

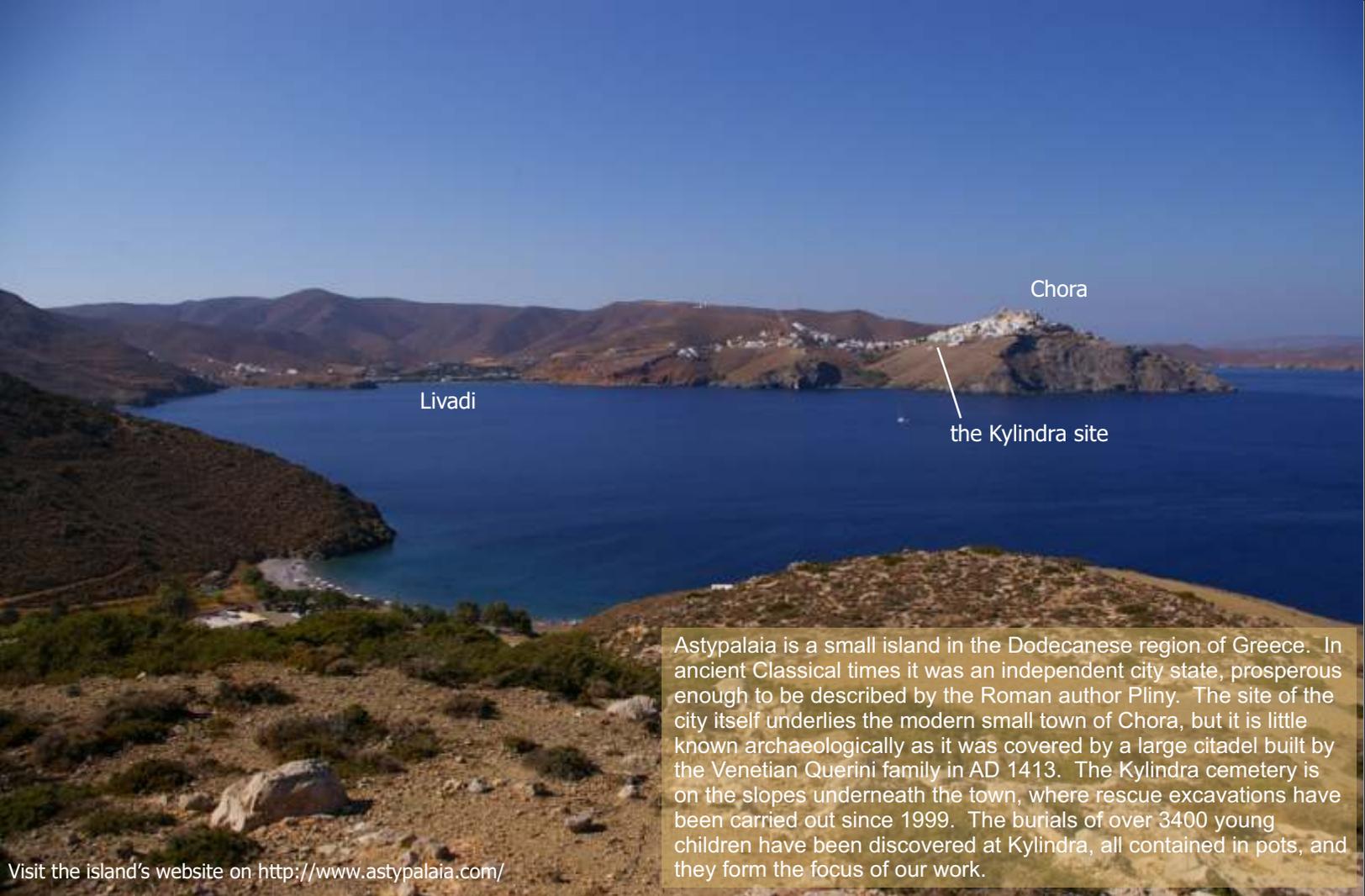


Astypalaia Bioarchaeology Field School

Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/fieldschoolastypalaia/home>

