

Cleaning and Restoration work in "Arches Building", Lod – Preliminary Report

Background:

The "Arches Building" is the name of an Ottoman period olive-press facility located in Lod's Old City (190,816/651,168). The building was active from around the late 18th century A.D. until just before the 1948 Israeli Independence War.

The building is in fair structural condition, albeit suffers from severe neglect. The interior was covered with a layer of deposits and waste, 0.5 to 2 meters above the original floor level. The debris was composed of a construction waste, household garbage, car and machine wreckage, vegetation and remains of squatters and drug addicts. The waste accumulated in the past decades of neglect and use by squatters.

The cleaning work:

The cleaning and preservation work began with the initiative of the "Israeli Institute of Archaeology" and its archaeological restoration-oriented sub-division, "Yesodot". The goal of the project is to restore the ancient city-centre and to create a tourist attraction, while involving the local community, as volunteers, in the archaeological and restoration works.

The first immediate action in the "Arches Building" was a small-scale, yet crucial, preservation task which included sealing gaps in the roof, and filling cavities which formed in one of the arch-columns supporting the structure. This was a measure that had to be taken before introducing other workers and volunteers into the building. (see pictures below)

Next, a group of hired workers removed the main bulk of "dangerous" waste from the interior: rusted metal, syringes, asbestos etc. In addition, the workers removed much of the vegetation and garbage that piled against the outside walls of the building. A "sitting-area", for instructions and conversations, was formed using carved building stones, of one of the collapses, and also the stairs to the roof were blocked, in order to prevent the visitors and volunteers from climbing to the still dangerous roof. Only with the completion of these steps the structure was ready to receive children and adults for volunteer work.



NE entry with plaster floor

After several attempts to schedule groups from different schools and social youth organizations in the municipality of Lod, the call was answered by the organization of the Jewish-religious community in the city, as groups from its "touring-course" and its "pre-military seminar" joined the work efforts. Prior to the work itself, each group receives a guided tour in the old city, including Khan el-Hilu, St. George church, Al-'Omri mosque, and finally – the Arches Building itself, with an explanation of old Lod's rich

olive-oil (and its sub-products) manufacturing traditions.

יסודות – שימור ושיחזור היסטורי וארכיאולוגי

The tour is followed by several hours of intensive work in an attempt to clear more waste and deposits, but also to reveal several nonstructural aspects, such as the original floor level, and the first courses of the building near windows and entryways. The results of this work will enhance and improve the efficiency of the proper archaeological dig and the reconstruction, once they are commenced.

To summarize the work day, the group will reassemble at the sitting area, and will be guided in a conversation about the importance of such community involvement, and also about any archaeological or historical question that might have come up following the work.

The results of the project so far:

- Approx. 10 tons of waste, garbage and dirt were removed from the interior, and was later carried away to a landfill by the municipality.
- Sealing a large hole in the ceiling as a result of collapse.
- Repair of one of the support columns, to prevent further deterioration
- Collapsed construction stones, worked and un-worked, were piled separated to size groups in order to assist future reconstruction and preservation efforts.
- The creation of a sitting-area for instruction or guiding.
- Exposing the first stone-course of the north-eastern entrance and a plastered entryway adjacent to it.
- Exposing a pebbled installation (?) - floor in the Eastern part of the building.
- Involving three groups of volunteers in a communal project, and instructing them both in the history of the city of Lod, and in the basics of archaeology.

2 of the 3 sorted stone piles



Debris in back of the hall



יסודות – שימור ושיחזור היסטורי וארכיאולוגי

	Before	After
The hole in the roof		
The column		

יסודות – שימור ושיחזור היסטורי וארכיאולוגי