

## PRESS RELEASE

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The Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Communications and Works announces the completion of the 2011 excavation season by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), directed by Dr. Alan H. Simmons. The UNLV continued its long-term investigations of the early Cypro-PPNB Neolithic site (ca. 7,800 B.C.), located in the foothills of the Troodos Mountains near Paphos.

The purpose of this short season, conducted from September 11 to 22, 2011, was to ground verify and test the results of a 2009 ground penetrating radar (GPR) investigation. That preliminary study of a 10X12 meter area indicated the presence of at least three circular “hotspots” that could reflect cultural features or structures. Thus, the goal was to test one to two of these areas to see if the GPR was, first, accurate and, second, if accurate, whether the readings indicate cultural or natural features.

A total of five test trenches were excavated, covering a total of 18 square meters. The major area, Test Trench 1, was placed directly over one of the GPR “hotspots.” Within a depth of less than 30 cm, a hard-packed circular surface was encountered. Upon further investigation, no regular morphology could be established and it was determined that this was simply a high area of dense colluvium that that “solidified”, likely due to the natural topography. A possible pit was also investigated (Test Trench 2, 1X1 m), immediately adjacent and north of Test Trench 1. This also turned out to be a solid densely packed non-cultural area. Within Test Trench 1, a 0.5X3 m unit was excavated into the densely packed area. This revealed the typical site stratigraphy of colluvium, followed by a chalky soil rich in rocks that overlies kafkalla bedrock. Test Trench 4 was a 1X1 m unit to the east of Test Trench 1, downslope towards previously excavated cultural features. Colluvium and the chalky soil were also revealed here. All of these trenches contained very limited artifactual materials, primarily consisting of chipped stone and limited bone, with some small intrusive potsherds.

Finally, Test Trench 5 was located over another GPR “hotspot”. It was a 1X1 m unit within 2 meters of previously excavated features. Unlike the other units, much more cultural material, primarily chipped stone, was encountered here. Approximately 8 m below the present ground surface a soil irregularity was noted, and this likely is a Neolithic pit. It was rich in chipped stone and contained no ceramics. Approximately 10 cm of this was excavated and then the operations in Test Trench 5 were terminated due to difficulty of excavating too deep a 1X1 m unit. It is possible that this pit was the “hotspot” noted by the GPR.

In summary, the results of the GPR study were interesting in that they were quite accurate in the location of “hotspots”. However, these “hotspots”, at least the primary ones investigated, appear to be the result of a natural rather than cultural density. Thus, it is unclear how useful the GPR readings will be for future investigations. Despite this, however, there is now a much better understanding of the site’s natural stratigraphy and definition of its southern boundaries.