University College London





Livadi

Chora

the Kyllindra site

Astypalaia is a small island in the Dodecanese region of Greece. In ancient Classical times it was an independent city state, prosperous enough to be described by the Roman author Pliny. The site of the city itself underlies the modern small town of Chora, but it is little known archaeologically as it was covered by a large citadel built by the Venetian Querini family in AD 1413. The Kyllindra cemetery is on the slopes underneath the town, where rescue excavations have been carried out since 1999. The burials of over 3400 young children have been discovered at Kyllindra, all contained in pots, and they form the focus of our work.

Visit the island's website on <http://www.astypalaia.com/>

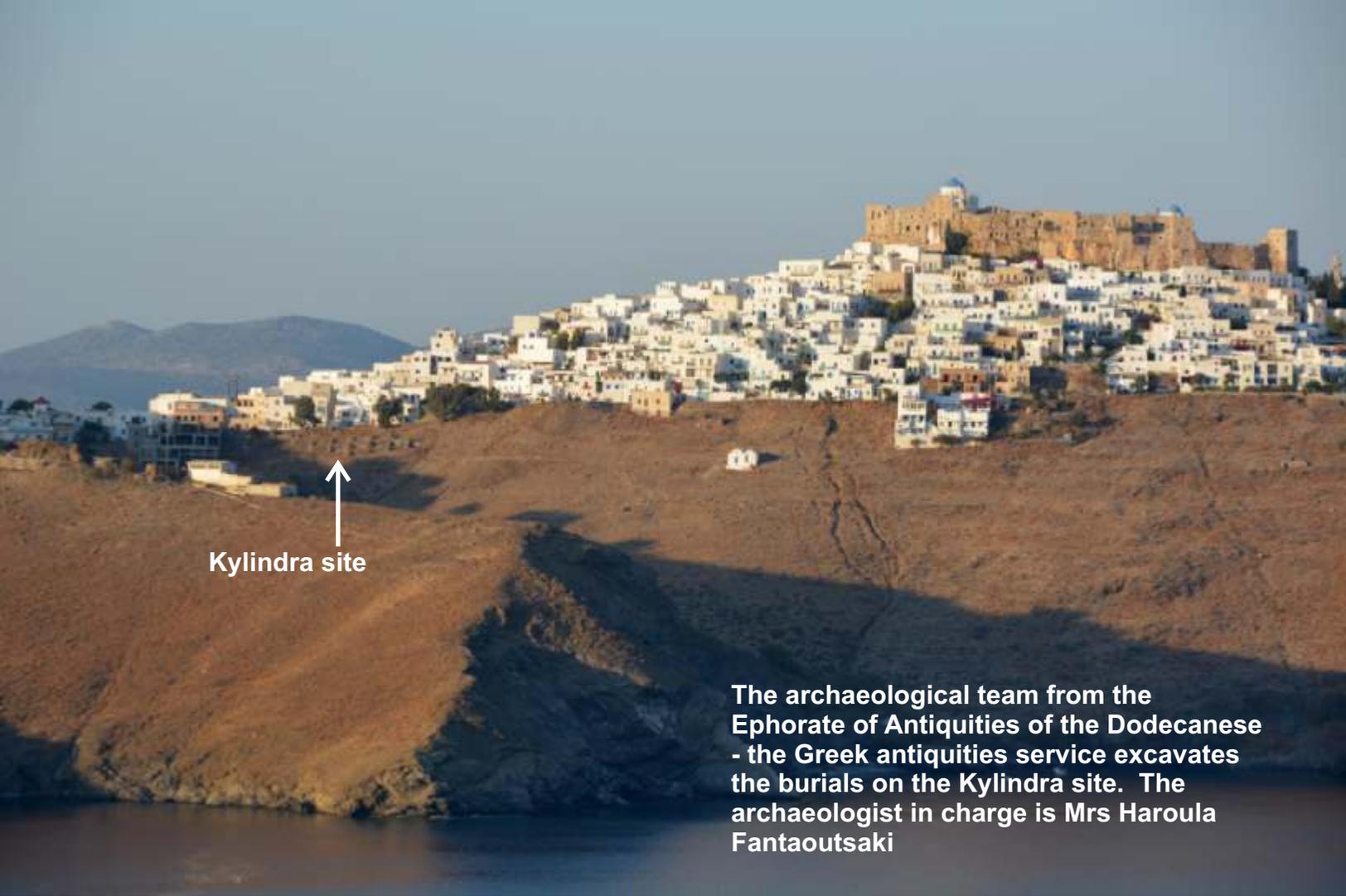


citadel

Chora town

main square

Pera Gialos



Kylindra site

The archaeological team from the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese - the Greek antiquities service excavates the burials on the Kylindra site. The archaeologist in charge is Mrs Haroula Fantaoutsaki



