



LIONBYTES

AN OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATION TO SUPPORTERS OF THE NEMEA CENTER
FOR CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

NOVEMBER 2014

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Aidonia Surprise

background



Many will recall the awful history of the Aidonia gold: In 1976 a fifteenth-century Mycenaean graveyard was discovered near the village. Archaiokapiloi (looters) swooped in, perhaps with the help or at least the acquiescence of local officials. Rich tombs of this period typically contain fine pottery, jewelry, and other valuable artifacts of gold. Soon the material began to appear on the antiquities market; rumor has it that they were smuggled out of Greece in watermelons!

In 1993 from an alleged European collector finds ended up owned by a gallery in New York City, purchased for a mere \$150,000 although its market value was probably ten times that. The Gallery claimed that the material was legally acquired and tried to sell it. But an exposé in the New York Times coupled with the diligence of archaeologist James Wright and of the Greek government quickly led investigators back to Aidonia. An out-of-court settlement returned the material to Greece—although other stolen material, including, presumably, valuable ceramics, has never been recovered from the looting. The most spectacular items are now on display in the Petersen Museum at Nemea. Unfortunately, looting resume in 2002-2004, and once again now during the economic crisis in Greece.

the Nemea Center steps in

The LZ' Ephorate of the Greek Archaeological Service became intensely concerned about the continued danger to the site. Last spring the Service approached the Nemea Center with a request a joint project to rescue and conserve the site. The Center responded promptly, greatly honored by the trust shown by the Service and eager to engage in a very important operation. The Service and the Center launched TAPHOS (the **Tombs of Aidonia Preservation, Heritage, and Exploration**)

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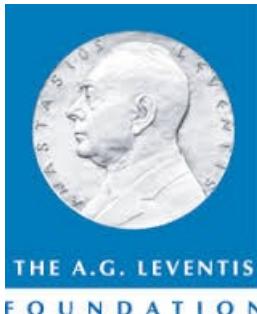
Synergasia [cooperative venture]. During June the Nemea team from Berkeley worked to clean the site, survey, and catalog over 150 features. Important work began that will continue over the next few years.

Nemea study season

Although there is no active excavation at the moment, there is a great deal of activity at the site. Visiting researchers are working on topics ranging from Hellenistic religion to Late Roman domestic deposits, to studies of bone remains in burials. Just to spotlight one of these important efforts, Dr. Effie Athanassopoulos (University of Nebraska) is doing exciting work on Byzantine assemblages previously excavated in the Stadium area. These finds are very different from the Byzantine material from nearby Corinth and so shed new and important light on this period of Nemea history.



temple



THE A.G. LEVENTIS
FOUNDATION

The Levantis Foundation, a philanthropic entity, has given the Center a significant grant to continue work on the Temple Restoration Project. The Foundation focuses on society, education, and culture; it has previously supported the reconstruction of a large number of classical, Byzantine, and post-Byzantine monuments in Greece and Cyprus. With Levantis funding the Center is studying the condition of the three ancient-and-still-standing columns of the temple, and their entablature. The goal is to conserve these columns and to restore several more blocks at the northeastern corner of the temple. In addition, Levantis funding will finance the Reconstruction Project exhibit to be housed in the construction shed beside the restored temple.



Research continues on Petsis House in anticipation of publication. This summer the Nemea Field School undergraduates as well as visiting researchers worked on drawing and cataloging pottery. Deanna Mellican was again present to work on the conservation of

Mycenae

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the startlingly original wall paintings that have been discovered over the last few years. Many previously mysterious pieces were organized into a coherent image. Come to Nemea Night to see the results!

A Visit from the Minister of Culture



The Honorable Konstantinos Tasoulas, Minister of Culture, made a day-long visit to Nemea Center projects. Accompanied by a group of other ministerial dignitaries he toured the Petersen Musem, the Nemea archaeological site, and the new work at Aidonia. Our Director, Kim Shelton, and Stephen Miller, Director Emeritus, provided expert guidance. Vassilis Fourlis, president of the Opheltes Foundation that has done so much to support efforts of the Center, was also part of the group.

UNESCO comes to Nemea

The designation of Nemea as a World Heritage Site has been Stephen Miller's dream. He has worked tirelessly to achieve this. The barriers are significant since UNESCO has slowed greatly the rate of approval of such sites. In addition, Greece already—and very understandably!—a number of World Heritage Sites. Last summer the UNESCO International Council on Monuments and Sites made a day-long tour of the Peloponnese, a tour that of course included the Nemea. Although this was hardly an official inspection visit, it was nevertheless an important moment to give the UNESCO delegation a first-hand tour of our site. By all accounts, the visitors were, in fact, very impressed by what they saw both at Nemea itself and in the region round about. As to World Heritage Site status itself, only time will tell.

Students and Researchers Make Nemea Happen

During this past summer many people have worked at and benefitted from the excavations of the Nemea Center. At Nemea itself, graduate students Stephanie Kimmey (University of Missouri-Columbia), Christian Cloke (University of Cincinnati), and Jared Beatrice (Michigan State University) worked on their dissertation project involving Nemean material. Dr. effie Athanassopoulos of the University of Nebraska continued her work on the important Byzantine finds at the site. At Mycenae Ph.D. candidates from the University of Cincinnati, University of Connecticut, and University of Florida worked on pottery and wall paintings. The undergraduates in the Nemea Field School as well as the graduate students from Berkeley programs in Classical Archaeology, Classics, and Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology all worked at Aidonia, Nemea, and Mycenae at various times during the summer. These are the people who make the discoveries and write about them. They are a fundamentally important part of the Nemea Center

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story.

The Greek Crisis and the Nemea Center

The continuing economic difficulties in Greece affect our work. This year the government laid off the temporary staff at the Petersen Musem. Guards and gardeners were let go. This created serious issues of access to the Musem by tourists and researchers alike. This is all the more significant since the Museum has now become something of a regional museum for artifacts from nearby Plakameno (in the Phlious valley), Aidonia, and Klenias. The Nemea site itself is maintained by the Center, not by the Greek government. Dimitris Karaiskos, our caretaker, has been doing an almost superhuman amount of work to keep the site up to snuff. He was also invaluable to the Berkeley staff and their colleagues during the summer season.

Nemea Night 2014

Nemea Night will take place on the evening of Tuesday, **December 2nd, 7:30 pm**, in the UC Berkeley Alumni House. There will be a catered reception of Greek inspired treats and Nemean wine BEFORE the lecture, **beginning at 6:30 pm**. Limited parking is available after 5:00 pm in lots near Dwinelle Hall and under the Recreational Sports Facility. Required parking permits may be purchased from the yellow vending machines. A Campus Parking Map (pdf) is available online at: <http://pt.berkeley.edu/park>.

She Swoops to Conquer

Be sure and come to Nemea Night to see the Center's newest technology in action! Images from our quad-copter photographing drone will amaze!

