As a practicing archaeologist, the opportunity to be within the Cyclades and on an uninhabited island such as Despotiko is a dream come true. The beauty and charm of Despotiko is enough to conjure images in your mind of what once was, the restoration of the temple currently being undertaken by the same craftsmen who worked on the Acropolis is awe inspiring and to be amongst some of the most talented marble workers in the world is an honour in itself. To be so close to the archaic in this way, unmarred by man and left behind in situ is an opportunity that extremely few ever receive and its recognisable as soon as you step foot from the boat to the island.

The finds themselves are also unimaginable, a plethora of pottery – tons with decoration – litter the island and on my second day we found a large piece with dancers. Handling pottery finds like this as an undergraduate is something that I didn’t think I would be doing, but the upside in some senses of Despotiko not being a purely educational dig powered by universities is that there is more room for everyone to be involved in the way they choose.

I made friends I consider to be life-long in many senses, and have since been in talks with some about my future trips to Greece. As a shy, quiet person, I found that the Greek students and volunteers on the dig were hospitable and open armed – everyone was your friend at Despotiko. The chief excavator himself was eccentric and a character, and the assistants, Ilia and Natalia were kind and helpful.

As a working class student my ability to undertake such excursions is often limited, but with the bursary it was made more accessible to me and for that I am grateful.

It was an experience I won’t forget, and would recommend to anyone who has a passion for the archaic period.

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