The earliest pots date to perhaps 750 BC and the youngest to Roman times, up to AD 100. This gives the range over which the cemetery was in use, including Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods. The range of pot shapes shows that they came from all over the Aegean.

The burials are carried in their pots to the laboratory, where the UCL bioanthropology team works on the human remains inside, led by Prof. Simon Hillson from the Institute of Archaeology at University College London.



Some of the pots are complete, but many were cracked and broken in the ground long before they were excavated. In the laboratory, we document the pot and the broken pieces of pot are carefully put on one side to expose a ball of soil inside.



Broken pot has been removed to leave the ball of cemented soil

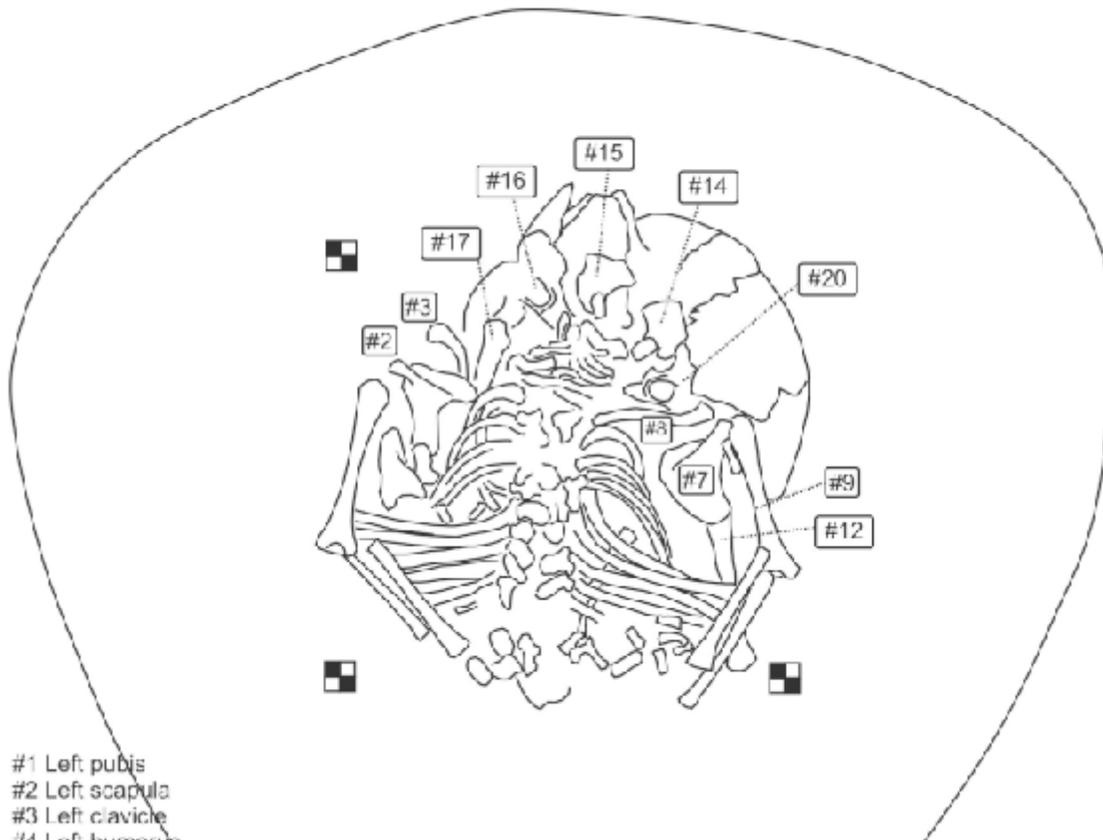
We carry out micro-excavations of the infant skeletons. The soil is hard and we chip it away carefully to expose the bones - we use dental tools rather than trowels. This is difficult material and a significant challenge, but we have many years experience of teaching students how to do the work.



