



**REPORTS**  
on the working of  
**GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

covering period between

**1st April, 1979**

and

**31st December, 1979**

Published by the Department of Information  
Printed at the Central Office of Statistics (Printing Division)

MALTA

1980

Price 35c



## Museums

(Period covered:

1st April, 1979 to 31st December, 1979)

Throughout the nine months under review, the Archaeological Section continued with active preparations to improve and extend the exhibition of Roman material in the National Museum of Archaeology. For the purpose a large and varied selection of items from the Department's holdings, including exhibits from the museum attached to the Roman Villa at Rabat, was studied and where necessary restored, while new display equipment, mainly showcases and stands, was manufactured.

2. Field-work, consisting in the investigation of casual discoveries, was carried out in both Malta and Gozo. The smaller island began the calendar of this rescue work with a rock-cut tomb of the more common type, namely an access shaft and a single burial chamber, which came to light at Wied il-Ghasri in April. From a corner of the shaft seven urns with lids and containing remains of cremations, seven two-handled amphorae, a corroded bronze mirror and five copper coins were recovered. The chamber, which was found completely flooded with rain-water, yielded fragments of human bones, three saucers and another five bronze coins. Four of the coins from the chamber and one from the shaft could be identified with certainty and date the use of the tomb from the second quarter of the 3rd Century B.C. at the earliest to the 1st Century A.D. at the latest.

3. A similar tomb was discovered at Żebbuġ, Malta, in May. It contained the skeletal remains of two individuals and a cremation, together with two large amphorae, two plates, two saucers, three bowls, a jug, two bottles and a kylix. Chronologically this group of pottery items dates from the 3rd to the first half of the 1st Century B.C.

4. In November road works at Ta' Qali in the limits of Mosta disturbed the third and last rock-cut tomb to be reported during the period under review. Besides the usual access shaft, it consisted of a burial chamber of irregular shape, in which the following pottery items had been deposited: a large amphora, two cremation urns with lids, a lamp, a globular jar, seven bottles, a jug and three bowls. On the basis of these contents, the tomb could be dated to the 2nd—1st Centuries B.C.

5. On two separate occasions and with different aims in view, the Archaeological Section undertook joint projects with the Classics Department of the Old University. From June to August various soundings were made in the open part of the Roman Villa site at Rabat with the scope of obtaining a stratified pottery sequence for the Punic and Roman periods. The yield of archaeological material from the exercise is now being studied by the Curator and Dr A. Bonanno, Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at the Old University.

6. The aim of the second joint project was set by the University Classics Department as the training of a nucleus of suitably trained volunteer assistants who could help on excavations conducted by the Museums Department. During a short course in December training was given in the practical aspects of archaeological field-work, including a limited excavation outside the Church of the Annunciation at is-Swatar in the limits of Rabat. The lecturers were the Director of Museums, the Curator of the Archaeological Section, Dr A. Bonanno and Dr A. Luttrell.

7. The salient project of the Fine Arts Section from April to December 1979 has been the long and difficult work of restoring and fixing of the Nasoni decorative panels on the ceiling of the first-floor corridors at the Palace, Valletta. The panels of the short "first corridor" were installed, having been completed in 1978-79, while very good progress was made with the restoration of the paintings pertaining to the much longer "Parliament corridor".

8. Restoration of works of art, mainly paintings, and arms and armour — to mention two very numerous categories of objects cared for by the Section — continued without hardly any interruption. Various improvements were made at the National Museum of Fine Arts and work on the second hall of the Armoury progressed to the extent permitted by the available labour resources.

9. The temporary exhibitions held at the National Museum of Fine Arts comprised a representative sampling of current production by various Maltese and foreign artists, as the following grouping indicates:

Paintings: C. Maya, C. Sichel, A. Sciberras, M. Tosoni, E. Micallef, A. Cencioni, M. Lewis, R. Saliba, various Italian artists;

Etchings: P. Dalcò, L. Micallef;

Lithographs: Various Commonwealth artists;

Drawings: T. Wilson, A. Agius;

Ceramics: P. Haber;

Photographs: M. Flores;

Paintings, etchings and sculpture: M. Mele.

Moreover, an exhibition of paintings by the late Gianni Vella was organised by his son, Mr A. Vella Chritien.

10. Outside Malta, the Fine Arts Section mounted an exhibition of paintings by contemporary Maltese artists at Mannheim, West Germany, and a similar event, combined with photographic documentation of ancient buildings, at the headquarters of Unesco in Paris in support of the International Campaign for the Restoration of the Monuments of Malta sponsored by that organization.

11. The inventory of works of art on view at the National Museum of Fine Arts was completed. Besides the work donated by every artist exhibiting at the Museum, the Section was given the framed lithographs — the work of various Commonwealth artists — by the Canadian Embassy which had previously sponsored their exhibition (see para. 9). Sir Hannibal Scicluna donated a set of his personal medals and decorations, a welcome addition to his portrait in oil by John Soutar which had been bequeathed by the late Lady Scicluna.

12. The Assistant Curator of Natural History carried out research on various aspects of local geology and palaeontology, dealing personally or with the help of learned overseas institutions with such diverse subjects as the sterile clay layer at Għar Dalam, third lower molars of the Maltese Pleistocene hippopotamus, a Quaternary volcanic ash layer discovered by himself in central Malta, a new species of teredinid and two new echinoid records. These studies were in varying stages of preparation for publication.

