



REPORT
on the working of the
MUSEUM DEPARTMENT
FOR THE YEAR
1970

MALTA
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION
1972

Price 2c5

NATIONAL MUSEUM,
Auberge de Provence,
Valletta, Malta.

June 16, 1972.

Madam,

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report on the
working of the Museum Department for the year 1970.

Yours faithfully

F.S. Mallia
Director of Museum.

The Hon. Minister of Education & Culture.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MUSEUM DEPARTMENT FOR THE YEAR 1970

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTION

1. The Curator of Archaeology acted as host and guide to Sigismund Freiherr von Braun, President of the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community, when the latter visited the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum on Sunday, December 6.

Assistant Curator of the Archaeological Section

2. Following the public call for applications to fill this post in September last year and the subsequent examination and interviewing of candidates, Mr. Tancred C. Gouder was appointed Assistant Curator of the Archaeological Section with effect from September 29. Mr. Gouder immediately began his in-service archaeological training in the course of his other duties which included the re-classification of the records and library.

Archaeological Museum Project

3. Throughout the year the Auberge d'Italie was still functioning as the Superior Courts of Law, although there were indications that these were about to move to the new building in Kingsway. However, during the last quarter of the year it became possible to intensify and to improve the organization of the task of transferring the contents of the archaeological library from the National Museum to temporary accommodation at the Auberge d'Italie. Not only were such transfers made at more frequent intervals than before, but the books were classified and catalogued on a new system before they were sent over. This method had the advantage of ensuring that every publication was put in the correct place on the shelving at its destination.
4. The classification scheme adopted is modelled on that used by the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London and follows the rules of the Library

Association of Great Britain for specialized libraries. It consists mainly of two operations: (a) a basic index by author (b) a class index on a geographical basis with subdivisions for general works, special subjects and periods, etc. Eventually users of the library will have at their disposal a leaflet explaining the whole classification scheme in detail to facilitate bibliographical research.

EXCAVATIONS

Attard

5. A curious bottle-shaped excavation in rock 3.70 m. due west of the electricity sub-station in Long Street (M.R. 5023 7265) was investigated in April. It went down to a maximum depth of 1.54 m. from ground level and had diameters of 1.16 m. at its middle height and 0.41 m. at the orifice. To close the opening there was a stopper-shaped plug of globigerina limestone.

6. The pit contained only a small quantity of stony soil and one insignificant sherd; removal of this fill revealed that the rounded corners of the bottom and the surface of the wall immediately above to a height of not more than 0.20 m. had a lining of greyish clay with light brown stains going to half-way through its thickness. At first these stains were thought to be due to decomposed seeds, but reference to a biologist gave a negative result. However, the pit could probably have had no other use than to store a family's supply of grain.

Rabat

7. The week ending September 5 witnessed the discovery and excavation of the most productive tomb of the year in terms of number and variety of portable finds. It was discovered at Busugrilla in the middle of the Fiddien road at the nearest point of the road to the new Government housing estate (M.R. 4503 7145). The tomb consisted of a rectangular shaft (2.37 m. x 0.90 m. x 2.20 m. deep) aligned east to west and with an entrance at each shorter

end providing access to the two burial chambers. The western chamber (2.20 m. x 1.48 m.) had a trench down the middle of the floor and deep square-cut recess on each side wall, while the chamber on the east (2.00 m. x 1.26 m.) had only a rudimentary trench and two recesses similarly placed.

8. The sealing slabs against the entrances were found in place, indicating that neither of the chambers had been rifled as it happens sometimes. This was subsequently confirmed during careful excavation of the two chambers which yielded a considerable quantity of pottery items, some of them holding cremations, glass bottles of various sizes and shapes, a variety of lamps, an iron strigilum or skin-rubber and a bone unguentarium with lid. The latter two objects are unique as far as the Museum's archaeological collection is concerned. The tomb with its contents is provisionally datable to around 200 B.C., pending its detailed study and publication.

Dingli

9. During the first week in November the operation to level the new playing area at Savio College yielded an early puniic tomb with some unusual features (M.R. 4455 6885). It consisted of a rectangular shaft (c. 1.52 m. x 1.70 m.) and an elaborately worked chamber (c. 1.74 m. x 2.38 m.) the inner half of which had a lobed plan. During its original excavation a circular hole to take a round-based vessel and a capacious lamp shelf had been worked out in the rock by the inside flanks of the entrance, while the inner half of the chamber took the form of a high platform with raised edge. Over this the skeletal remains of three individuals were identified. The interments were accompanied by a squat oval amphora, two bilychnis lamps, two dishes, a cup and two juglets, which together suggested a date around 700 B.C.