When the bones are exposed, we plan and photograph them. Even though the work is done indoors, you will learn a full range of small scale excavation techniques, planning and recording that can be applied on many different sites.

Νοτιοδυτική Κύλινδρα, Οικόπεδο Φοίβος, AE38
PLAN 1

NECK

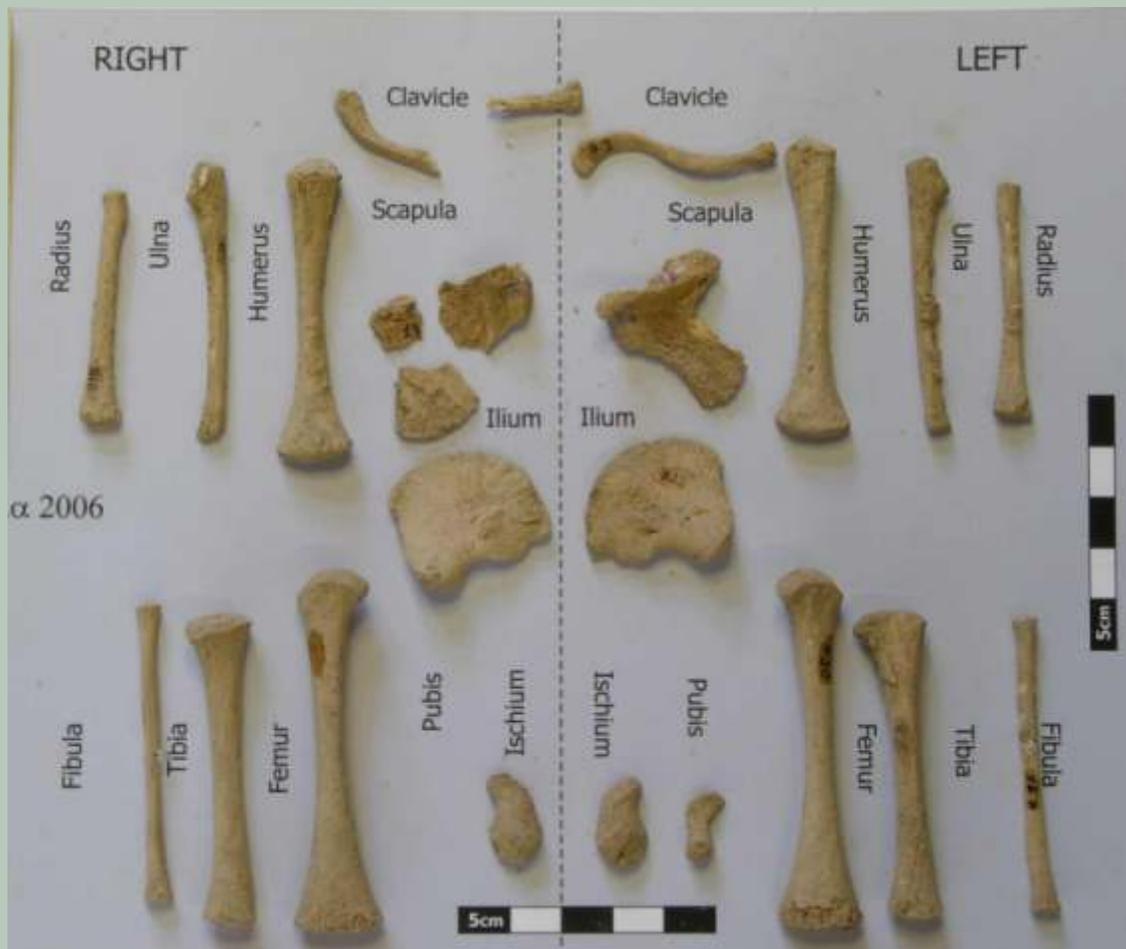


The bones are very small so we draw plans at a large scale. We use a system of targets in the photographs so that we can combine drawing and photograph to make a detailed plan with graphics software on the computer.



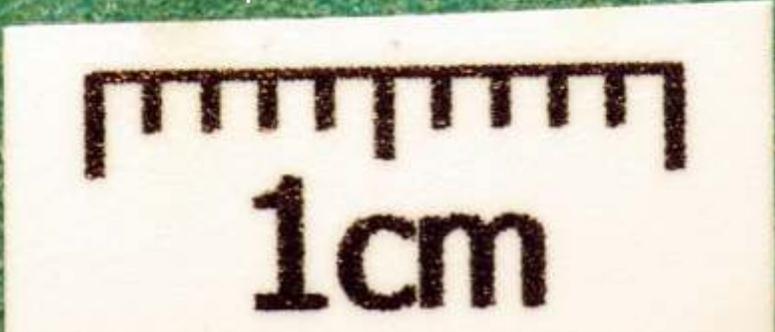
Once out of the soil, we clean the bones and carry out any conservation procedures that are needed. Then we measure and photograph them, and make an inventory before putting them into storage.

We will teach you the detailed anatomy you need to know to identify the different parts of the skeleton. You will learn the conservation techniques you need, together with research methods for studying growth and development. We discuss with students the results of the study. The overall aim of our work is to document growth and development in the skeletons and dentitions buried in this unique large Classical children's cemetery - the largest ancient children's cemetery so far discovered in the world.





