



REPORTS

on the working of

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

for

The Year 1980

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Museums

(Period Covered:
1st January, 1980 to 31st December, 1980)

During the year under review several archaeological soundings were made in the enclosed area behind the Museum of Roman Antiquities, at Rabat, in continuation of the exercise commenced the previous year. In the course of further field-work on the site, a number of architectural fragments consisting of capitals and drums of fluted columns, were identified as belonging to the peristyle of the Roman house incorporated in the lower floor of the Museum. These important architectural fragments will now be utilized in the projected re-construction of the peristyle.

2. A rock-cut tomb consisting of a rectangular access shaft with two burial chambers hewn opposite each other was excavated and recorded at Mqabba in July. Both chambers were found to have been thoroughly rifled and only yielded some fragments of human bones and a few sherds of punice type.

3. While preparing to renew the roof of the main hall of the Museum of Roman Antiquities at Rabat, the exhibits in it were dealt with as follows: a selection of pottery, statuary, etc. was transferred to the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta to extend the display of Punic and Roman material, while items of Rabat provenance were re-arranged in the temporary visitor entrance. The actual renewal of the roof of the main hall, involving major structural repairs and alterations, was commenced in November and is now nearing completion.

4. Considerable attention was given to the re-organisation and extension of the Punic and Roman displays at the National Museum of Archaeology. Material from storage or transferred from the Museum of Roman Antiquities at Rabat was restored and documented prior to exhibition; similar treatment was given to contemporary material of foreign provenance. The net result by the beginning of December was the addition of the great hall and two other rooms on the first floor of the Museum to the public areas, while various improvements were made to the general layout on the same level.

5. The adaptation of part of the basement accommodation at the National Museum of Fine Arts, including the extension of a spiral staircase, for a new display of coins and medals of the Order of St John was completed, and work on the display set-up and show-cases was taken in hand.

6. In the Palace, Valletta, the decorative ceiling panels by Nasoni belonging to the corridor outside the President's office were re-mounted and restored, and more than half of them were fixed in their original location. The work of fixing the remainder is in progress.

7. The Fine Arts Section completed the inventories of works of art and other antiques kept in Government palaces. It continued to increase the artistic value of its collections by various acquisitions, including an important religious triptych by Anton Inglott and an oil painting by Gianni Vella depicting the Madonna of the Rosary. Two other paintings, a portrait of Giuseppe Cali by Edward Caruana Dingli, and another portrait of Grand Master Emmanuel Pinto by Antoine de Favray, were brought over from the Upper Secondary School and are now exhibited at the Museum.

8. A record number of temporary exhibitions, thirty-five in number, by Maltese and foreign artists, were held at the National Museum of Fine Arts. The Section was also primarily responsible for mounting the exhibition of the works of the Italian artist Carlo Carrà and of the history of Bulgaria, including a number of ancient icons, at the Palace in Valletta. Artists who held exhibitions at the National Museum of Fine Arts donated one of their works. Other donations include a uniform of a knight of Malta, a number of prints and oil paintings, and six water-colours depicting uniforms of the Order of St John.

9. The reserve collection of paintings has been re-organized and a new system of shelving introduced. It is now stored in adequate conditions and work on the inventory is proceeding steadily.

10. As in previous years, members of the staff were engaged in the examination of antiques and works of art both at the Museum and elsewhere, and in painting large posters to advertise cultural activities organized by the Ministry of Culture.

11. The Assistant Curator of Natural History carried out research work at his own expense in a number of foreign museums and established contacts with their respective curators. A search was made for Maltese fossils in the reserve collections of the Manchester Natural History Museum, and work on a Maltese teredinid mollusc was carried out at the Department of Natural History at the British Museum. Further research was carried out at the Bergen Aquarium and Botanic Gardens. Apart from this work overseas, the Assistant Curator continued with his long term research project on Ghar Dalam's cave ecology.

12. A collection of sixteen photographs taken by M.T.V. in April 1971 in connection with a programme on Ghar Dalam was purchased from Xandir Malta for the Ghar Dalam Records. The collection included the only photograph available of a large tusk belonging to *elephas mnaidraensis*.

