

# Summer 2015 - Excursions in Kythera

by Kalie Zervos

**K**ythera is not just about going to the beach, eating and relaxing, in fact there are a few companies on the island now offering organised adventure activities such as dive lessons, canyoning, mountain bike tours and hiking just to name a few.

In addition to these companies there are activities and excursions organised by local associations during the summer. This summer the Friends of the Kytherian Museum organised two excursions, a walk to the Karava Natural Springs and Watermills and Agios Yiannis above Kapsali, whilst the Kytherian Association of Pireaus organised an excursion to visit the Moudari lighthouse.

The following is an account of the three excursions.

## Walk to Karavas Natural Springs and Watermills

The excursion coordinated by Helen Tzortzopoulos and guided by Archaeologists Tim Gregory and Lita Tzortzopoulos-Gregory took place on the 20th July. Meeting place was the platea of Karavas at 6pm.



When we arrived at the platea, there was an interesting site, two gypsies were polishing copper pots for some

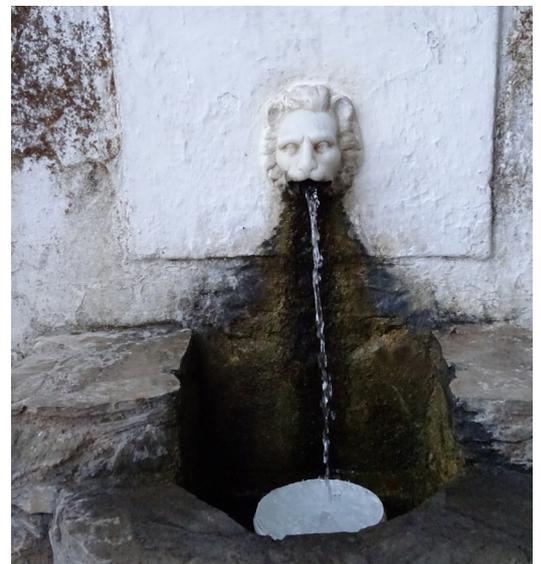


locals with the old methods used years ago. Literally before our eyes, they transformed old tarnished copper pots into shiny new ones.



Helen welcomed all to the excursion and handed over to Tim and Lita who led us to the first of the three natural water springs of Karavas. At the Keramari spring, believed to be the best drinking water on the island,

Tim handed out an information sheet about the water system and talked about the clever use of terracing which were built all over Karava centuries ago which



allowed the locals to manipulate the flow of natural water to water their gardens, to power their watermills and to wash in.

They then walked us up to the first of many disused Watermills found in this area. We then walked from Keramari to Amir Ali, tasting the water there which is more metallic and then proceeding down a beautiful path to the third water spring of Portokalia.

We visited yet another disused watermill which is in much better condition than that at Keramari. Apparently this one was in use until the mid-20th Century.

The excursion was concluded with light refreshments of cold water, local Karavitika paximadia, cheeses, olives and a fantastic tasting Sage infused Fatourada (a local drink made from Tsipouro, more commonly infused with cinnamon).



## Visit to Agios Yiannis on the cliff at Kapsali

On the 29th July the Friends of the Kytherian Museum, coordinator Helen Tzortzopoulos organised a guided tour of Agios Yiannis on the cliff above Kapsali.

There were close to 70 people who made their own way to Kapsali and then walked up the 100 or so steps to the little church of Agios Yiannis on the cliff. We were asked to enter in small groups as the church is quite small as it is built into the side of the cliff overlooking Kapsali Bay.



The church is situated approximately at an altitude of 100 metres. Above the entrance there is a marble plaque which makes reference to Ioannikos the monk who restored the Shrine in 1725. Once past through the main entrance and up a few steps we came across the guest houses. The original ones which were believed to have been built over 500 years ago were

home to 5 or 6 monks.

We then ascended a few more steps to find a small cave with the remains of foundations of an old temple believed to have been built in honour of Saint John the Baptist. We eventually reached the main cavern and church where, according to tradition and reports of foreign travellers of the 17th, 18th and 20th centuries, Saint John the Theologian stayed for a time after being banished from Rome, and it is believed it is here he had the inspiration for his writing of the Apocalypse.



The church however over the centuries became known for the worship of St John the Baptist. There are smaller caves which stem off the main cavern. One of them contains centuries old earthenware basins used to collect the dripping water from the stalactites in the cave. The walk and tour took about 45 minutes.



## Visit of the Moudari Lighthouse in northern Kythera

On an extremely windy Saturday 8th August, the Kytherian Association of Pireaus organised a self-drive visit to the Moudari lighthouse near Platea Amos in the north of the island.

A convoy of cars met up at the platea in Karava at 9.30am and set out down a very narrow road commencing near Amir Ali, which became a dirt track leading us to a point which was a twenty minute trek by foot to the lighthouse.

There were over 50 people on the excursion, the majority from Pireaus and Athens, with a handful of Aussie Kytherians from Brisbane and Sydney. When we reached the lighthouse we were greeted by the two lighthouse keepers who had cold water, soft drinks and loukoumia for us in the lighthouse keepers' quarters. Later we were instructed that in groups of 5 we were to enter and climb inside the lighthouse to receive a guided commentary of the lighthouse once inside.

Being the patient Aussies we are, we waited for all the Greeks to have their go. We were the last to enter and ascended through the various sections of the lighthouse on a very narrow vertical staircase. The lighthouse keeper showed us the old crystal light which was used for many years to illuminate the lighthouse. We then reached the



top and were shown the current modern lighting, which is a series of 4 fixed light fittings which do not rotate like the old light did but which are programmed to light up in sequence to give the impression the light is revolving.

The lighthouse keeper even did our commentary in English. We asked if we could exit onto the exterior balcony at the top and for a reward for being so patient we were allowed to exit.

The views of Cavo Malea, the north part of Kythera and the Peloponese are amazing from the top.

*Photos by John Black of Brisbane & Matina Zervos of Sydney*