how to recognise and side the microscopic middle ear bones

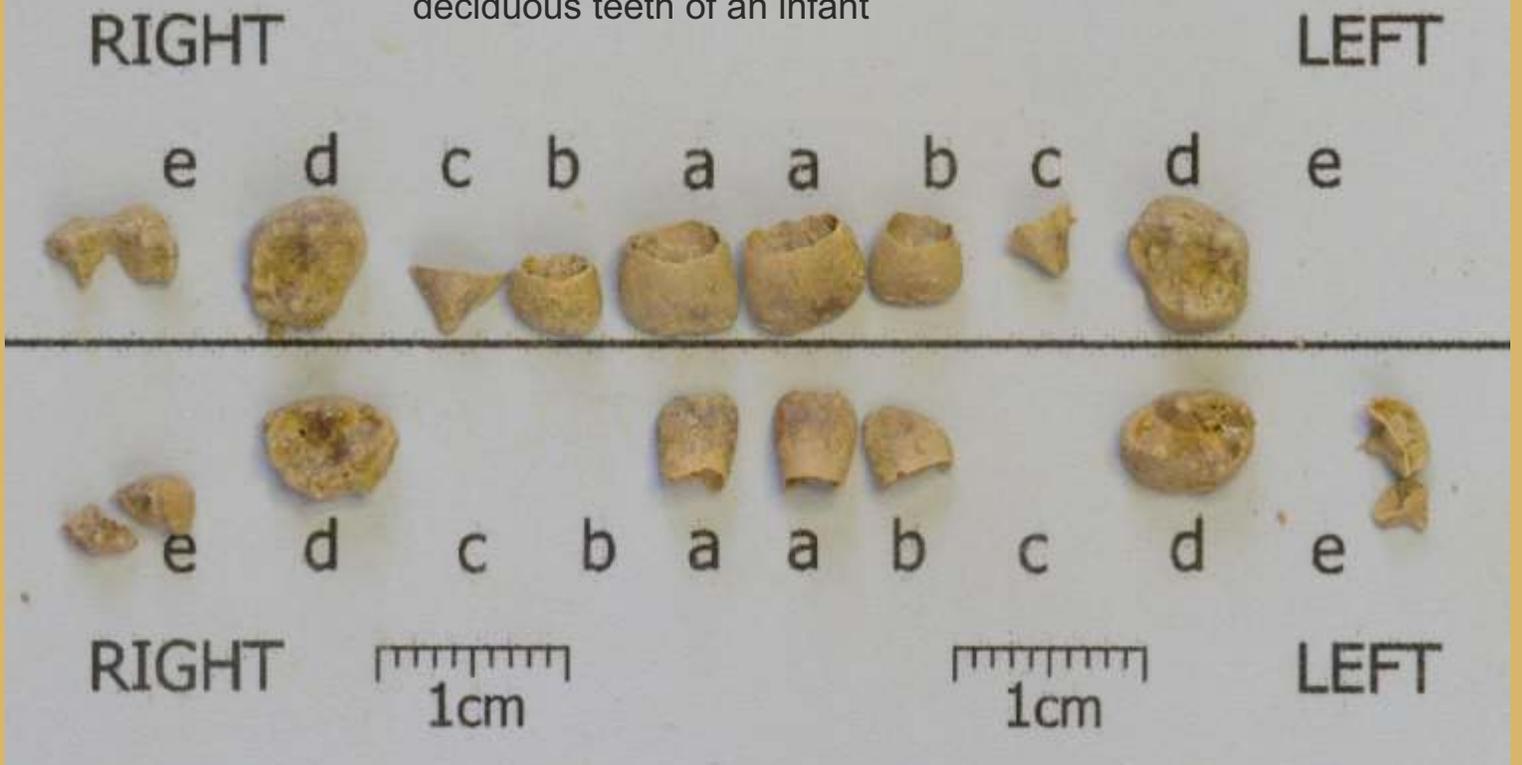


the trick for siding the palatine bone of the skull (this one is from the right side)

Baby bones are different in many ways to the bones of the adult skeleton and you will gain a great deal of experience identifying them, working with them and learning how they change in shape with the sequence of development in a child. The Kylyndra site is one of very few in the world where you can gain this kind of experience.

