

Race around Yeronisos island

JUNE 18TH, 2015

CYPRUS

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By Bejay Browne

A boat race around Yeronisos Island in Paphos is about to get underway.

The race is being held to celebrate 25 years of excavations at the site by students of New York University's Yeronisos Island Expedition, headed by Professor Joan Breton Connelly.

Yeronisos is a small island off the Paphos coast, opposite Ayios Georgios tis Peyeias.

The race, which gets underway at noon will involve tens of small sailing boats and is being organised in conjunction with the Paphos International Sailing Club.

Kit Whitehouse, a sailing club member, told the Cyprus Mail: "The race is expected to become an annual event which will also be included in the Pafos 2017 European Capital of Culture celebrations. The idea behind staging the event is to welcome the dig each year and add another dimension."

The race is open to all sailors and the winning boat will be presented with a piece of artwork depicting one of the finds on the island, as well as other prizes. Prize giving will take place in the Mandoulis beach café at 3pm.

According to the Antiquities Department, all sorts of finds have been uncovered on the island.

Recently, many items used for dining including: drinking cups, bowls, juglets, lagynoi and plates in Eastern sigillata A, Cypriot Sigillata, and local Pink Powdery Ware.

A series of huge pithoi have also been recovered along the southern edge of the island where similar large vessels were previously found. These were probably used to collect rain water. Evidence of monumental ashlar walls has also been revealed in a series of gypsum mortar setting beds for large stone blocks.

The Antiquities department said that evidence shows how much of the original surface of Yeronisos has been destroyed by erosion by the wind and sea, which has undercut cliffs and caused a widespread collapse of the island's perimeter.

Yeronisos, or 'Holy Island,' is an ancient site and was mentioned by the Roman writer and natural philosopher, Pliny.

He mentions an island called 'Hiera' near Paphos in western Cyprus. The island is fairly inaccessible, as visitors have been put off by strong currents and steep cliffs and there is no natural source of drinking water. This has meant that the island has been left largely undisturbed since Byzantine times.

It is hoped that by increasing awareness of the excavations taking place on Yeronisos, that the public will learn more about the extraordinary history of the Island.