
Duncan Howitt-Marshall (University of Cambridge)

This lecture will present an overview of underwater survey work conducted along the west coast of Cyprus from 2002-2007. Using various scales of analysis this research has helped situate the island in the broader context of maritime communication networks from early prehistory to the Late Medieval Period. It has also encouraged renewed debate on the protection and preservation of Cyprus' submerged cultural heritage. Over the last decade there has been a resurgence in underwater archaeological fieldwork on the island, including multi-period coastal surveys, deep-water remote-sensing and shipwreck excavation. In 2002 the author conducted a low-impact shallow-water survey of known anchorage sites along a stretch of coastline north of Paphos. Since then this project has expanded to encompass a broad stretch of coastal landscape from Kouklia in the south to Cape Aspros in the north, spanning a time period from the Epi-Palaeolithic to the Medieval Period. The range of sites located along this coast includes shallow water shipwrecks, ancient harbours, anchorages, ceramic assemblages and submerged prehistoric landscapes. All bear testament to a rich maritime heritage that is crucial to our understanding of Cyprus and the wider Mediterranean world.

Following a brief introduction to underwater archaeology in the Mediterranean, this talk will outline the development of maritime research in Cyprus and its relevance to our understanding of seafaring and social development. The focus will be on the 2005-discovery of an anchorage site 2.5km southwest of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement at Kouklia-Palaipaphos, where a total of 120 stone anchors were found in an area extending approximately 200m offshore. Analysis of these artefacts has revealed a great deal about southwest Cyprus and early maritime communication networks with coastal centres around the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, this research has highlighted the importance of Palaipaphos as a primary maritime centre in Cyprus during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages.

Finally, the talk will briefly introduce the fledgling field of submerged prehistory in Cyprus and include a short video of underwater work carried out at Aspros in 2007, which will demonstrate some of the basic search and survey techniques used on a submerged prehistoric site.

Tuesday March 23rd 2010 at 7pm