

To the Library of the University
by W. C. C. Lawrence

2. 1. 09

*Remains of an ancient Greek building discovered in Malta
in February 1888.*

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
Valletta, 21st April 1888.

The remains of the basement floor of the building, a plan of which accompanies this Memoir, was discovered about two months ago in a field, Archiepiscopal property, called "Nadur" and formerly bearing also the denomination of "Feides-Iz-zghir." They lie at a distance of about 5 miles to the South of Valletta and midway between the Villages "Luca" and "Micabiba," in a lonely but well cultivated district of the island.

Though constructed of large blocks of stone, these remains cannot, in any way, be considered as belonging to the Megalithic class of the majestic rude-stone structures of which there are many in these islands. They belong to a class of buildings differing from the Megalithic both as regards mode of construction and type.

The very few fragments of cornices found amongst the *débris*, and the large blocks, carefully cut and neatly dressed, laid with mortar in courses, 1 ft. 10 in. high, or double the height of those generally employed at present in masonry works in these islands, tell of the Greek origin of the building which, probably, belongs to the same epoch of the portion of the Greek house still existing in the Village "Zurricco," of the wall bordering on the road leading from that village to Casal "Safi," and of the remains existing on the road to "Santa Maria Tas-Silc" in the promontory of Delimara, and of several others which are seen elsewhere, illustrated in my Report on the antiquities existing in the islands of Malta, 1882.

The two tanks, marked A, A, on plan, just cleared of rubbish, bear a great resemblance to the tank in the lands "Ta Medeuiet" near the Phœnician temple of Melkarte (see illustration page 22 of said Report). They are, like that tank, of a primitive construction, having a flat roof made of roofing-stones, say 1 ft. thick, 3 ft. broad, and 8 ft. long, resting on architraves measuring, on an average, 8 ft. \times 1 ft. 10 in. \times 1 ft. 10, supported by rows of massive pillars, the greater part of which Monoliths, 9 ft. high and 2 ft. square. This primitive mode of constructing reservoirs for water leads me to believe that the building in question belongs to the early Greek epoch.

It is beyond doubt, that early Greek Colonies had settled in these islands about 700 B. C., which is very nearly the epoch of all Greek settlements in Sicily. It is also certain that they remained in the island throughout all the period of the Roman Rule.

A glance to the plan illustrating this Memoir and to any of those of the Maltese Megalithic monuments, such, for instance, of "Hagiar-Kim," in Malta, or of "Gigantia," in Gozo, brings most prominently to view the difference between them as regards type. The plotting, in fact, of the plan of the building now discovered shows nothing of the apsidal form which predominates throughout in the Maltese Megalithic monuments and constitutes their characteristic features; whilst the attempt at decoration by symbolical ornaments, and the internal arrange-

ment consisting of numerous recondite recesses and niches, proving their destination as places of worship, offer a great contrast with what is to be seen in the building now unearthed by the presence of door-ways, steps, grinding-mills, troughs, sinks, &c., as will be hereafter detailed, showing the character of a private building. It is, in fact, nothing more than a large farm-house, or country-residence, containing in the basement floor hitherto discovered what is necessary for carrying on, and on a comparatively large scale, some of the most important agricultural operations.

From what has been as yet laid bare, it is rather difficult to make out to some certainty what portion of the original building has been discovered, the more so that many of the remains of the walls have, unhappily, been demolished or otherwise disturbed, owing to the excavations having been carried on without a proper supervision or direction. It is, however, most probable that the portion now laid bare is an angle of the sides or wings which, most likely, might have surrounded a court-yard overlying the two tanks mentioned above, and affording an easy means of communication on the inside of the building between the several parts of the premises at the basement-floor. In this case, the entrance from the court-yard to this part of the building would be from door marked J, on plan, and the two doorways K, K, would have led to some part of the premises situate at a higher level, as it is to be inferred from the few steps still remaining, whilst door L, afforded access to other rooms in the basement floor. This door has near its jamb a groove M, intended to receive the edge of a round stone-slab, a fragment N, of which is still *in situ*, which would seal up that door like slab H, in doorway O. Although it is rather difficult to guess the destination of each of the rooms and recesses shown in the drawing, still I would say that areas P, P, P, were intended as stables or sheep-pens, and Q, Q, as places where the olives were stored to ferment before being crushed and pressed as it will be described presently.