10. The Museum is grateful to the Salesian Fathers for their co-operation and for their initiative to preserve the tomb.

Imriehel

11. Another chance find in the same category was dealt with during the same week. Mr. E. Sciberras of Bur Marrad, a P.W.D. employee, reported a tomb some features of which showed on the surface a few yards west of the technical school and probably exposed by the passage of heavy transport (M.R. 5106 7248). All in all it turned out to be a rather humble affair: a rectangular shaft (c. 1.70 m. x 0.68 m.) and a small oval chamber (c. 1.84 m. x 0.90 m.) at right angles to its west end, both cut in very friable rock. On a shelf running the whole length of the chamber was found an adult male skeleton, and below it, in a trench, an oval amphora, two plates, a dish, a lamp and a jug. Although of authentic punic tradition, these items are datable to around 200 B.C.

Attard

12. This village again featured in the field-work of the Archaeological Section in May when a small catacomb was exposed while soil was being cleared mechanically from a building site in Valletta Road (M.R. 5001 7224). Upon investigation it was found to consist of a stepped entrance corridor aligned north to south with the largest of three burial chambers at its north end and two opposite chambers on the sides. The north chamber (1.80 m. x 2.24 m.) featured a wide central draining pit, a low shelf on each side of the entrance with one head-rest each and square-cut recesses on the east and west walls. The west chamber had smaller dimensions (1.80 m. x 1.66 m. on an average) and was provided with two low shelves along the back wall with two head-rests each. A 'portable' stone head-rest was located in the north-west corner of the chamber. The third chamber (1.56 m. x 1.00 m. on an average), due east, had exactly the same tomb plan typified in the Christian catacombs, i.e. a near rectangle with two raised head-rests along the arched short wall on the left and the long wall at the back curving towards the feet of the interments.

13. The sealing slabs of the north and west chambers consisted of thick squared blocks which took account of

the surrounding rebates, while a dove-tail shaped 'offering' table was placed in front of the entrance to the east chamber which was then sealed by rubble.

14. This catacomb, or family tomb, might have been opened previously, but, in any case, the rain water which flooded it every year must have wrought havoc with the skeletons as only fragments of these were collected. The same fate had befallen a number of very fine glass cups and beakers which, to judge by the complete absence of pottery, must have been the only items interred with the burials.

Żurrieq and Rabat

15. A rifled tomb at each of these localities was notified to the Museum respectively from Qrendi Road (M.R. 5221 6556) and Parish Square (M.R. 4578 7125). Although they did not yield any finds, a record of the shaft (in the case of Żurrieq only) and the chambers was made as usual.

Rabat

16. From the beginning of April to the end of October the Archaeological Section concentrated its outdoor research activities on the investigation of a second Roman site at Saqqajja (M.R. 4607 7125), confirming the continuation due south of the ancient built-up area worked on during the previous two years. For practical purposes the sites were henceforth distinguished as Saqqajja I and II.

17. The various finds from Saqqajja II are of great significance particularly when it is remembered how little is known in detail about the character of Melita, the island's principal settlement in Roman times and how few, if any, are the localities where an operation of this sort could be carried out in the modern town.

18. Briefly the excavation yielded the following results: a stretch of foundations for the town wall and an opening (? gate) in it have been identified about 5 m. below the

surface of Saura Street. Behind the wall and roughly central with the opening stretched a porticoed building which was later altered to accommodate small shops and houses. One of the former almost certainly belonged to a mosaic worker whose bench, stool with backrest, imported vari-coloured marble to produce the tesserae and stone boxes to hold them in, as well as a baked clay panel and an incomplete or damaged figurative mosaic, were found inside it. At the same time another bay of the portico was adapted as a household shrine or larder; from here has come a set of intact pottery items, including the head of a statuette of Isis, which impress by their state of preservation. A hopper-grinder mill of volcanic stone and two bread (?) ovens completed the list of salient finds from Saqqajja II at the close of excavations.

Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi

19. The members of the Italian Archaeological Mission again worked on these two sites from mid-October to mid-November, concentrating on the former and bringing the investigation at the latter site to a close.

