

# **Hidden Pasts: Developing narratives for community archaeology and local history at Arediou, Cyprus**

Principal Investigator: Dr Louise Steel (University of Wales, Lampeter)

## **SUMMARY**

This project aims to inform local people about their past, perhaps even "re-introduce" them to the past, both recent and ancient and is based around the community of Arediou on Cyprus. It is intended that by encouraging and empowering the local community to better understand the continuity between their ancient and modern history, that they will not only embrace, but also gain the pride to want to curate and eventually even disseminate their own archaeology and history.

Because of the geographical position of the island, Cyprus has been subjected to many different cultures over hundreds, if not thousands of years; not only that, but they have also frequently been ruled by people they would deem to be outsiders. As such they have often been dictated to throughout history, and that is how many modern-day residents of the island generally, and Arediou in particular, feel about their archaeological sites today. By that we mean that they feel "distanced" and unattached from their archaeology and therefore history, and the only real information they have is what has been communicated to them from some central government department. As a result of this discrepancy/shortfall, the locals have very little respect for the archaeological remain, even ones that fall within their own immediate area - consequently they are treated with scant regard and are often seen as simply targets for looting, or the gathering of curiosities.

Cyprus as a whole is rapidly changing and becoming more and more 'Westernised'. Property developing is moving at a pace and as a consequence the traditional mud-brick houses are disappearing from the landscape. Arediou on the other hand, although experiencing inevitable change, is somewhat isolated from the pressures that many areas are experiencing and still retains a fair number of these older buildings. Not only that, but because of the rural nature of the village, it also has many older residents who were born and bred in the village, and who retain lucid memories of their childhood and important events within the recent history of the area.

By combining the ancient with the modern, in other words the archaeology with the contemporary; the project intends to present a more holistic version of their cultural heritage/history to the villagers. A doorway to the ancient already exists via the ongoing excavation of a Bronze Age site in the village and it is intended that this should be coupled with not only the oral record provided by the older residents, including accounts of Ottoman rule and more recently EOKA resistance and the 1974 invasion, but also a photographic record of many of the extant mudbrick buildings within the area. Constructing their history in this way will make it more meaningful and therefore accessible to the community, it will also encourage them and give them the confidence to assume possession of this history.

The process of disseminating the information to the community will be done via hands-on sessions in the local school, combined with site visits that would be open to the general public, as well as an information booklet written in Greek. In addition and along with help from the Department of Antiquities in Nicosia it is intended to provide a display of artefacts from our excavation at Arediou accompanied by story boards, to be permanently housed in the new Civic Centre in the village, thereby making the whole story permanently visible and

available to a much wider audience. All the information will then be compiled and used to produce a bi-lingual website that would be hosted and regularly maintained from our servers at the University in Wales.