CONNECTING WITH THE PAST:





A Tale of Heritage, Culture & Adventure

After the wave of migration over the last sixty years, hundreds of thousands of second and third generation Greek-Australians have been born. Unlike a lot of their parents - many of whom entered Australia as poor migrants, later generations of Australian-born Greeks have been afforded the luxury of higher education and broad career prospects.

ow that there's a level of economic and educational comfort, what's next for second, third and future-generations of Greek-Australians? In a growing number of cases, a thirst for knowledge and pioneering spirit on a different, more intellectual level. That's why learning about history is starting to grow in appeal.

Having been transplanted a great distance geographically, and with the voices of grandparents starting to fade, what can a visit to Greece really mean for Australian-born Greeks? Surely more than ouzo, mezes, nice beaches and monument tours?

In the case of the Greek island of Kythera, something new took place in July this year. A project that helped stimulate a thirst for both knowledge and adventure through community backed archaeological excavations. I their stay organised by mem-Archaeology is far from new

in Greece, but what was new, is the inclusion of the local community and members of the Diaspora in the project, both as sponsors and beneficiaries. Perhaps the term 'Community Backed' Archaeology is most appropriate.

A handful of Greek archaeologists planned to survey a path along the side of a mountain where Kythera's ancient capital (Paleokastro) is currently buried; an arduous task considering how overgrown the area was with dense, inhospitable scrub.

With the help of members of the Kytherian-Australian community, a team of twenty full-time volunteers were assembled to assist archaeologists, with up to fifteen more daily volunteers helping most of the time. The full-time volunteers were primarily Greek archaeology students from Athens, with logistics during bers of the Kytherian-Aus-





tralian community. Funding to feed volunteers over the 18day period was provided from Australia through the generous support of the Nicholas Anthony Aroney Trust and Kytherian Association of Australia.

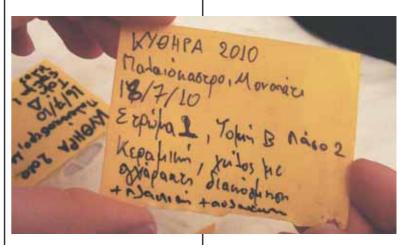
The team stayed in a picturesque 170 year-old, mountaintop monastery - with accommodation provided by the local Bishop and Greek Orthodox church. Kythera's Dimos (council) helped provide bus transport from the monastery to the dig site each day, with local supermarkets, bakeries and other businesses also supporting the team. It was a united, Greek-Australian coordinated effort, with a mix of local Greek volunteers and members of the Diaspora all pitching in to assist archaeolo-

Support involved more than just money but complete help with logistics. For example 50 meals a day were required for full-time volunteers over an 18 day period, totalling approximately 900 meals (excluding breakfast).

Hundreds of members of the public also visited the site on tours, many being Greek-Australian children. So the end result was an active, unifying, adventurous and intellectually stimulating project involving youth, parents and grandparents.

Sections of the mostly for-

called Agios Kosmas at the top of the Paleokastro mountain, built in approximately 1290AD. This church is unique as it was constructed using Doric columns from approximately 600BC, which stood in the area from a temple in the ancient city. Together with Bishop Seraphim, Kythera's Metropoliti, the team organised the first



gotten 2500+ year-old ancient Laconian-controlled capital were found, helping discover enough evidence to write a new chapter of ancient history. The team found walls, columns, coins, thousands of roof tile fragments, ancient ceramics and dozens of other different kinds of artefacts.

It would be hard to find a more interesting and practical community backed project which unified local residents with members of the Diaspora, and deeply involved; youth, culture, history, education, exploration and adventure. Not only did volunteers and visitors learn about ancient Greek history (from the dirt up) but they got to participate in the discovery of it. What a way to connect with the land of your forefathers!

Most of the volunteers who provided physical labour were 18-30 year olds, with older generations being inspired by the on-site tours. An added bonus was the clearing and opening of a path to a church church service held at Agios Kosmas over 100 years.

Youth of today is part of a generation brought up with on-screen heroes such Indiana Jones and Lara Croft, so coupled with the intellectual/cultural stimulation and feeling of adventure associated with archaeology, the project created a melting pot of learning, excitement and intrigue, resulting in something truly special.

A lecture outlining the concept of Community Backed Archaeology, perhaps sparking similar initiatives in other parts of Greece, plus a presentation of what the team discovered while excavating parts of Kythera's ancient Laconian-controlled capital will be held at Sydney University on the evening of Wednesday November 10th.

It's an interesting story, about more than just 2000 year-old artefacts but a way of unifying the community on many levels, engaging youth and providing a connection to