13. The cataloguing and marking of unlabelled fossils from the old collection stored at the National Museum of Natural History, Mdina, was continued throughout the year.

14. Works of restoration on the top floor of the National Museum of Natural History at Mdina were finalised, permitting the continuation of the project to set up an extensive display on the theme 'The Sea'. This is made up of shells, corals, crustacea, reptiles and fish of

local and foreign origin documented with an introductory history on marine biology and augmented with photographs and drawings. Local material was collected, cleaned and prepared for exhibition after expeditions were conducted during the summer months on the M.V. Nalout, a Government trawler. As the Museum still lacks a number of important specimens on local marine fauna, further expeditions are envisaged for the spring and summer of 1981.

15. Major work was also carried out on the Museum entomological reserve collection which was indexed, and the specimens classified in their respective orders and families. Several hundred specimens from the pre-war collections, however, were found to have been badly damaged by mites. Luckily no insect of major entomological importance to Malta suffered any damage, but this left the Museum collection in need of new specimens to make up for the losses sustained.

16. From January to March the Museum taxidermist prepared 109 specimens for display purposes. These varied from crustacea, fish, reptiles and birds. Among the latter, two new species of Maltese birds were added to the Museum collection, and the total number of specimens was increased by 48.

17. At the War Museum in Lower St Elmo, Valletta, work on the annexe to the main exhibition hall was completed, and considerable improvements were made in the general layout of the exhibited material. Foremost among the donations made to the Museum during the year was the battledress of Air Chief

Marshall, Sir Hugh Lloyd, who was Air Officer Commanding, Malta, from 1941-1942. An exhibition on Aviation Art by Richard Caruana was held in September.

18. The total restoration and adaptation of the Auberge de France in Vittoriosa to house the new Museum of Political History was completed early in the year. The display itself, including furniture and lighting, has been brought to an advanced stage of completion.

19. Concurrently, very extensive restoration work was carried out on the much larger Inquisitor's Palace, intended to accommodate the proposed Folk Museum. Display items for the project are being transferred to the building where they will be processed and selected for the purpose by the Department, assisted by the Folklore Society on a voluntary basis.

20. U.N.E.S.C.O. launched an International Campaign for the Restoration of some of the major Historical Monuments in Malta which involved Vilhena Palace, the Hypogeum, Fort St Elmo and the Gozo Citadel. These sites figured in a postage stamp set issued to mark the launching of the Campaign by the Director-General of U.N.E.S.C.O., H.E. Mr Amadou Mohtar M'Bow. To commemorate the event, a marble plaque was set up in the courtyard of Vilhena Palace, and unveiled by Mr M'Bow.

T. Gouder,
f/ Director of Museums

1st March, 1981

**Statement of visitors admitted to Museums and Monuments during the period
1 April — 31 December 1979 and the Calendar Year 1980**

Place	1 April — 31 December 1979		1980	
	On Payment	Free	On Payment	Free
National Museum of Archaeology	15,351	6,409	21,732	8,563
National Museum of Fine Arts	7,813	4,667	11,136	3,154
National Museum of Natural History	20,200	12,070	29,073	13,666
Palace Armoury	22,313	7,942	43,330	10,575
State Rooms and Tapestry Chamber	5,166	501	27,987	5,982
War Museum	5,800	3,885	50,782	12,805
Caravaggio Oratory	—	—	22,332	—
Museum of Roman Antiquities	16,637	7,592	16,954	6,980
St Paul's Catacombs	42,250	7,160	41,231	6,297
Hal Saffieni Hypogeum	23,728	10,259	27,293	8,406
Tarxien Temples	17,959	7,553	19,892	7,225
Għar Dalam Cave and Museum	14,000	6,686	15,358	6,950
Haġar Qim	2,333	33,913	18,345	3,931
Museum, Gozo	10,559	2,830	13,012	2,936
Ggantija Temples	58,323	10,656	48,609	6,199
Visitors in groups	147,502	—	245,965	—
TOTAL	411,816	123,243	653,031	103,669
	£M30,991.35.0		£M158,926.27.5	