Gozo

20. During the first half of the year excavations continued at intervals on the floors of two caves perched precariously above a working quarry at Ghajn Abdul, Santa Lucija, also called il-Mixta (M.R. 2889 8976). Partly due to lack of a sufficient number of experienced workmen and partly due to the potentialities of the site nearing exhaustion, results in terms of finds, mainly pottery, were far below those of the previous year. The excavations were brought abruptly to a close when the fissured back of the site came away loose as a result of the spring rains and caused an avalanche of rocks which swept away practically the whole of the area under investigation.

Unesco Mission

21. Dr. Milorad Medić of Yugoslavia was sent to Malta by Unesco with the task of reporting on the conservation

and preservation of mosaics at the Roman Villa, Rabat and at the Roman Thermae, Ghajn Tuffieha. From November 13 to December 2 Dr. Medić made a close examination of the pavements at these two sites and carried out some preliminary treatment of the lichen growth and discoloration of the mosaic at Rabat with the assistance of the Curator and staff of the Archaeological Section. His report was still awaited at the end of the year.

FINE ARTS SECTION

22. Fr. Marius J. Zerafa, O.P., S.Th.L. & Lic., Dr.Sc.Soc., B.A.Hons.(Lond.), A.R.Hist.S., was appointed Assistant Curator of the Fine Arts Section with effect from February 17.

23. The year under review marked the holding of the XIII Council of Europe Art Exhibition on "The Order of St. John in Malta", which was inaugurated on April 2 and closed on July 1. This international exhibition involved a great deal of preparatory work and as the Secretariat was established in Malta the Fine Arts Section was assigned the task of compiling the list of exhibits and arranging their loan with the owners many months before the exhibition opened. In time the Section came to be responsible, with the Council of Europe experts, for the selection, transport and display of the exhibits that were contributed by most countries of Europe as well as by the local Ecclesiastical authorities and private owners. The exhibition was divided between two venues in Valletta, the state rooms of the Palace and St. John's Museum, both of which were adapted for the special occasion. The Section was directly concerned with the preparation of the catalogue of the exhibition and the design of the commemorative medal.

24. For the duration of the exhibition Section officials hosted foreign delegations and V.I.P.'s, assisted representatives of the local and foreign mass communication media in their assignments and issued frequent handouts to the local press, radio and television. Educational visits by adult groups and school children were also

catered for.

25. When the exhibition was over, the Section had the responsibility of dismantling the display and carefully packing the foreign exhibits for their safe return to the country of provenance.

26. Besides continuing with its normal activities throughout the year - chief among them the restoration of paintings and other works of art - the Section helped directly with a number of temporary exhibitions in the entrance hall of the National Museum; these included an exhibition of paintings and sculpture by J. Genuis, J. Mallia and J. Casha, another to mark Nature Conservation Year, and a third one organized by the Natural History Society of Malta.

27. The Assistant Curator gave a series of lectures to prospective members of the custodial staff, conducted cultural tours and sat on a number of committees and advisory boards. He also helped with the examination of antique furniture and silver and works of art being either imported or exported so as to establish whether customs duty was payable or to prevent the depletion of the national artistic heritage as the case might be.

PROTECTIVE INVENTORY OF MONUMENTS AND SITES

28. During the year under review work on the Protective Inventory of Monuments and Sites was to a large extent restricted to the finalisation of the preliminary part of the project (consisting of the division of the Maltese Islands into sites and the card-indexing of buildings in Mdina and Safi) with a view to eventual publication by the Malta Government in conjunction with the Council of Europe. Professor P. Gazzola of Italy and Mr. G. Alomar Esteve of Spain, Council of Europe consultants visited Malta from February 22-28. With the assistance of Dott. Tognetti, who was also concerned with the project, and Mr. M. Buhagiar, they assessed the work done so far and suggested some minor modifications. As a result of this meeting, it was decided that:

(a) to avoid confusion and unnecessary overlapping, the division of the Maltese Islands into sites should strictly adhere to the existing parish boundaries, each parish or group of parishes constituting a single mixed site.

(b) in the resultant sites only buildings erected prior to 1900 should be card-indexed, unless situated in the historic centres of towns or villages, in which case all buildings, irrespective of their age, should be included.

