

Έχω την τύχη, αλλά πάνω από όλα την τιμή, να είμαι γεννημένος σε έναν από τους πιο ευλογημένους τόπους της Κρήτης. Σε έναν τόπο που αναθράφηκα, που γαλουχήθηκα, που έκανα τα πρώτα μου βήματα και είπα τις πρώτες μου λέξεις. Μεγαλώνοντας σ' αυτόν τον τόπο συναναστράφηκα σπουδαίους ανθρώπους, ανθρώπους με ήθος, με αγνή καρδιά, αξιοπρέπεια και ήθος που πάλευαν να κρατήσουν τα ήθη και τα έθιμα αυτού του τόπου, περήφανοι για τα ένδοξα έργα των προγόνων τους. Δύσκολα ο ποιητής μπορεί να περιγράψει την απaráμιλλη ομορφιά που πλανιέται ανάμεσα στους ελαιώνες που καταλήγουν μέχρι την ακροθαλασσιά, την ομορφιά του σφυρίγματος του αγέρα μέσα στα φαράγγια, το δέος μπροστά στο ηρωικό μοναστήρι του Αρκαδίου. Δύσκολα ο ζωγράφος θα μπορέσει να μεταφέρει στον καμβά του το γαλάζιο του ουρανού, το αντανάκλασμα του ήλιου στους τοίχους των βενετσιάνικων αρχοντικών, το γλαυκό της πεντακάθαρης απέραντης θάλασσας που απλώνεται γύρω μας, και τον γαλήνιο ουρανό του Αυγούστου με την πανσέληνο του. Σας προσκαλώ να έρθετε και να γνωρίσετε από κοντά τον τόπο μας. Να γευτείτε τις ομορφιές του, την ιστορία του, το παραδοσιακό φαγητό του, το κρασί και την τσικουδιά του... Να αισθανθείτε τη φιλοξενία που θα σας δοθεί χωρίς ανταλλάγματα.

*Καλώς ορίζατε στον Δήμο Αρκαδίου, στον τόπο μας... και να 'δτε οι γουροί πως
θα τον αγαπήσετε σαν το σπίτι σας!*

ΜΑΝΩΛΑΚΑΚΗΣ ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ

ΔΗΜΑΡΧΟΣ ΑΡΚΑΔΙΟΥ

Υπάρχουν στιγμές που γυρίζω το νου μου στο παρελθόν και αναπολώ τα περασμένα, τα όμορφα περασμένα... Τις καντάδες στα καλντερίμια για τις όμορφες κοπέλες... τα πανηγύρια να γιορτάζουν την χάρη των Αγίων μας... τις βεγγέρες τα καλοκαιριάτικα βράδια στις γειτονιές παρέα με τα αστέρια... Βέβαια όλα αυτά δεν απέχουν πολύ με το σήμερα αφού ακόμα και τώρα τα συναντάς κάθε στιγμή, κάθε λεπτό, κάνοντας μια βόλτα στα όμορφα χωριά μας, περπατώντας στα πλακόστρωτα σοκάκια, χαζεύοντας τους κήπους με τα τριαντάφυλλα, τα γιασεμιά και τα αγιοκλήματα πλημμυρισμένα από ευωδιές και ευχές. Όταν φτάνεις στην πλατεία του χωριού ακούς μαντινάδες χαρισμένες σε σένα από τους θαμώνες του γραφικού καφενείου που φιλό-ξενα σου προσφέρουν τσικουδιά και ελιές, αγναντεύοντας από το παράθυρο από τη μια τον λεβεντογέννη Ψηλορείτη κι από την άλλη την βαθυγάλαζη απέραντη θάλασσα μέχρι εκεί που φτάνει το μάτι κι όταν όλα γίνουν ένα τότε βγαίνει το ψητό, η οφή πατάτα και το κατακόκκινο κρασί παρέα πάντα με τον γλυκόλαλο ήχο του λαούτου και της λύρας για ένα γλέντι μέχρι το πρωί.

