



Fieldwork report to the Honor Frost Foundation: **Akrotiri-Dreamer's Bay (*Nissarouin*), April 2019**



Fig. 1: Excavating heavily eroded walls of a substantial building of Roman date, constructed next to the quarry complex overlooking the ancient harbour of Dreamer's Bay.

Separate reports will be provided on the other HFF-funded activities in 2019, i.e. the oral history workshop which took place in October 2019, the publication work continuing until the end of December, and the underwater expedition in September (by Lucy Blue)

Between 4 and 23 April 2019 further fieldwork was conducted by the Ancient Akrotiri Project (AAP) in the vicinity of Akrotiri-Dreamer's Bay (*Nissarouin*). The AAP is led by the University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History, in collaboration with colleagues from the Universities of Southampton, Cyprus and Athens. The fieldwork is conducted with the consent of the Republic of Cyprus Department of Antiquities the UK Sovereign Base Areas Administration. It is generously funded by the Honor Frost Foundation and the University of Leicester, and kindly supported by RAF Akrotiri.

This marked the fifth year of work conducted by the AAP on remains in this area on the southern coast of the peninsula which appears to have comprised an ancient port, quarry and other facilities. Fieldwork comprised two seasons, onshore work in April during the University Easter vacation when the weather was still cool enough for heavy physical work, and September when the sea conditions were best for underwater activities.



Fig. 2: Excavation of the late Antique building complex on the hilltop overlooking the Dreamer's Bay region, showing (at right) plastered masonry walls and gypsum flooring, with the cliffs of Akrotiri's southern coast in the background.

Previous land archaeology seasons from 2015-18 saw exploration of Roman (probably 2nd-4th-cent. AD) shoreline buildings overlain by concentrations of later ceramics, largely late Roman/Byzantine (5th-7th cent.) amphorae, with 2018 also including exploration of a submerged ancient masonry breakwater and other archaeological remains on the floor of Dreamer's Bay itself.

April 2019 saw completion of investigations of a concentration of masonry buildings on the hilltop overlooking the shoreline structures from the north, and further survey and sample excavations of the large complex of ancient quarries at the top of the 40m-high scarp overlooking Dreamer's Bay harbour.

