

Narrative accompanying the preview of the video documentary “A Timeline of Limassol’s Urban Development”

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“Limassol is a miserable town consisting of 150 mud houses of which 100 are Greek and 50 Turks.”

Since the beginning of the 19th century Limassol’s development has been quite extraordinary. In 1825, 90 taxpayers were recorded.

“The masts of some vessels in the harbour, and the minarets of the mosque, pointed out the site of Limassol. After we passed two hills descending upon the beach, we came upon a large mass of wall projecting into the sea on the ledge of rock, which is called “Old Limassol”... The number of inhabitants in Limassol is not less than 1000 of whom about two thirds are Greek and one third Turks... the Greeks occupy the lower, the Turks the upper part of the town. On this upper part is a pretty mosque, with a tall minaret, standing beside a river, now dry, which is crossed by an old Venetian bridge of two pointed arches. Several enclosed gardens border the channel of the river... Below the mosque is an oblong compact looking castle of hewn stone... There is another castle or fort of similar dimensions on the beach of the marina, or lower part of the town, and near to this is the house of the Commandante della Piazza. It must be the lower castle which is alluded to in the sailing book, where it says that Limassol may be known by the old castle that stands on the shore... In the lower part of the marina bordering the sea, are many wine-magazines, and the casks and wine skins in the street, show some signs of the nature of the trade carried on here.”

The first map of Limassol dates back in 1849. A small town described by travellers, with a river bed, mosques, cathedral and a fort, around of which the historical town centre is clearly recognisable. Especially important was the street of Agiou Andreou, parallel to the shoreline and leading into the street of Angyras, which was the main commercial street during the Ottoman times. The southern part of Anexartisias street, the main modern commercial street, can also be seen in this map.

During the second half of the 19th century, Limassol began to grow and expand substantially. This was reflected in the construction of the Greek cemetery of Agios Nikolaos, placed to the east of the road leading to the village of Germasogeia. A Muslim cemetery was also constructed at the western edge of the city, at the intersection between the roads leading to Paphos and to Zakaki. These larger peripheral land uses were followed by the construction of the Commissioner’s house in 1875 in the east of the city, and then the Commissioner’s depot in the north on the road to Polemidia. By the end of the Ottoman period the geographical divisions related to ethnicity and social class had become quite apparent.

“Though towns were roughly divided into Turkish and Greek sectors, by the end of Ottoman rule social distinctions were also beginning to be accentuated by geographical concentration into quarters. This

evolution was more obvious in the coastal towns of Larnaca and Limassol, the commercial and consular centres of the island. In Limassol, a poorer area was expanding around the medieval castle and the port, besides the upper-class quarter of two-storey houses known as Maratheftoghitonia, by the church of Katholiki."

In 1880, the wife of the District Commissioner of Kyrenia made mention of Limassol's infrastructure as well as the ethnic divisions within the city.

"The town is built of mud and stone, mostly the former. At the first glance, it seems more a big village than an important city. The streets are wide and tolerably clean but the population, after Larnaca and Nicosia, seemed very limited and the streets and shops looked bare and empty. The Turkish part is separated from the Christian by the dry bed of a river, a rather unusual distinction in Cypriot towns."

In 1881, the new pier was inaugurated along with the customs house. During the 1880s, Limassol started developing its industries. The economy benefited from the stationing of British troops in the district, and consequently various establishments and retail facilities appeared.

"Along the Marina I passed a number of stores, each well-stocked with goods quite foreign to Cyprus, and also many well-arranged cafes and restaurants."

At this time, the streets of Ellados and Anexartisias became important routes in and out of the city. Limassol's development met an increase of demand following social and historical changes. It is worth noting that like many other port cities where troops have been stationed, Limassol became known as the centre of the sex industry.

"In 1883 Alex Gordon, Chief Commandant of Military Police, noted that the town needed nearly as many policemen though having less than half of Nicosia's population. Upon the Chief Secretary's comment on this apparent disparity Gordon replied that in Limassol the number of wine shops, cafes and brothels was far larger in proportion to those in Nicosia and Larnaca."

In 1891, the decision to construct a newer, larger cathedral was made. Plans were also made for a new marketplace to the east of the church of Katholiki. During this time houses were built along the coastline, forming a wall along the sea and looking inwards towards the road and the rest of the city. Only a small number of openings between the densely built houses revealed the Mediterranean Sea.

Although a lot of infrastructure was built during the early days of British administration, the city was still developing slowly did not. By 1903 Limassol was...

"...quite a small town of about 8000 population. Its streets narrow and zigzagging, only allowing but one cart to pass at a time."

End of Preview