

Sea gives up secrets to experts

With shafts of sunlight shimmering through a few metres of crystal clear water, you can pick out the cornerstones of an ancient civilisation which inspired literature and legend.



Experts recovered a number of artefacts from the site

There is more than a whiff of Atlantis about the story of Pavlopetri - the world's oldest submerged town.

But the Bronze Age site, off the coast of Laconia in Greece, has its roots in fact not fiction.

New underwater archaeology techniques - with sonar mapping used by the military and off-shore oil industry - are giving up new secrets.

An international team, given special permission to dive by the Greek government, has found artefacts on the sea bed dating back 5,000 years.

This fresh information puts the world's oldest submerged town well over a millennium older than previously thought.

Dr Jon Henderson led a team from the University of Nottingham and said the expedition surpassed all expectations. "This site is unique in

that we have almost the complete town plan, the main streets and domestic buildings, courtyards, rock-cut tombs and what appear to be religious buildings, clearly visible on the seabed.

"Equally as a harbour settlement, the study of the archaeological material we have recovered will be extremely important in terms of revealing how maritime trade was conducted and managed in the Bronze Age."

One of the most important discoveries has been what is believed to be a large rectangular great hall, known as a "Megaron", from the early Bronze Age period.

'Rare find'

They have also found more than 9,000sq m of new buildings, including a pillar crypt, which could be the first example ever discovered on the Greek mainland.

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture's Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities is overseeing the work.

Official Elias Spondylis said: "It is a rare find and it is significant because, as a submerged site, it was never re-occupied and therefore represents a frozen moment of the past."

The team had a warm reception from local people, who were excited about the project

and sense an important part of Greek history and culture would soon be returned to them.

The Mayor of Neopolis, Pavlopetri's nearest neighbour, Jannis Kousoulis, has become one the dive team's most enthusiastic supporters. He hoped the new work will raise the whole region's profile as a place for culture and tourism.

Archaeological co-ordinator for the Pavlopetri project is Dr Chrysanthi Gallou, a post-doctoral research fellow at The University of Nottingham and an expert in Aegean Prehistory.

Dr Gallou said: "The new ceramic finds form a complete and exceptional corpus of pottery covering all sub-phases from the Final Neolithic period (mid 4th millennium BC) to the end of the Late Bronze Age (1100 BC).

"In addition, the interest from the local community in Laconia has been fantastic.

"The investigation at Pavlopetri offers a great opportunity for them to be actively involved in the preservation and management of the site, and subsequently for the

cultural and touristic development of the wider region."

The team has also been joined by Dr Nicholas Flemming, a marine geo-archaeologist from the Institute of Oceanography at the University of Southampton.

He discovered the site in 1967 and returned the following year with a team from Cambridge University to carry out the first ever survey of the submerged town.

Using just snorkels and tape measures they produced a detailed plan of the prehistoric town which consisted of at least 15 separate buildings, courtyards, streets, two chamber tombs and at least 37 graves. Despite the potential international importance of Pavlopetri no further work was carried out at the site until this year.

The Pavlopetri Underwater Archaeology Project 2009 is at the start of a five-year study of the site which aims to define the history and development of Pavlopetri.

Four more fieldwork seasons are planned before their research is published in full in 2014.

Greek Diaspora Events and News



» Greek Australian **Ana Kokkinos** recently won the prize for best screenplay at the San Sebastian Film Festival, with her new film, *Blessed*.

» Greek American **Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis** has been nominated by the White House to be Ambassador to Hungary for the United States. Tsakopoulos - Kounalakis is a very active member of the Greek American community.

» Greek-speaking education in Latin America focused of a conference that took place in Montevideo, Uruguay on Oct. 16-18. The event, hosted by the Buenos Aires-based Education Coordinator in Latin America, allowed the drawing up of common policy for the promotion and dissemination of the Greek language and culture in the region. The conference was sponsored by the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) Latin America Region and the "Maria Tsakos" Foundation. Invited to address the proceedings were distinguished Greek scholars from universities and research centers in Latin America.



Domaine Skouras Winery awarded "Winery of 2009" from Wine and Spirits magazine

A Greek winery, Skouras, has been named the best winery of the year as according to Wine and Spirits magazine. This marks how far Greek winemaking has come in the past couple decades, an industry long dominated by Western Europeans and Americans.

Domaine Skouras was established in 1986 just outside Argos by oenologist George Skouras and was followed by the launch of the Megas Oenos label in 1988. He was the first oenologist to blend the Greek grape Agiorgitiko (Saint George) with a Cabernet Sauvignon - creating great results.

The Domaine grew in 1996 with an additional winery at Ghymno, a part of the Nemea area; and the Domaine began operations out of its new facilities in Malandreni in 2004. Only about an hour and half

drive from Athens, the Domaine is very accessible for visitors.

Domaine Skouras is at the forefront of Greek estates, full of momentum and with a sharp focus on its future. Demand for its terroir-driven and estate-bottled wines is consistent both at home and around the world. For what makes these wines so popular is the fact that Skouras does not compromise quality or craftsmanship. In fact, there is always something better, something more, with



each and every vintage, for each and every product.

The Vineyards

The Peloponnese -rich in ancient ruins from its glorious past- has been cultivated with vineyards for many a century. The north-east -home to Mycenae and Epidaurus- is blessed vineyard territory. Indigenous grape varieties in Nemea, Argolida, Arcadia and Mantinia include Roditis and Moscofilero (white varieties) and Saint George (aka Aghiorghitiko, red variety). Cosmopolitan varieties -Chardonnay, Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot- are also cultivated and display strong terroir.

Domaine Skouras sources grapes from its own vineyards and from dedicated grape-growers in the region.