dated 17 March 1746 -
6 ft. 11 in. x 4 ft. 9 in.

Italian School, XVIII century: Allegories; a pair,
canvas - 42 in. x 52 in.

Furniture

Serpentine fronted veneered chest of drawers, Maltese
XVIII century - 33 in. x 54 in. x 23 in.

Other Objects

French (?), XVIII century: small carving in ivory
representing a Satyr abducting a Nymph.

Glazed terracotta jar, first half XIX century.

Glazed terracotta jar, first half XIX century.

Glazed cooking pot with four handles.

Terracotta jar, glazed in the inside, early XIX century.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF VISITORS ADMITTED TO SITES UNDER THE
MUSEUM DEPARTMENT DURING THE CALENDAR YEARS 1966 AND 1967

PLACE	1966		1967	
	On payment	Free	On payment	Free
National Museum	10,047	2,670	11,881	2,295
Palace Armoury	14,015	13,468	15,964	10,459*
Museum of Roman Antiquities	8,616	3,462	10,898	6,921
St. Paul's Catacombs	8,014	1,913	12,147	1,692
Hal Saflieni Hypogeum	11,386	4,958	14,099	4,717
Tarxien Neolithic Temples	5,638	2,245	7,865	2,145
Ghar Dalam Cave and Museum	2,588	1,750	4,207	1,080
Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa				1,500
Museum, Gozo	2,500	676	3,141	930
Ggantija Temples, Gozo	6,191	3,544	10,397	3,215
General Day Tickets	10,485		14,407	
Total	79,480	34,686	105,006	34,954
Total admission fees collected	£5,874. 6s. 6d.		£7,600. 7s. 0d.	

* Inclusive of 7,201 visitors admitted during the
8th September Exhibition.