13. A further considerable batch of unlabelled fossils deriving from the old collection and stored at the National Museum of Natural History, Mdina was marked and catalogued. Similar treatment was given to a small collection of Maltese fossils collected by the late Dr Pass and kindly donated to the Department by Professor J. M. Ganado, the executor of the former's will.

14. The Assistant Curator of Natural History published the following papers during the period under review:

i. *Laganum depressum* Ag. (Echinoidea, Laganidae), a new record from the Maltese Tertiary, *Atti Soc. Tosc. Sci. Nat.*, (A) 85: 103—115.

ii. The Indo-Pacific affinity of some Maltese Tertiary fossils, *Centr. Med. Nat.*, 1 (1): 1—12.

iii. Handbills extolling the virtue of fossil sharks' teeth, *Melita Historica*, 7 (3): 211—224.

15. Priority of attention among the other sections of the National Museum of Natural History was given to the proposed section on marine life, an area so far only summarily represented. A suite of rooms on the top floor was being prepared to accommodate the new display which will include corals, crustacea, echinoderms and turtles, besides more comprehensive presentations on sea-shells and fish than at present. These preparations were sustained by the acquisition of the large variety of species required to set up the display. In this activity, the contribution by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of specimens from catches by Government trawlers has been of the greatest benefit. In turn, the museum laboratory was kept constantly active, preparing the specimens for display purposes.

16. Further preparatory work was taken in hand to improve practically all other sections of the National Museum of Natural History. To quote one example, the Bird Section display was to absorb the majority of specimens acquired from the famous Conti Collection.

17. The War Museum at Fort St Elmo, Valletta made further progress in the spheres of acquisitions and improvement of the contents and significance of the display. A new section was set up to commemorate those Maltese who lost their life in the two World Wars; it includes a Roll of Honour in respect of casualties in World War II and the original model of the War Memorial at Floriana.

18. With the help of the Armed Forces of Malta, work was commenced on a further annexe to the Museum in a suite of long rooms on the west side of the Drill Hall. Here will be displayed services' uniforms and insignia, together with related photographic documentation.

19. The Bofors anti-aircraft gun has been restored by the A.F.M. and displayed in the main hall. Its former place in the open outside the entrance to the Museum has been taken by a gun from a German submarine of World War I.

20. A new system of admission to museums and monuments was introduced by Legal Notice 102 of 1979 published in the Government Gazette of 26th October, 1979. Its effective date was 1st November, 1979. The distinction between adult and juvenile was established at 16 years of age and the entrance fee to each museum or monument at 15c and 7c5 respectively. Provision was also made for a comprehensive ticket valid on the day of issue only for visiting any number of museum and monuments and costing 50c for an adult and 25c for a juvenile. Such comprehensive tickets were primarily meant for use by travel agents as part and parcel

of their tour programmes for organised groups; they constituted a cost-saving facility and provided further inducement for tourists to acquaint themselves more with the cultural heritage of Malta. The State Rooms and Tapestry Chamber at the Palace, Valletta, Haġar Qim Temples, the War Museum, and the Caravaggio Oratory at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta were introduced into the system of paid entrance as from the date mentioned above.

F.S. MALLIA,

Director, Museums Department

5th March, 1980.

**Statement of Visitors admitted to Museums and Monuments during the Financial Year 1978-79 and the period 1st April — 31st December, 1979**

| Place                               | 1978/79              |                | 1 April — 31 Dec.<br>1979 |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|                                     | On Payment           | Free           | On Payment                | Free           |
| National Museum of Archaeology ...  | 18,351               | 7,781          | 15,351                    | 6,409          |
| National Museum of Fine Arts ...    | 11,348               | 5,528          | 7,813                     | 4,667          |
| National Museum of Natural History  | 21,442               | 16,604         | 20,200                    | 12,070         |
| Palace Armoury ... ..               | 31,470               | 12,662         | 22,313                    | 7,942          |
| Museum of Roman Antiquities ...     | 23,435               | 9,497          | 16,637                    | 7,592          |
| St. Paul's Catacombs ... ..         | 46,519               | 10,771         | 42,250                    | 7,160          |
| Hal Saffieni Hypogeum ... ..        | 29,004               | 13,054         | 23,728                    | 10,259         |
| Tarxien Temples ... ..              | 21,119               | 10,410         | 17,959                    | 7,553          |
| Ghar Dalam Cave & Museum ... ..     | 18,101               | 11,665         | 14,000                    | 6,686          |
| Inquisitor's Palace ... ..          | 2,706                | 1,745          | 1,882                     | 1,120          |
| Haġar Qim ... ..                    | —                    | 42,643         | 2,333                     | 33,913         |
| State Rooms & Tapestry Chambers ... | —                    | —              | 5,166                     | 501            |
| War Museum ... ..                   | —                    | —              | 5,800                     | 3,885          |
| Museum, Gozo ... ..                 | 12,515               | 2,829          | 10,559                    | 2,830          |
| Ggantija Temples ... ..             | 52,833               | 10,117         | 58,323                    | 10,656         |
| Visitors in groups ... ..           | 166,091              | —              | 147,502                   | —              |
| <b>Total ... ..</b>                 | <b>454,934</b>       | <b>155,315</b> | <b>411,816</b>            | <b>123,243</b> |
|                                     | <b>£M27,092.92,5</b> |                | <b>£M30,991.35,0</b>      |                |