*Για όλα αυτά λοιπόν θέλουμε να σας καλωσορίσουμε στον ΔΗΜΟ ΑΡΚΑΔΙΟΥ με την υπόσχεση να
περάσετε μαζί μας αξέχαστες στιγμές που θα μείνουν για πάντα στις ψυχές και στις καρδιές σας.*

ΠΟΛΙΟΥΔΑΚΗΣ ΓΙΩΡΓΟΣ

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΟΣ Δ.ΕΠ.ΑΝ.ΑΡ

The natural environment

The Municipality of Arkadi, one of the 11 which make up the Prefecture of Rethymna, covers an area of 123,027 'stremmata' (1 stremma = 1,000 sq metres). According to the census of 2001, it has a population of more than 5,800 inhabitants. Its seat is at the village of Adele and it is composed of the following Communities: Adele, Hamalevri, Pigi, Mesi, Pangalohori, Kyri-

anna, Harkia, Amnatos, Erfi, Skouloufia, Eleftherna, Archaia Eleftherna, and Prinos. In the west it borders on the Municipality of Rethymna, in the east on the Municipality of Yeropotamos, and in the south on the Municipality of Syvritos.

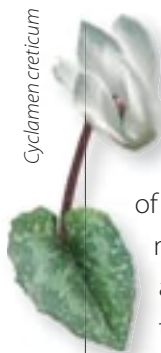


Virgin's bower (Clematis cirrhosa), Cistus creticus, and storax (Styrax officinalis) are some of the plants found in the region of the Municipality of Arkadi.

The forest of umbrella pines in the vicinity of the historic Monastery of Arkadi.



Extending from the northern seashore up to the foothills of Psiloritis, the Municipality of Arkadi is harmoniously composed of semi-mountainous terrain and areas of plain. For the most part it is taken up by the latter, chief among them being Adelianos Kampos (the Adelian plain) which extends for a great length along the northern coastal zone and for a considerable distance southwards. Both Adelianos Kampos and the greater part of the Municipality of Arkadi are areas suited to cultivation, which consists mainly of olive groves. The area under olive cultivation in the Municipality is considered to be one of the largest and most important in the Mediterranean. In addition - mainly in the coastal zone - open air or hothouse cultivation of vegetables is carried on to a considerable extent, as is the growing of vines. The landscape of the Municipality is characterized by a rich diversity, and changes according to its altitude above sea level. In the shore zone, the sea lily (*Pancratium Maritimum*) and also rare formations of *Centaurea spinosa* are to be found. Of great importance is the presence of the sea turtle *Caretta caretta*, which lays its eggs in the sands; a significant and systematic attempt is being made to protect it. Olive groves predominate in the plain, along with countless species of wild flowers such as the crown daisy (*Chrysanthemum coronarium*), the crown or



Cyclamen creticum

poppy anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), and aromatic inula (*Inula viscosa*) etc. In the semi-mountainous zone there are large areas of phrygana (garrigue) in which a multitude of orchids may be found, and also bushy formations of Mediterranean maquis, among which the predominant species are the Kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*), *Cistus creticus*, and strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*).

Particular mention should be made of the Arkadi gorge which begins from Arkadi Monastery and after a walk of around 2 hours ends at the village of Pikris. The gorge is of exquisite natural beauty and the visitor will be able to see representative species of Cretan flora there, as well as fossils. Arrival at Pikris with its magnificent Venetian buildings more than compensates for any fatigue felt by the walker. An important monument of nature is constituted by Fantaxospiliara, at Prinos. This imposing cave has a total length of 210 metres and consists of 11 chambers, two of which contain wonderful stalactite and stalagmite decoration.



Myrtus comunis

Over the course of time

The continuous, uninterrupted presence of Man in what is now the Municipality of Arkadi has been demonstrated during all phases of history. Thus, from the Early Minoan period (2600-2000 BC) onwards, we can speak with certainty of the existence of settlement in the places known as Hamalevri and Pyrgi Eleftherna; occupation continued at Hamalevri during the Middle Minoan period (2000-1600 BC). Where the Late Minoan period (1600-1100 BC) is concerned, traces of habitation have been found at Peristeres Eleftherna, and the cave of Fantaxospiliara in the district of Prinós must have been used as a place of worship. The important city of Eleftherna began to make its presence known from the Early Geometric period onwards (1100-900 BC), and was to produce evidence of an uninterrupted artistic development throughout all the subsequent phases of antiquity: the Geometric period (900-650 BC), the Archaic period (650-500 BC), the Classical period (500-330 BC), the Hellenistic period (330-67



Clay figurine of a goddess with raised arms from Pangelohori. Rethymnon Archaeological Museum.

BC) and the Roman period (67 BC-323 AD).

