

NOTES AND NEWS

The past year has been one of considerable activity on the part of the Department. It is satisfactory to be able to record that all budget cuts have now been restored, and staff has even been increased, so that it will now be possible to maintain better control over ancient sites and to provide better conditions for visitors to the chief show places. A new Antiquities Law, embracing features of the old laws of both Palestine and Jordan, has come into force, together with an Antiquities Order covering special sections of the law. Among other improvements is the reduction of visiting fees, which are now 400 fils (8s.) for Petra, and 50 fils (1s.) for each other site.

A major operation was the survey of the Jordan valley carried out in connection with the Yarmuk dam scheme, with funds provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. This was done by Mr. James Mellaart and Count Henri de Contenson, assisted by Hassan Awad and Nasri Nasir. Field work was completed in three months, during which time 76 sites were examined, many of them for the first time: they ranged in period from Neolithic to Medieval Arab. Perhaps the most important discovery was Tell Shuneh, lying under the modern village of Shunet Mushawah, where a sounding revealed five layers of occupation from Chalcolithic to Early Bronze III, the latest strata containing large quantities of Kh. Kerak ware. Other important early sites in which soundings were made are Tell Um Hamad el Sharqi, Tell Abu Habil, Jiftlik, Tell el Mefjer and Ghrubba. The results from the last-named are published in the present volume, and it is hoped to continue publication of the others in subsequent numbers.

Other works were undertaken with a grant from Point 4 Economic Development (Tourist) Section. These were: enclosing Tell el Sultan at Jericho with a wire fence; clearing and enclosing the Roman Theatre in Amman; completing the restoration of the mosaics in the Church of SS. Cosmos and Damianos at Jerash; clearing the remaining stretch of the cardo between the Forum and South Tetrapylon; and beginning on the restoration of the stage of the South Theatre, also at Jerash. The mosaic work was carried out by Herr Gauer after completion of his work for the Palestine Archaeological Museum at the Palace of Hisham, Jericho, and the other works at Jerash were under the direction of Miss Diana Kirkbride, with Mr. Theo. Canaan as architect, and assisted by Hasan Awad. Nearly a third of the scaena was finished, and work will be continued in this year (1954) on the Department's budget.

The Department again collaborated with the École Biblique et Archéologique Française and the Palestine Archaeological Museum in a third season's work at Kh. Qumran, of which a brief report appears on p. 75. The amount of material from Qumran Cave IV, referred to in the previous *Annual*, has turned out to be very much greater than was at first anticipated, and as the Government felt itself unable to contribute further large sums for the acquisition of it, they agreed that foreign institutes might, through the Director of Antiquities, acquire material, on condition that it remained in the country until study and translation had been completed, which period is reckoned at not less than two years. Contributions have so far been received from McGill University, Montreal, Manchester University and the Vatican Library. It is believed there is still more material to come, but the quantity is as yet unknown.

The Palestine Archaeological Museum, through the generosity of Mr. J. D. Rockefeller, Jnr., has again been active at Kh. Mefjer (Hisham's Palace) at Jericho. A German mosaic expert, Herr Gauer, and his wife spent five months on repairs to the great floor of the baths, and in the process trained a group of young men from Jericho in the technique, so that they were subsequently able to continue minor repairs on their own with only occasional supervision from the Curator. One of the young men, Ahmad Hamzeh, was in charge of this latter work. In the Museum itself further work was done on the carved stucco from the Palace, and arches, domes, panels and figures have been restored with great skill by the formatore, Mubarak Saad. Mr. G. U. S. Corbett worked on architectural features and reconstructions for some months, and Mr. R. W. Hamilton has kindly undertaken to prepare all the material for publication. Mr. Oleg Graber will contribute a section on the frescoes.

With the help of another generous gift from Mr. Rockefeller, a group of scholars are working on the manuscript fragments in the Palestine Archaeological Museum, their activities being controlled and co-ordinated by R. P. R. de Vaux, O.P., and Abbé Milik. Dr. Frank Cross of the American School of Oriental Research and Mr. John Allegro of Manchester University spent a year on the work, and they will be succeeded by Father Skehan and Mr. Strugnell. It is much to be regretted that owing to serious illness Père Barthélemy, one of the first to take up this work, has been unable to continue.

The first volume of the Qumran texts, consisting of all the material recovered from Cave I, is being published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, with the help of a grant from the Palestine Archaeological Museum. Subsequent volumes in the series, to be called *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*, will cover the material, both textual and archaeological, from Murabaat, Kh. Mird and Qumran.

In addition to the work on the Jerash Theatre referred to above, the Department this year (1954) will carry out the following work:

Petra: Three years ago heavy rains caused the collapse of a stretch of retaining wall on the south side of the torrent bed within the city area, and subsequent floods have started to eat their way behind the wall, endangering among other things the triumphal arch. This wall must be restored and strengthened for a considerable distance to prevent erosion.

Palace of Hisham: Final touches to the mosaic floor of the baths and a general cleaning up of the site, which has not been touched since the end of the Mandate, will be carried out during the winter.

Kh. Qumran: The difficult problem of preserving the existing remains of the settlement must now be tackled, its walls (all of rubble only) must be reinforced to prevent rain getting in and causing collapse, and some means found of preserving the plaster facing of walls and cisterns. The Department will also collaborate in a fourth season of excavation on the site.