29. Subsequently index-cards for the new sites (46 in Malta and 14 in Gozo) were compiled by Mr. Buhagiar and checked by the Curator of the Fine Arts Section, Dr. J.A. Cauchi and the Architect i/c Antiquities Section, Public Works Department, Mr. M. Ellul. All the index-cards of Mdina and Safi, numbering 256, compiled earlier by Dr. Tognetti with the assistance of Mr. Buhagiar were likewise checked and revised.

30. Meanwhile, compilation of the remainder of the Inventory proceeded at a steady pace. Mr. Buhagiar made several trips to Gozo to photograph all the scheduled buildings (328) in Gharb and to finalise the work on that village. From September Mr. A. Ricci, an American architect belonging to the Peace Corps and who had had considerable experience in similar work in Sfax, Tunisia, was assigned to the Department and helped in the survey of buildings in Dingli.

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

Ghar Dalam

31. A team of scientists from the Natural History Museum of Senckenberg in Frankfurt-am-Main, West Germany visited Malta for the second time during the year. The expedition comprised Dr. Gerhard Storch, leader, Herr Franz Malec, student, and Herr Siegfried Weigelt, preparator, who had the task of continuing the palaeontological research started the previous year at Ghar Dalam by another group from the same institution.

32. The aim was to sample the deeper strata of the cave

site, namely the Red or Deer layer and the Clays or Hippopotamus and Elephant layer. The areas chosen for this purpose were the undisturbed deposits beneath a large boulder in the innermost southern end of the cave and the region next to the large stalagmite in the central part. Reports on the results will be published in Senckenbergiana Biologica, the official journal of the Senckenberg Naturhistorisches Museum.

33. One result of the work carried out by the previous year's expedition was the identification by Professor Dr. J. Boessneck of Munich of a number of bones of domestic animals as those of Capra hircus, Ovis aries, Felis catus, Bos taurus and Sus scrofa domesticus, besides bones and vertebrae of fish. The bones had come from the Upper Cultural Layers (neolithic and recent) at Ghar Dalam.

34. Throughout these expeditions, liaison was maintained with the German scientists by the Assistant Curator of the Natural History Section, Dr. G. Zammit Maempel, not only to afford them normal facilities but to ensure the safeguarding of our national heritage and to increase the Museum collections in the field of palaeontology.

35. The supervision of the cave during visiting hours was improved as a result of the employment of a door-keeper for the museum above, thereby permitting the guide to accompany the groups of visitors admitted into the cave at regular intervals. It is hoped that this arrangement will help in the better preservation of a pile of bones stored in a corner of the cave entrance and, for an obviously special reason, of the only surviving evidence of the original stratification in the cave as represented by a baulk from the old excavations. These features would otherwise suffer considerably at the hands of souvenir hunters.

Museum of Natural History, Vilhena Palace, Mdina.

Sub-section of Palaeontology

36. The unpacking and cleaning of the Department's collection of fossils was completed and new classification

and storage taken in hand. Although some of the specimens were found to carry a number and sometimes written information of no scientific value, important details, such as locality of the find and geological horizon, were missing. An inventory of the fossils was similarly not available. Everything possible is being done to rectify these deficiencies by proper classification and cataloguing.

37. A number of showcases was installed in a large room of the Palace and good progress was made in mounting the palaeontological display (fossils, captions, diagrams, explanatory cards, stands,) inside most of them. Understandably the aim was not to pack the showcases with all the material available, but to ensure, as far as was practicable, that they would eventually present an orderly and instructive display of the palaeontology of the Maltese islands.

38. The Department is most grateful to Dr. G. Zammit Maempel, the officer responsible for this sub-section of the Museum of Natural History, for his spontaneous and praiseworthy gesture in supplementing the exhibitable fossils in the Museum collection with loans from his own extensive and well-documented private collection. These useful additions are being recorded separately from the normal holdings of the Department.

Sub-section of Ornithology

39. The Assistant Curator in charge concentrated on the preparation of the bird display which will aim at giving as complete a picture as possible not only of the indigenous and migratory species, but also clear explanations of bird flight, habits and habitats. For this purpose a large hall was fitted with specially designed and locally made wall cases and the bulk of the display mounted in compartments inside them according to special themes.