The hilltop lookout/?beacon complex

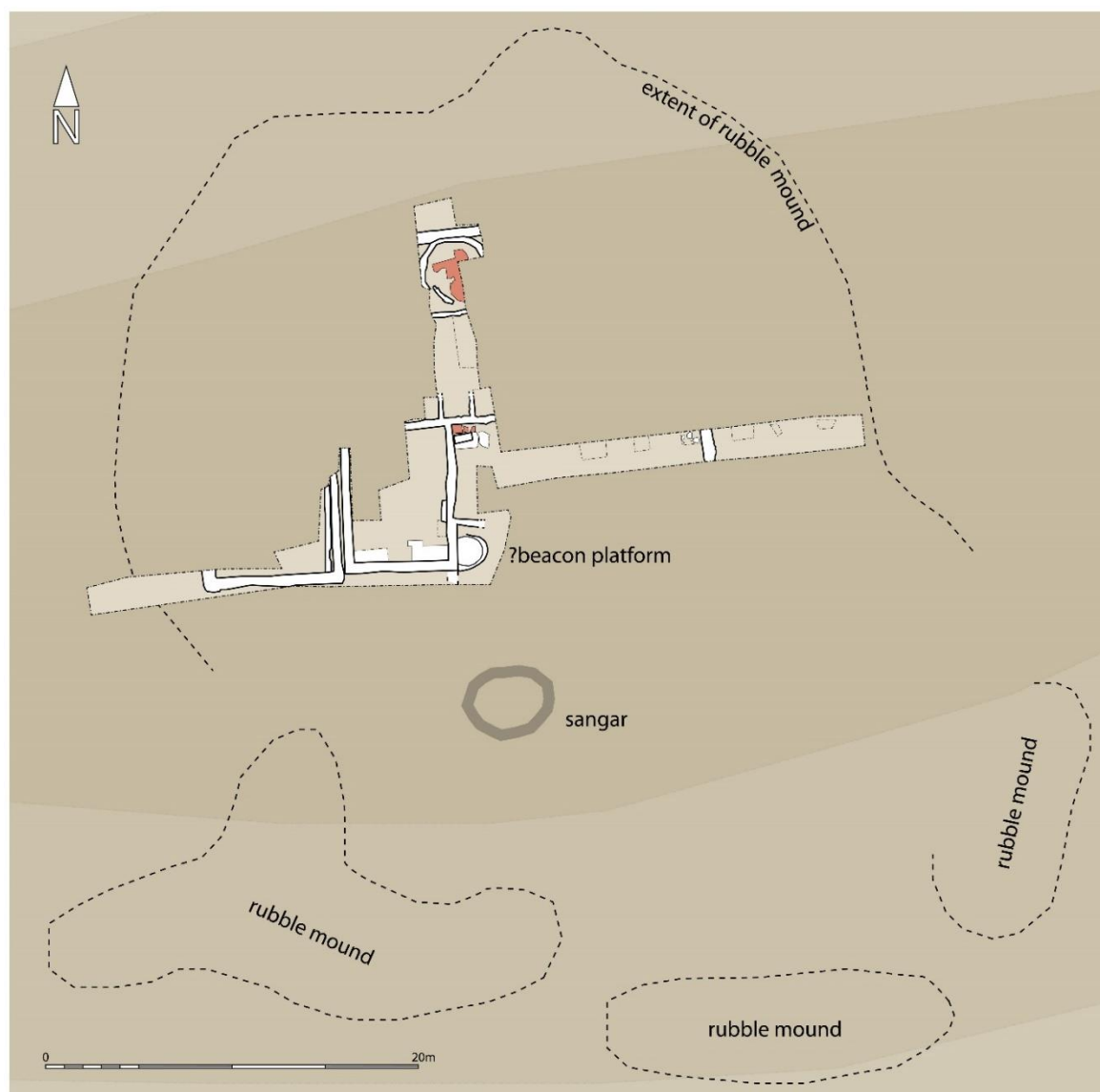


Fig. 3: The buildings on top of the ridge above Dreamer's Bay, showing the excavated area and the rubble mounds visible on the surface indicating the extent of the complex.

The hilltop complex (Fig. 3), which commanded a very wide field of view from Kourion c.13km to the north, to Cape Zevgari to the West and round almost to Cape Gata in the East, would have been extremely well sited both to spot approaching shipping, and to act as a landmark for vessels making landfall at Akrotiri (Fig. 2). Remains encountered comprised several stone-founded structures with evidence of multiple phases suggesting an extended life (Fig. 4).



Pottery, roofing materials and coins suggest occupation during the Byzantine period, to at least the sixth century, although construction during the Roman period cannot be ruled out. An important find was a copper alloy buckle-plate (Fig. 5). This is of a known sixth-century type, and is probably military—the first specific indication of an imperial army presence at the site. This could attest use of the site as a military lookout, perhaps in the context of the Heraclian wars.

Fig. 4: The north side of the Dreamer's Bay hilltop complex comprised parallel stone foundations apparently overlain by a large ovoid structure with clay floor of uncertain purpose.



Fig. 5: Byzantine buckle plate, probably military, of sixth century date, from the hilltop complex.

(The old excavation trench which initially revealed the hilltop complex had been open since the 1980s to the detriment of the remains. With the support of the Foundation, and using clean soil provided by UK MOD, in September this was backfilled, and the monument secured to the satisfaction of the Department of Antiquities.)

