

Press Release

Excavations at Kissonerga-Skalia 2010

The Ministry of Communications and Works, Department of Antiquities, announces the completion of the latest season of excavation at the Early–Middle Bronze Age (c. 2300–1650 BC) settlement of Kissonerga-Skalia, which was carried out during July by a University of Manchester team under the direction of Dr Lindy Crewe. The team focussed their efforts on revealing further Bronze Age architectural remains, partially exposed during the previous three seasons, in order to address questions of how people lived during the Bronze Age in Kissonerga; how long the site was occupied for; and how local populations interacted with other communities on the island. Kissonerga-Skalia is the first site of this period to be excavated in the southwest of the island and the only known site located by the coast, in contrast to the more usual inland Early–Middle Bronze Age settlement patterns.

One of the most striking features of the settlement is the diverse range of architectural styles used by the Bronze Age people of Kissonerga-Skalia. The earliest phase exposed consists of typical multi-roomed rectilinear structures with walls around 80cm wide, their foundations built from two rows of stones. The houses would have had mud brick upper walls but these have collapsed long ago. One full room has now been revealed, with a sequence of at least three floors, each with features such as plastered pot stands and post supports. Floor deposits are rich in animal bones, edible sea shells, storage jars and cooking pots and the room seems to have had a domestic function. According to the pottery styles in use, the houses seem to have been abandoned before the end of the Middle Cypriot Bronze Age period.

To the north of this area the site continued to be occupied right until the threshold of the Late Cypriot Bronze Age (c. 1650 BC). Excavation has revealed a large outdoor space. In the earliest phase exposed thus far the area seems to have been used for cooking. A large ashy mound has several phases of digging of small pits, some with partial pottery vessels placed in the base as lining. The scale is beyond that of the usual household cooking facilities of the period and may have been for communal use. During the latest phase a large, free-standing, furnace-like structure was constructed of mud plaster, perhaps similar in appearance to a traditional village oven. In the ashy deposits of the base was found a partially collapsed large storage jar embedded upright in a pit with a cooking pot at the bottom. The furnace structure is unique in Early–Middle Bronze Age Cyprus. When the feature was built the space was formalised into a courtyard, with the building of two parallel walls with foundations built of large blocks of limestone and the construction of a plaster floor. On the floor were found whole smashed pottery vessels and a spindle whorl.

The unusually wide (1.2m) rubble wall that was partially uncovered at the northern end of the site in previous seasons was further excavated and the wall now extends for over 22m in length. This season the team established that an unusual method of construction was used to build the wall. A large ditch was dug into a Bronze Age surface and rubble was dumped into the ditch to make the wall's foundations. On the interior of the wall there is a floor surface with plastered pits, pottery and ground stone tools. Copper slag indicates that metal-working was carried out nearby.

Although the excavation has only exposed the latest phases thus far, pottery styles found in the debris indicate a long occupation from the beginning of the Early Cypriot Bronze Age and also attest to contacts with other parts of the island. The University of Manchester team are hopeful that future seasons will reveal these earlier phases preserved beneath later occupation.



Excavation at Kissonerga Skalia 2010: furnace-like structure