ΑΣΤΥΠΑΛΑΙΑ 2006

how to identify and side the tiny developing deciduous teeth of an infant

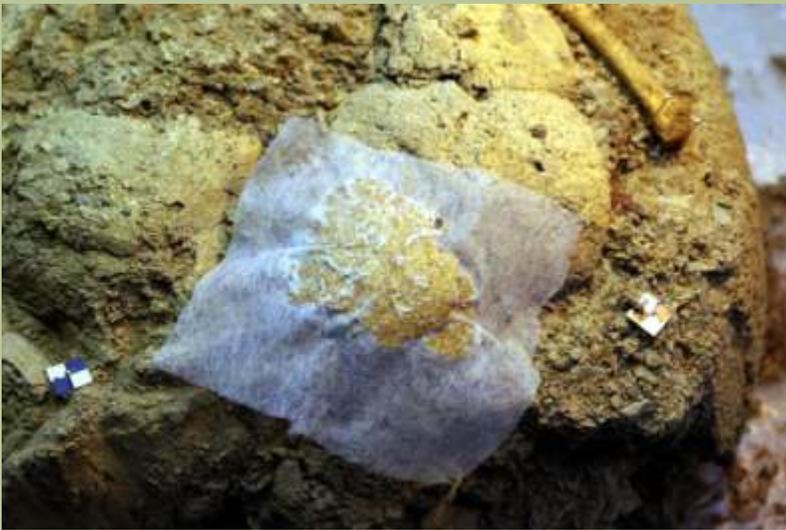




When the pot is unbroken, we have to carry out our small scale excavation inside, through the "door" hole which was cut in the pot side when the burial was made. The soil only partly fills the pot because the intact door kept it out during the time it was buried.



