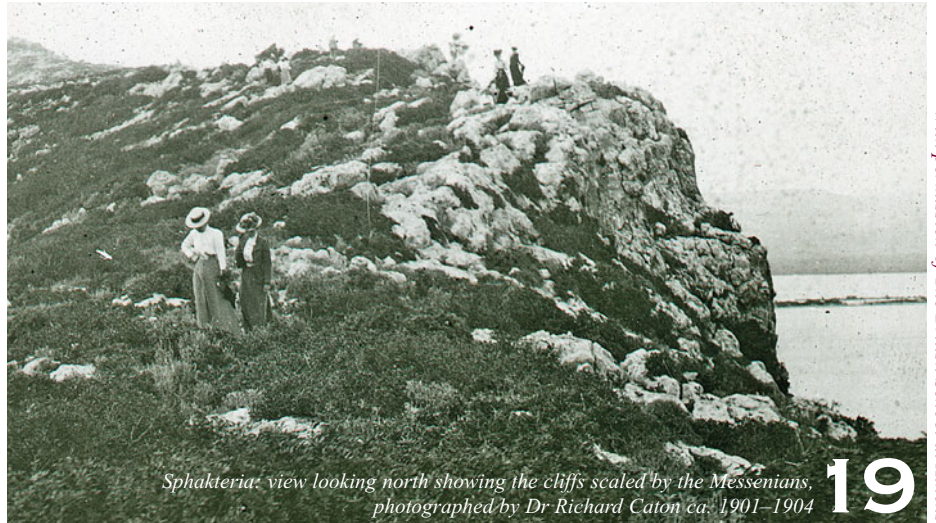
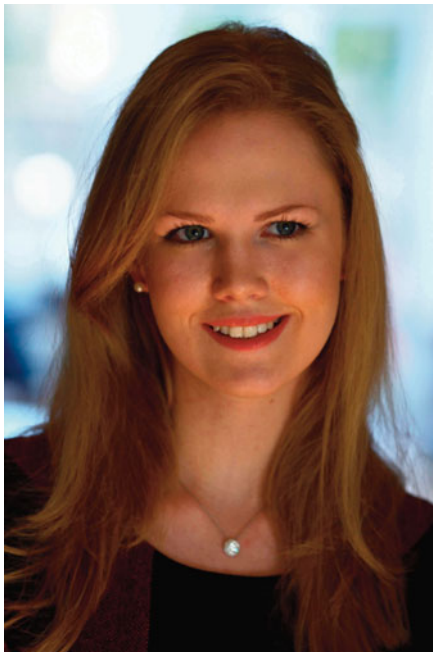


# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



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**O**ur cover illustration shows Monemvasia, a foreboding but rather beautiful fortress city in the Peloponnese. It is one of a number of less familiar locations which form the focus of this issue of *ARGO*. ‘The Gibraltar of the east’, as Monemvasia is sometimes known, was formerly home to Yannis Ritsos (1909–1990), the popular Greek poet. John Kittmer goes in search of him in this ‘unmissable jewel’ of a place on pages 22–25. Tracking him through houses and holiday villas, churches and even his tomb, Kittmer questions what Ritsos meant when he wrote that Monemvasia was ‘the protagonist in all my verses’ and explores the variety of modes in which he responded to it poetically.

Signe Isager, meanwhile, introduces us to two little-visited Greek sites beyond Athens (pages 13–16). The fort of Phyle, northwest of the city, played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants in 403 BC and the return of democracy. The mines of Laurion, recently featured in *Ancient Invisible Cities* on BBC 2, financed the Athenian fleet during the Persian Wars. Isager reveals why both are truly worthy of an excursion.

On pages 4–6 Cornelia Römer takes us to the Fayum in Egypt where, last year, she and a team from the German Archaeological Institute at Cairo made the astonishing discovery of the first Hellenistic gymnasium archaeologically attested on Egyptian soil. This issue of our journal indeed brims with archaeological progress. While Yannis Galanakis reveals equally astonishing discoveries at a rock-cut chamber tomb near Orchomenos (see pages 7–8), Paul Watkins provides an update on the

thrilling Griffin Warrior Tomb finds at Pylos (readers will remember the exquisite agate featured in the latest BBC *Civilisations* series) before leading a tour of the remarkable towers (*pyrgoi*) of the Mani on pages 29–31.

In the Mani, of course, we are in Patrick Leigh Fermor territory. On pages 25–27 Sir Michael Llewellyn-Smith describes his role in curating this year’s phenomenally successful *Charmed Lives in Greece: Ghika, Craxton, Leigh Fermor* exhibition at the British Museum. Exploring the friendships and work of the three philhellenes, the show brought many an unseen Greek vista to overcast London. On pages 19–21 Deborah Harlan discovers some lesser-known travellers with historic links to our own Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. And on pages 32–33 Julie Peakman transports us to the Greek island of Leros in time for the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Leros this November.

Also in this issue we have Kathryn Tempest on the complex portrayal of Porcia in Greek and other sources (pages 17–18), Nina Caplan on the glories of Greek wine (pages 9–10) and some witty Herodotean observations of London from Matt Simonton (pages 35–36), one of the winners of this year’s Runciman Award (find the full report from the ceremony on pages 34–35). Our reviews, finally, take us from Rodin to Stephen Fry and to Sparta before depositing us back in Putney. Which only leaves me to wonder, how many air miles might we have racked up in this issue? Answers on a postcard.

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17 Portia, The Graphic Gallery of Shakespeare's Heroines, 1896

*ARGO* is published by the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies  
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