

THE STUDY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN MALTA

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The University of Malta has made a late entry in the field of archaeology. The first graduate courses started only in 1987. One recalls with satisfaction, however, that Professor Temi Zammit, the distinguished Maltese archaeologist, was Rector of the Royal University of Malta between 1920 and 1926, and that for a short period, in the years 1938-1939, John Ward Perkins, then at the beginning of his brilliant and influential career, was appointed Professor of Archaeology. Furthermore, John Evan's work on the prehistoric antiquities of the Maltese islands in the fifties, published in his widely read *Malta* (1959) and his monumental *Survey* (1971), was monitored by a Committee set up to administer a grant made available to the Royal University by the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas and chaired by the then Rector, Professor J. Manché.

A full-time lectureship was instituted in 1969 and it was filled by an Italian archaeologist from Palermo, Dottoressa Rita Virzi. During her term of office in Malta (1970-1971) Dottoressa Virzi conducted full-scale excavations on the prehistoric site at Ras il-Pellegrin and some minor and partial explorations at Ghar ta' Iburdan and a cistern at Il-Bidnija, limits of Mosta. It is most unfortunate that, apart from a very short account of her exploration at Ghar ta' Iburdan published in *Kokalos* (1976-7), no report of the excavations has been published. What is even worse is that both the photographic documentation and measured drawings of the excavations were taken away and never returned, with the net result that virtually nothing can be done by anyone to attempt an academic publication of the excavated material which is still housed at the University. Attempts made by the undersigned to acquire this documentation proved futile, and any help on this matter would be appreciated.

The undersigned was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Classics in March 1971 with duties to teach in both the Classics and Archaeology. But Archaeology was not destined to develop and flourish for the next sixteen years. In the early 1970s we barely managed to introduce Archaeology as a subsidiary area of study in the evening B.A. course. After that course was completed, Archaeology had to wait for the change of government in 1987 to re-emerge, first as a subsidiary area, but soon after, as a main area of study within the B.A. programme.

The first two graduates were Mr Anthony Pace and Mr George Said, both of whom proceeded with their post-graduate studies in Archaeology abroad. Mr Pace won the post of Assistant Curator of Archaeology at the Museums Department and was promoted to Curator soon after. Two other graduates from our Department, Mr Nathaniel Cutajar and Mr Reuben Grima, joined the Museums Department as Assistant Curators of Archaeology in 1992. Both of them have since then undertaken postgraduate courses abroad.

Meanwhile, the Department of Classics, which was reinstated together with the Faculty of Arts in 1987, changed its name to the Department of Classics and Archaeology in 1992. This was made possible after Dr Anthony Frendo joined the staff of the Department. Archaeology started being offered as a B.A. Hons subject in 1992, and last November we had the first three Hons graduates, along with four others graduating B.A. Two of last year's graduates are pursuing further studies in England, providing further confirmation of the recognition of both our degrees overseas. As from this year we have also our own post-graduate students, one being registered for an M.A., the other for an M.Phil.

The above historical account reflects directly the present situation in terms of courses and levels at which Archaeology can be studied at this University. In brief, all levels are available, from B.A. to Ph.D. As from next year, in collaboration with the International Office of the University, it is our intention to hold also "Summer Schools" to cater for the international market. These will involve practical sessions which will see the participants in these courses working along with our own students in the Department's dig.

This leads me to the subject of the Department's current involvement in excavation activity. Up to last summer, as one can make out from another article in this issue, this Department has been involved in a joint research programme focussed on Gozo. The excavation part of it is now concluded. What remains to be done is the post-excavation processing and eventual publication of the data. The research project included also a regional study of Gozo based on a field walking survey of a transect across the whole of Gozo. This part of the project is still on and the Department will keep its commitment to it until its completion.

All this means that from this year the Department will need its own site to conduct annual summer excavation campaigns, mainly to provide a proper field training for its students. I am pleased to be in a position to announce that we have had the approval in principle to our request for the southern section of the Tas-Silg site, both from the Ministry for Justice, Youth and Culture and from the Department of Museums. All we need to do now is to settle the conditions and details of responsibilities connected with the site itself and its excavation.