40. Concurrently, work was continued on the reserve and study collections of stuffed birds (coming either from the pre-war Museum holdings or from the donation of Mr. V. De

Lucca), bird skins and eggs. A small collection of the latter, purchased from the Museum of Pisa, Italy will supplement local bird eggs to form the display in a table showcase placed centrally in the Ornithology Room.

Sub-section of Entomology

41. Considerable time was dedicated to the collection of specimens of local insects for the relative display. They were subsequently set and mounted either for exhibition purposes or to enhance the reserve collection. Several showcases were prepared to take the public collection which will help to instruct the ordinary run of visitors as well as specialists. As only a limited number of insect families are represented on Malta and Gozo, it was found necessary to purchase a number of exotic specimens from the United Kingdom to make the display more comprehensive.

Sub-section of Conchology

42. The collection of sea-shells from all over the world is one of the best and most valuable inherited from the pre-war museum in Valletta. The sorting and classification of some 30,000 specimens was taken in hand as a preparation to putting the most significant items on public display.

43. The Natural History Section suffered a great loss with the untimely death of its Curator, Professor Henry Micallef on October 3. He had been put in overall charge of the Section in August 1966 to re-organize the collections and to set up the proposed museum. Although his time was mainly taken up by his full-time duties in the Chair of Biology at the Royal University of Malta, the Section always stood to gain, as it certainly did, from his wide and deep knowledge of the natural sciences.

APPENDIX I

Bibliography

Archaeology

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New configurations in old world archaeology, World Archaeology, vol. 2, no. 2, October 1970, pp. 199-211.

Fine Arts

various authors,

The Order of St. John in Malta, being the catalogue of the XIII Council of Europe Art Exhibition, Valletta, Malta, 1970.

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APPENDIX II

Restoration Works

Paintings

St. John's Oratory

M. Preti: Bl. Gerard.

Sarria Church

M. Preti(?): St. Rose.

M. Preti(?): Two lunettes.

Jesuits Church

A. Erardi: The Assumption.

A. Erardi: The Visitation.

A. Erardi: The Presentation.

A number of decorative panels and small pictures including St. Augustine, St. Anne, St. Paul, St. Joseph, a Pieta', an Immaculate Conception, St. Ivo, Madonna with Saints, St. Louis and St. Anthony, St. Charles, the Entombment, and Three Saints.

Verdala Palace

St. Peter in Prison.

Four views of cities.

St. Paul's Church

F. Zahra: Crucifixion.

Anonymous: St. Roche.

Anonymous: A Madonna.

St. Bartholomew Hospital

Anonymous: Madonna of the Rosary.

Gozo Cathedral

A set of 7 paintings forming a polyptych was taken in hand.

A frieze with coats-of-arms of the Grand Masters was completed and put back in place at the Customs House,

The Matteo d'Aleccio frescoes at the Palace, were retouched after being damaged by seeping rain water. The tempera painting on the wall in the Minister's room at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was also repaired, as well as a number of frames in the Medical and Health Department.

Besides these works a number of local paintings earmarked for the Council of Europe Exhibition as well as others arriving from abroad, had to be retouched because of damage in transportation.

Sculpture

G.A. Foggini(?): Four statues in wood.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF VISITORS ADMITTED TO SITES UNDER THE
MUSEUM DEPARTMENT DURING THE CALENDAR YEARS 1969 AND 1970

PLACE	1969		1970	
	On payment	Free	On payment	Free
National Museum	17,501	3,873	15,251	3,256
Palace Armoury	23,934	7,350	16,500	10,113 [#]
Museum of Roman Antiquities	13,965	3,830	15,425	3,503
St. Paul's Catacombs	21,257	2,955	25,066	2,282
Hal Saflieni Hypogeum	21,986	4,123	22,352	3,392
Tarxien Neolithic Temples	11,236	2,936	11,931	3,175
Ghar Dalam Cave and Museum	9,200	3,031	11,920	3,326
Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa	-	1,300	1,300	900
Museum, Gozo	6,069	1,080	7,714	747
Ggantija Temples, Gozo	22,000	4,578	21,544	2,560
General Day Tickets	24,718	-	32,700	-
XIII Council of Europe Exhibition			17,010	-
Special "Caravaggio" Exhibition			2,754	-
Total	171,866	35,056	201,467	33,254
Total admission fees collected	£12,139.6s.6d.		£14,740.16s.0d.	

* Inclusive of 3,313 visitors admitted during the
8th September Exhibition.