



PRESS RELEASE

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Archaeological Find at the Gibraltar Garrison Library

The original floor of the west facing side of the basement at the Garrison Library has been uncovered during the major restoration project taking place at the Library. The floor had been covered by a top layer of concrete, most likely laid during the mid-twentieth century as a means to render the floor level. The floor, of terracotta blocks and limestone flagstones for support, only became visible after a small channel was opened along the concrete to carry electrical cabling from one end of the basement to the other; an exercise that became necessary to avoid the trunking of electrical cables on the stone and brick walls of a vaulted chamber. The aim throughout has been to preserve and conserve the Library's historical and architectural heritage, with measures in place to reflect this initiative.

Much of the floor has now been carefully uncovered with a full conservation of the floor to be carried with advice from Dominic Lopez, the Ministry for Heritage archaeologist, and Manolo Jaen, conservator at the Gibraltar National Museum. The suggestion at present is that the recovered terracotta and limestone floor dates from c. 1800 – 1804, the period which saw the erection of the Garrison Library, but further research will be carried out given that the plot on which the Library sits may have been the site for an earlier building. Although full details are unknown at present, research in this area may uncover a previous occupancy and a fuller understanding of the site.

Minister for Heritage, the Hon Prof John Cortes, said: "The discovery of the original floor at the Garrison Library basement is a good example of how heritage considerations can function alongside construction works currently underway at the Library. The floor will of course be conserved and protected, but importantly, it shall form part of a functional space that is both respectful of the past and of 21st century institutional requirements. Upon completion the basement will provide greater access to the Library's collections whilst also creating provision for their safeguarding".