The declared objectives of the undergraduate course programme in Archaeology is to provide our students with as broad a base for this discipline as possible. The programme starts with a four-credit, compulsory, introductory study unit, followed by a series of other study

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SOCIETY REPORT FOR 1994

SEMINAR ON THE BROCHTORFF CIRCLE

During 1994 the Society continued to grow steadily in membership, and attendance at meetings open to the public demonstrated the extent of interest in archaeology.

The Society is greatly honoured by having the President of the Republic as its Patron. The Hon. Dr. Michael Refalo now Minister with responsibility for Museums and Archaeology has shown characteristic vigour in setting in motion a radical change in the management of archaeology which is of immense importance.

Professor John Evans who has done so much for archaeology in Malta and whose classic volume *The Prehistoric Antiquities of Malta* remains the standard text, is an Honorary Vice-president of the Society.

During the year a number of meetings were held at the National Museum of Archaeology, which were very well attended.

Professor Anthony Bonanno, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Malta, gave a talk on **Roman Malta** in which he outlined the wide range of remains dating from nearly 600 years of the Roman imperium, ranging from sophisticated villas to large country estate establishments.

Dr. George Zammit Maempel, Honorary curator of the Ghar Dalam Museum, spoke about the geology and fossil fauna of **Pre-Human Malta** and how the remains of dwarf elephants and hippos, as well as giant swans and dormice, had adapted to the environment of islands cut off by a rise in sea levels.

The Archaeology of the Emergence of Ancient Israel was the topic chosen by Dr Anthony Frendo, Lecturer in archaeology at the University. He described the archaeological evidence for the conglomeration of the tribes that formed Israel probably after the widespread series of population movements initiated by movement from the north of what is now Greece and the Aegean Islands.

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units covering almost the whole of the chronological divisions of Mediterranean archaeology from Prehistory to Medieval. Study units focussing on Maltese archaeology of the same periods are also provided. Other units are concerned with aspects closely related to Archaeology, such as Photography, Surveying and Draughtsmanship, Principles of Conservation and Scientific Applications of Archaeology.

In September the Society held a one day conference to mark the end of the final season of excavation by a joint Anglo-Maltese team on the burial complex at Xaghra, Gozo known as the Brochtorff Circle.

As this coincided with the visit of a Bristol University summer school the first part of the meeting consisted of an update overview of the archaeology of the Maltese Islands, mainly for the benefit of our visitors. An audience of about two hundred, headed by the President of Malta attended. Minister the Hon. Dr Michael Refalo opened the proceedings with a speech which emphasised his intention of tackling the many administrative and funding problems facing archaeology in Malta.

The first paper was by Dr David Trump, now of Cambridge, a leading authority on the Pre-History of the Mediterranean, who has had a long and fruitful involvement in Maltese archaeology. He set the scene by a masterly review of Mediterranean pre-history during the period covered by the use of the Brochtorff burial complex, from the Zebbug to Tarxien periods (4000-2500).

Professor Patrick Schembri gave an account of the probable natural environment of the burial complex during its period of use, deduced from a study of the remains of snails and other species; he came to the conclusion that it was somewhat arid and not very different to present conditions.

The Phoenecian and Punic period in Malta were reviewed by Dr Tancred Gouder and Professor Anthony Bonanno covered the Roman period. Dr Mario Buhagiar spoke on the little known era when Malta was part of the Byzantine empire. The change in landscape from an essentially agrarian one to the beginning of urbanisation that followed the arrival of the Order of St. John was described by Dominic Cutajar.

The afternoon session concentrated more closely on the Brochtorff Circle excavations. Dr Tancred Gouder explained how the Anglo-Maltese Gozo Project came about. Dr Caroline Malone then gave an account of the excavations on the site from 1987 to 1994.

The fascinating art objects found during the course of the excavations were described in terms of their context by Professor Bonanno, while Andrew Townsend spoke about them in relations to other comparable objects from the rest of the Mediterranean. With the help of the Curator of Archaeology many of these unique artefacts were on display for the first time during the seminar.

Carol Brown, John Dixon and Robert Leighton were the authors of a paper that analysed some of the artefacts and particularly the exotic symbolic axes found in the burial complex. Another paper by Cristina Sampedro gave an

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