The actual position of the grinding mills, troughs, &c., which are still *in situ*, clearly explains, in my opinion, the several stages of the process in carrying on the operation of expressing oil, and for which those mills, &c., were intended. I consider it, in fact, most probable that the fruit, after having been split and crushed in the hard-stone mill B, was removed to the other mill C, whence the oil was made to percolate through the cutting R, still existing in the floor of the said mill C, into the troughs D, D, D, partly filled with water for the purpose of purifying the liquid let into them. The oil so expressed was finally carried and poured into a sort of receptacle S, whence it was, through the channel T, made to run into the vat G, purposely rendered with a compos made of lime and "diffun," that is to say ground pottery, and there stored. That water was used for the purpose now mentioned is, I think, clearly evinced from the presence, in close proximity to the troughs D, D, D, of the sink F, into which all polluted water from the troughs could be easily drained off. This primitive process would bear a great resemblance to that still followed in many parts of Barbary.

The process of expressing oil just described is further illustrated by Drawing No. 2, which shows the plan and section of the hard-stone crushing mill B. It is made of a basin *a*, 4 ft. 2 in. diameter, and 2 ft. 8 in. high, in the form of a segment of a sphere. It is provided with two edge-runners *b*, *b*, 2 ft. 9 in. diameter, which have also the form of a segment of a sphere so as to fit to the cavity of the basin. The two edge-runners are provided each with a hole in the centre, apparently for the insertion of an horizontal axle *c*, *c*, as shown in the drawing. From the centre of the basin rises a cylindrical pillar *d* supporting a *pivot*, on which revolved the horizontal axle now mentioned, let through the edge-runners and working like a capstan-bar, thereby setting in a rotatory motion the two edge-runners. This mill is perfectly similar to the two discovered in 1879 amongst the remains of the Roman Villa at "San Paul Milkghi," at "Ben-uarrat."

The storing capacity, say 6,200 gls., of the oil-vat mentioned above being, in my opinion, too large for the quantity of oil which could possibly be obtained from a single mill, I am inclined to believe that other mills existed in proximity to that vat, which have been either destroyed or removed elsewhere.

Further excavations would, I think, lead to the discovery of the remaining vestiges of the building; and this opinion is confirmed by the farmers of that locality who speak of stone pavements and other works in masonry as still lying buried in the adjoining lands.

Although nothing remarkable, in so far as art is concerned, has been recovered from the excavations, still these remains are of a great interest on account of the additional evidence they afford to the flourishing state of agriculture in these islands, even in remote epochs, and to the existence of large plantations of Olive trees at that time: an evidence which is further corroborated by the designation of the village "Zebbug," *i.e.* of Olive trees, and of that of the other village "Zeitun," which means Yielding Oil. This discovery confirms, moreover, what has been stated on former occasions, that the eastern part of the island of Malta was in former days and at a remote period most inhabited and studded with large centres of habitation of which nothing now remain but their relics and former nomenclature.