This can be very awkward work, with your hands inside the cramped space, but we still make plans and take photographs to record the positions of the bones. If you can excavate one of these pots, you can probably excavate anything! It's perhaps just as well we don't get too many of them.



Sometimes the thin bones of the skull vault are so delicate that we need to support each one before gently taking the stack of bones apart. We use a technique that conservators call "facing up", holding the cracked pieces together by using consolidant to attach them to a sheet of tissue paper. Sometimes, there is a stack of 3 or 4 thin skull bones cemented one on top of another. It's a real challenge to lift them in an intact state.



Many bones can be lifted without support and we interfere as little as possible with them. Others may require just a little support before lifting and for these we use a conservation grade consolidant which makes them a little more solid.

You will learn a variety of conservation techniques which are specific to skeletal remains:

- how to expose bones without damage
- how to lift them
- how to support them when required
- how to clean and store them.

This project provides a good opportunity to learn on difficult, but well preserved material.

Μαθαίνετε ελληνικά!

Learn a little Greek! You will quickly learn to write the characters, because we have to write all the labels in Greek. That's something we'll teach you right at the start. We'll also teach you some basic travellers' Greek to help you find your way around.

You will be immersed in Greek island culture because we live mostly in apartments and studios which are part of peoples' houses. Astypalaia is small and away from the usual tourist routes. Like the whole Dodecanese archipelago, it has a complex history having been, in turn, a classical city state with extensive trade links, a haunt of pirates, a Venetian colony, part of the Ottoman empire and briefly in the hands of Italy and Germany before joining the Greek state in 1947.



Culture

There is a good deal of traditional Greek island life still to be seen on Astypalaia, particularly because there is only a short tourist season during late August. During July and early August when the field school runs, life is quiet and relaxed - except that we have to work, of course.



Greek food!

Your food will be provided during the working week. It will be the type of food that local families eat themselves. On the weekends, there are opportunities to try the island restaurants. The range of Greek food might surprise you. Not unexpectedly, seafood is one of the traditional things. A big grilled fish can be expensive, but there are lots of alternatives - small fried fish, octopus or squid. One traditional dish is a fish soup, called kakavia, made with scorpion fish. Another is a goat soup (there are lots of goats on the island). There are also vegetarian options - traditional Greek family food is largely based on vegetables and pulses.



NASA Visible Earth image "A" marks Athens

Today's Dodecanese administrative region is based in the island of Rhodes and includes a total of 163 islands, 64 of which are inhabited for at least part of the year. This is in spite of the name Δωδεκάνησα which means "twelve islands". Astypalaia is at the northwest edge of the group, next to the Cyclades islands. If you take the ferry from Athens/Piraeus to Astypalaia, it passes through the Cyclades and one of the peculiarities of Astypalaia is that it looks like a Cycladic island rather than a Dodecanese one. All this means that, on the island, we are in an interesting fusion of different cultural elements. It also means that it makes a good midway point for exploring the Cyclades and Dodecanese by ferry. Astypalaia can also be reached by small plane from Athens international airport, or from Rhodes via Tilos, Nisyros, Kos and Kalymnos. Either way, it is possible to spend some time in Athens itself, one of the great cities of the world.

How to find out more:

Email the project director, Professor Simon Hillson, at University College London:
simon.hillson@ucl.ac.uk

Visit the project website: <https://sites.google.com/site/fieldschoolastypalaia/home>