The quarry zone above Dreamer's Bay harbour

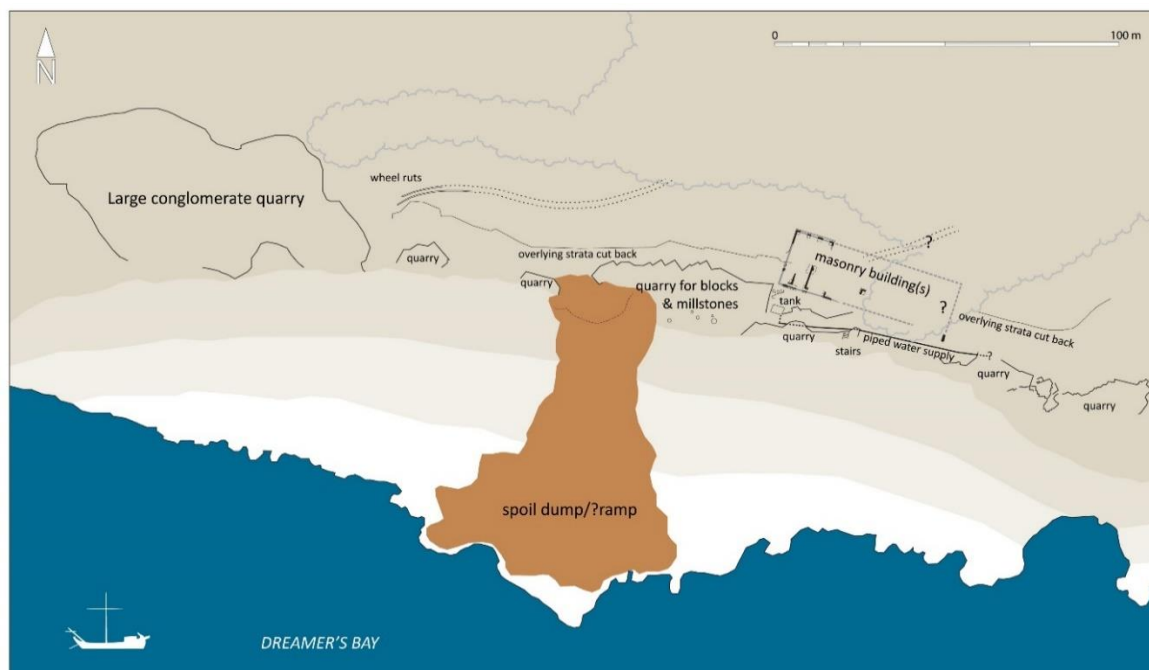


Fig. 6: The quarry complex and dump/ramp above Dreamer's Bay harbour, with the recently explored ?residential complex at right.

Work in the quarry complex (Fig. 6) comprised detailed recording of the very well-preserved traces of ancient rock-cutting. The quarries were producing squared blocks and round millstones, and probably loose aggregate for mortars and concrete, from different grades of marine conglomerate (Fig. 7).

Sample excavation was also undertaken of heavily eroded masonry structures identified in the quarried landscape (Figs 1 and 6). These were hypothesised to be quarry administration buildings, but turned out to have possessed finely plastered walls with simple painted decoration, and even traces of graffiti, though sadly illegible. A ceramic piped water supply probably (Fig. 7) also related to this complex, which is provisionally dated to the Roman era (1st-4th cents AD). The buildings overlay part of the quarrying, proving that at least some of it was Roman or earlier. The quality of the plastering and the hydraulic installation suggests that, the overlying buildings comprised a residential complex which, while not palatial, was of some pretension. If, to modern eyes, incongruously sitting in an industrial landscape, it overlooked the sea, and comprises the first villa-like structure securely identified on the peninsula, although others are suspected.

During this season, additional built structures were identified at the water's edge below the quarry ramp. These were further examined in September, but await detailed survey. They are most likely structures associated with transfer of quarry products from shore to shipping.



Fig. 7: top left, the quarries and dump/ramp down to the harbour; right, quarry which produced squared blocks, and millstones; bottom left, channel for piped water supply serving the clifftop residential complex

Overview and wider context

The April fieldwork has added important elements to the emerging picture of a complex commercial and industrial coastscape at Dreamer's Bay with a history lasting for at least five centuries. Further important parts of the picture were revealed by the underwater work in and around the harbour which followed in Sept, as Lucy will report.

The other unanticipated discovery of early 2019 was the exposure of walls very similar to Dreamer's Bay, and apparently of Roman date, at a known scheduled monument at Akrotiri-Vromonera on the sheltered eastern coast of the peninsula (Fig. 8), where the AAP already postulated a possible second landing place/port. Examination of the surrounding area identified more evidence of walls near the water's edge, in a zone scheduled for building work in 2020. This is the objective of the next stage of the project.

Simon James



Fig. 8. Newly discovered wall of probable Roman date found close to the shoreline on the east coast of Akrotiri at Vromonera. Akrotiri Bay and Limassol in the background.