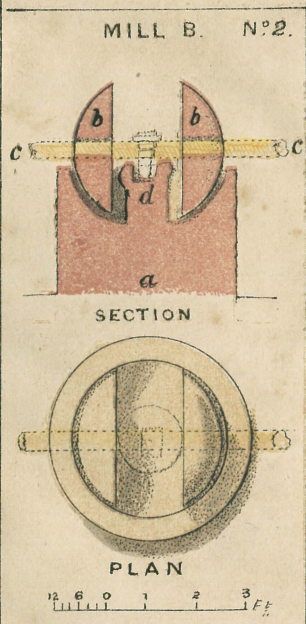
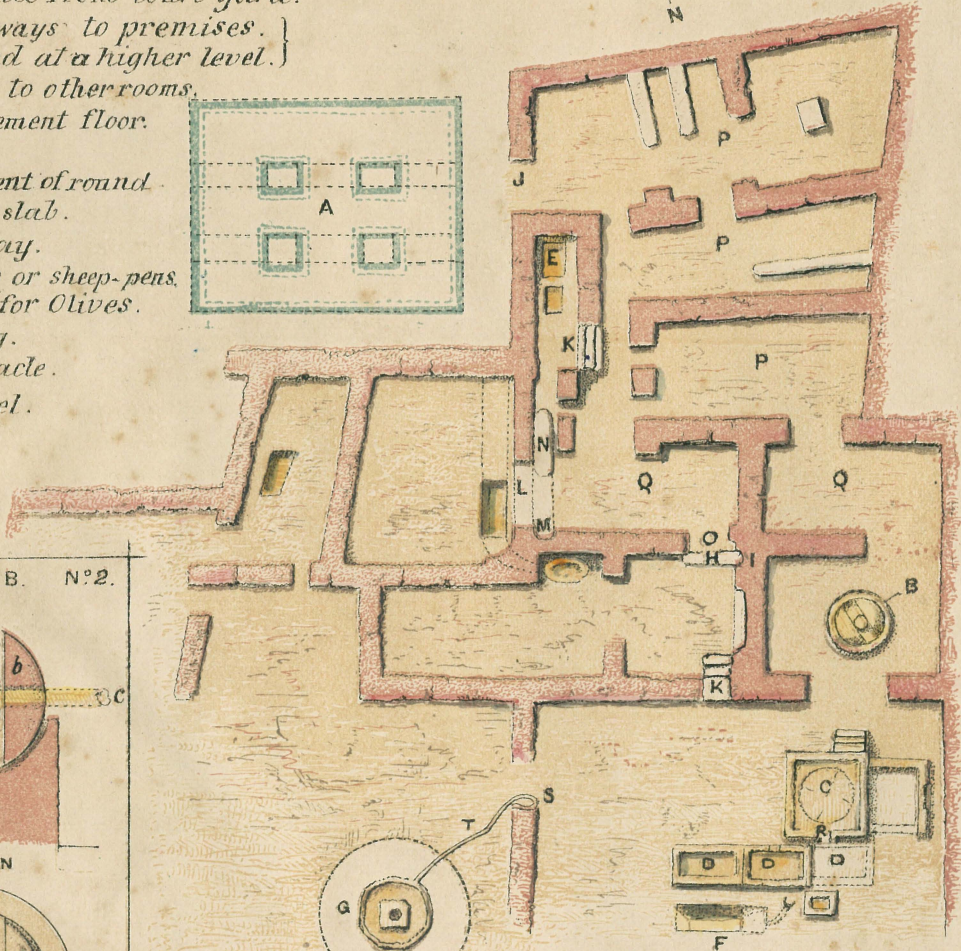
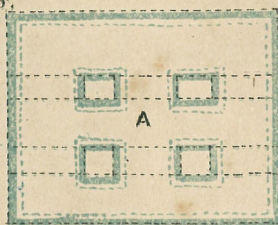
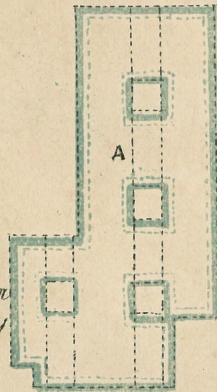
A. A. CARUANA,
Director of Education.

— P L A N —

OF AN ANCIENT BUILDING DISCOVERED IN FEBRUARY 1888 IN THE
FIELD "NADUR" FORMERLY CALLED "FEIDES. IZ-ZGHIR", MIDWAY
BETWEEN THE VILLAGES "LUCA" AND "MICABIBA,"- MALTA.

— REFERENCES —

- A.A. Tanks.
- B. } Mills.
- C. }
- D.D.D. Troughs.
- E. } Sinks.
- F. }
- G. Oil vat
- H. Round stone slab 8 Ft. diam.
found sealing up doorway
and let into groove 1
Groove.
- I. Groove.
- J. Entrance from court-yard.
- K.K. Door-ways to premises. }
situated at a higher level. }
- L. Access to other rooms.
in basement floor.
- M. Groove.
- N. Fragment of round
stone-slab.
- O. Doorway.
- PPP. Stables or sheep-pens.
- Q.Q. Stores for Olives.
- R. Cutting.
- S. Receptacle.
- T. Channel.



PUBLIC LIBRARY-VALLETTA.
21ST APRIL 1888.

L. G. Farrugia
Director of Education.