



REPORTS

on the working of

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

covering periods between

1st April 1973

and

31st August 1974

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Museum

(Period covered:

1st April, 1973 to 31st March, 1974)

The financial year under review saw the completion of the Museum of Natural History, one of the major museum projects which the Department had been working on for some time. Considerable progress was also made, particularly in the second half of the same period, in the preparations to re-organise the Fine Arts collections as a separate museum.

2. Several foreign statesmen, diplomats and scholars visited the museums and monuments under the care of the Department and showed great interest in the Islands' historical, artistic and natural heritage. The most important visitor was Archbishop Makarios, President of the Republic of Cyprus who, during an intense two-day itinerary at the beginning of November, was conducted by the Director and the officers responsible for the different Sections of the Department.

3. The Archaeological Section was very active both inside and outside the National Museum where its public and reserve collections are mainly concentrated. The archaeological and historical library was brought to working order and, combined with other measures, immediately enabled the Assistant Curator in charge to initiate some useful research, a part of which has already been published. A review of the reserve collection was commenced in preparation for the extension of the display following the proposed transfer of the Fine Arts Section to the former Admiralty House in South Street, Valletta.

4. Activities in the field commenced in earnest during August and went on till the following December. For the third year in succession, a party of Maltese and foreign students helped in the excavation of a Roman villa in the grounds of the Girls' Secondary School, Żejtun while in Malta undergoing an English-language course organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The layout of the building was cla-

rified further and a second cistern, cut in the rock to a cylindrical shape, was brought to light. It was also realised during this campaign that the site had been used during the Bronze Age, as indicated by the presence of two rock-cut silos containing sherds of the Borg in-Nadur Phase.

5. Another four of these typical silos were discovered inside the British Services area at Mtarfa; three of them contained no archaeological material, but the fourth one produced a variety of finds datable from the 1st century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. These included pottery, three fragments of Punic architectural mouldings and remains of inhumations and cremations, all of which had probably been dumped as rubbish into the silo.

6. The yield of rock-cut tombs was meagre compared with previous years. Three of these features were accidentally met with at Mriehel, Santa Venera and Marsa; their contents referred to a time span from the 4th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.

7. The leading discovery of the year was made at the new Government housing estate in Santa Lucia, where an underground burial place reminiscent of the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum was identified. The small labyrinth was provided with a megalithic structure serving as an entrance and contained a considerable quantity of human bones Copper Age pottery and a few amulets made of shell and imported stone. As in the Hypogeum, from which the new site is only half-a-mile distant, there were no regular inhumations, but a filling made up of stony soil containing the above-mentioned finds, as if the mass had been dumped inside the monument from the surface.

8. From about half-way through the year under review, good overall progress was registered on the proposed museum of the fine arts and history. This brought the project to a stage where, by the end of March 1974, the physical works, including flooring and decoration, were practically complete and the Fine Arts Section began the actual transfer of its holdings from the Auberge de Provence to the former Admiralty House in South Street, Valletta. Indeed, it became possible to forecast the inauguration of the new museum during the first week of May 1974 and several months ahead of the original estimate.

9. Throughout the year two venues were at the disposal of the Department for the holding of temporary exhibitions, namely the entrance hall of the National Museum and the ground floor hall at the Main Guard, Palace Square, Valletta. The relative programme comprised the following events:

National Museum

Title or nature of exhibition	Exhibitor or organiser
Portraits of children ...	Miss Brownie Downing
Sculpture and paintings	Mr Dennis Mitchell and Miss Misome' Piele
Popular arts and crafts of Hungary ...	Hungarian Embassy, Rome
The Hungarian scene in photographs ...	Hungarian Embassy, Rome

Main Guard

Botanical art ...	Natural History Society of Malta
Charles Peguy ...	John XXIII Peace Laboratory
Human rights ...	Unesco Club.

10. In the field of natural history, the year was marked by the completion of the relative Section's museum at the Vilhena Palace, Mdina and its official opening by the Hon. Miss A. Barbara, M.P., Minister of Education and Culture on June 22, 1973. The display covers geology, fossils, animal skeletal anatomy, fishes, insects, birds, and land and sea shells; in the majority of

cases these sub-sections have been built up almost entirely of local specimens. The first nine months in the life of the Museum of Natural History have witnessed its popularity with all categories of visitors.

11. Throughout the year every effort was made to develop the natural history collections with a view to improving or extending the existing display, or to plan for future expansion into other subjects. A large bird collection was acquired from a private source, while small but interesting collections of fossils and stuffed animals were transferred from the Argotti Botanic Garden, Department of Agriculture. Amongst the Museum's own collections due shortly for display, priority of physical and technical preparation was given to local and foreign land shells which number over 2,000 examples, and minerals, of which there are about 7,000 specimens.

F. S. MALLIA
Director of Museum

10th June, 1974

Place	1972-73		1973-74	
	On payment	Free	On payment	Free
National Museum ...	14,069	3,622	17,715	4,195
Palace Armoury ...	19,749	8,254	26,135	11,361*
Museum of Roman Antiquities ...	12,970	5,644	15,992	7,870
St Paul's Catacombs ...	18,919	3,605	28,600	5,852
Museum of Natural History ...	—	—	6,688	6,645
Hal Saflieni Hypogeum ...	16,585	4,554	20,990	6,414
Tarxien Temples ...	11,473	8,099	13,408	11,677
Għar Dalam Cave and Museum ...	11,028	4,710	12,728	5,885
Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa ...	2,263	273	2,306	375
Museum, Gozo ...	5,893	850	7,602	970
Ggantija, Gozo ...	20,920	969	33,293	1,452
General Day Tickets ...	61,570	—	77,689	—
Total: ...	195,439	40,580	263,146	62,696
Total admission fees collected ...	£M12,692·70,0		£M16,133·95,0	

* Inclusive of 2,335 visitors admitted during the 8th September Exhibition.