

Exhibition on Antikythera mechanism in Athens

An exhibition entitled "The mechanism of Antikythera - A tour of astronomy and ancient technology", referring to one of the most important technological objects of the ancient world, is on display at the National Research Institution in Athens in the framework of European research program "Hephaestus" (Hellenic Philosophy, History and Environmental Science Teaching Under Scrutiny).



Sometime before Easter 1900, Elias Stadiatis, a Greek sponge diver, discovered the wreck of an ancient cargo ship off Antikythera Island at a depth of 42 m (138 ft). Sponge divers retrieved several statues and other artifacts from the site. The mechanism itself was discovered on May 17, 1901, when archaeologist Valerios Stais noticed that a piece of rock recovered from the site had a gear wheel embedded in it. Examination revealed that the "rock" was in fact a heavily encrusted and corroded mechanism that had survived the shipwreck in three main parts and dozens of smaller fragments. The device itself was surprisingly thin, about 33 cm (13 in) high, 17 cm (6.7 in) wide, and 9 cm (3.5 in) thick, made of bronze and originally mounted in a wooden frame. It was inscribed with a text of over 2,000 characters, many of which have only just recently been deciphered.

The visitors of the exhibition, which will run until January 25, will learn about the history of the mechanism and prevailing opinions on ancient astronomy and technology which are necessary for the understanding of the function of the mecha-

nism as well as 3D pictures from the interior of the mechanism via the use of modern technology.

The Antikythera mechanism is believed to be an ancient mechanical calculator (also described as a "mechanical computer") designed to calculate astro-

nomical positions. It was discovered in the Antikythera wreck off the Greek island of Antikythera, between Kythera and Crete, and has been dated to about 150-100 BC. Technological artifacts of similar complexity appeared a thousand years later.



Athens' centrepiece Christmas tree replanted at Mt. Pendeli

Athens' large and environmentally-friendly Christmas tree has been dismantled and the 250 small fir trees that formed it will be planted on the Pendeli mountain range on Sunday to help revive the wildfire-ravaged site, according to a press release by the municipality. "This year, Athens' Christmas tree was not only unique to Greece but to the whole of Europe. It was composed of 250 natural, small fir trees, which were not cut but removed with their roots intact and placed in pots. They were pieced together to form one beautiful Christmas tree, which both Athenians and city visitors admired during the holiday season," Athens Mayor Nikitas Kakkalmanis said while viewing the proceedings at Syntagma Square. He also noted that the city is Athens demonstrates its environmental consciousness with action, "instead of words and shouts." The municipality is participating in the tree-planting organised by the Pendeliko Protection and Regeneration Association (SPAP) with the support of the Athens-based Skai media group.

\$18.4 MILLION FOR Bankstown first home buyers IN 2009

Local MP Tony Stewart welcomed news that more than 700 families in Bankstown have benefited from \$18.4 million in first home buyer grants - making Bankstown one of the top ten suburbs in NSW to receive first home buyer grants.

"The record support for first home owners is helping local families achieve the dream of homeownership," Mr Stewart said.

"Our community is a fantastic place to live, and I congratulate the 710 families who have settled in our area.

"Official figures from the NSW Office of State Revenue released today show first home buyer grants worth \$18,438,294 were paid to 710 families in 2009," Mr Stewart said.

"This is a vote of confidence by families

wanting a good place to live.

"As one of the top ten suburbs in NSW to attract first home buyers, we can see that our area is attracting families who are looking for opportunities and a supportive community," Mr Stewart said.

More than 70,000 families in NSW received first home buyer grants in last year - making it the first year the grants passed the \$1

billion mark.

This includes both included both State (\$515 million) and Commonwealth (\$519 million)

support.

Western Sydney was the most popular region for NSW first home buyers, accounting for seven of the top 10 suburbs where grants were received.

"Since the first home buyer grants in July 2000, more than 440,000 first home buyers have received first home benefits worth more than \$6.6 billion.

"Last week The NSW Government extended the Housing Construction Acceleration Plan (HCAP - its 50 per cent stamp duty cut for newly-constructed dwellings worth up to \$600,000.

"The extension of this targeted stimulus will help support jobs in our local housing construction sector.

"HCAP has already generated more than \$850 million in construction activity in NSW by putting \$14.8 million worth of stamp duty back into people's pockets

For more information on home buyer benefits visit www.homebuyer.nsw.gov.au



CES: Robot floor cleaner Mint gets those tight spots

Evolution Robotics is introducing an automatic floor cleaner for hard surfaces that can get those tricky spots like corners, edges, and places under furniture.



The Mint robot mop and duster being introduced at the Consumer

Electronics Show uses disposable or reusable cleaning cloths to get the job done. You put a Swiffer or Pledge cloth on the bottom, push a button, and off it goes. The dry cloths trap dirt and dust. When set to mop mode and given a wet cloth, Mint does a back-and-forth movement to scrub floors.

The sexy, compact machine uses Evolution Robotics' NorthStar navigation technology. A small, separate projector unit beams infrared light spots on the ceiling that the robot detects. Instead of pursuing a random pattern, Mint tracks where it has cleaned already. Evolution Robotics CEO Paolo Pirjanian says Mint can clean a floor three to five times faster than a robot following a random pattern.

He adds that because it spends less time cleaning, Mint will have a longer service life before wear and tear cause problems.

Mint is slated to ship in fall 2010 with a retail price of less than \$250. That's less than the cheapest iRobot Scooba, the Scooba 330.