In 535 AD, during the 1st Byzantine period, Eleftherna became the seat of a Bishopric. In the centuries that followed, encompassing the period of Arab occupation (824 AD-961 AD), the 2nd Byzantine period (961-1210), and the period of Venetian occupation (121-1669), life

in the area which is now the Municipality of Arkadi continued normally and without interruption, keeping pace with developments and producing wonderful works of art and culture, particularly during the period of the Cretan Renaissance.

The Monastery of Arkadi was founded during the 14th or 15th century; it was destined to play an important role throughout the period of Turkish occupation, culminating in the holocaust of 1866 which defined Arkadi as a universal symbol of heroism. After the Turkish yoke was thrown off and following the period known as that of the Cretan State, the union of Crete

with the rest of Greece was proclaimed in 1913. Thereafter the island participated in the events which have shaped the history of the nation - in fierce struggles such as those against the German occupying forces which destroyed many villages in the Cretan countryside, among them a number in the area constituting the Municipality of Arkadi.



Wall-painting from the Byzantine church of Ayios Dimitrios in the village of the same name.



Detail from a plan by Fr. Basilicata, 1618.

Arkadi Monastery in a water-colour painting by Edward Lear, 1876.



Eleftherna



The excavations begun in 1985 by the University of Crete in the area of the modern villages of Eleftherna and Archaia Eleftherna have brought to light important sections of the ancient city. Archaeological interest is concentrated on a hill between two converging torrent-beds. In the place known as 'Orthi Petra' (on the western side of the hill), Professor N. Stampolidis has discovered a necropolis of the Geometric and Archaic periods, as well as Hellenistic and Roman buildings which were constructed on top of the older structures. In the place called 'Pyrgi' (on top of the hill), Professor Ath. Kalpaxis has excavated the nucleus of the settlement, and in the place known as 'Katsivelos' (on the

eastern side of the hill) Professor P. Themelis has uncovered part of the settlement including Hellenistic walls, Roman buildings, baths and an Early Christian basilica with mosaic decoration (below).



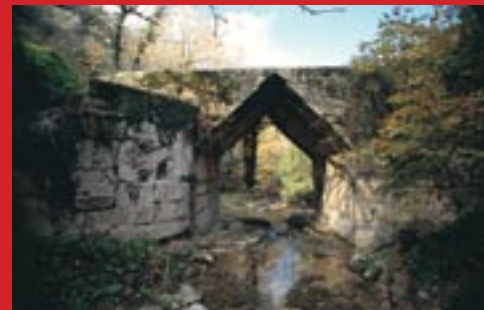
Top to bottom:

From the excavations at 'Orthi Petra':

A bridge dating from the Hellenistic period can be found north of the ancient city, by following the stream which passes to the west of the hill of Pyrgi.

In the region of Eleftherna, a visit is worthwhile to the fortified tower which stands on the hill; it must have been in use from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine period.

Below: Excavations at the place called 'Katsivelos':

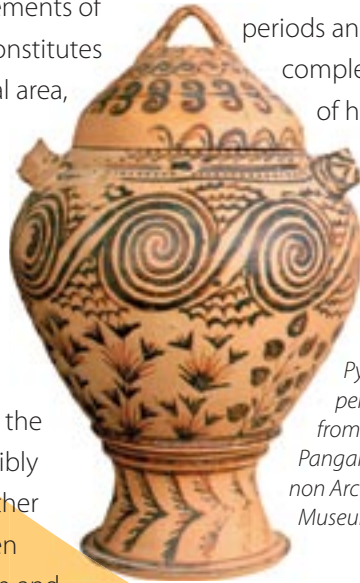


Stavromenos – Hamalevri – Pangalohori



The region defined by the inland villages of Hamalevri, Pangalohori, and the coastal settlements of Stavromenos and Sfakaki constitutes an important archaeological area, of which a considerable part has been brought to light through excavations carried out by the KE Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. The name 'Arion' or 'Agrion', which persisted in use until the Byzantine period, may possibly have applied to this area; other names which have also been suggested are Pantomatrion and

Allaria. Apart from the settlement structures of Minoan date which have been unearthed on the hills of Hamalevri, the discovery of a workshop for the production of essential oils dating from the same period is of particular interest. Cemeteries of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods and an imposing Roman bath complex are only some of the finds of historical date, mainly in the coastal zone of Sfakaki – Stavromenos.

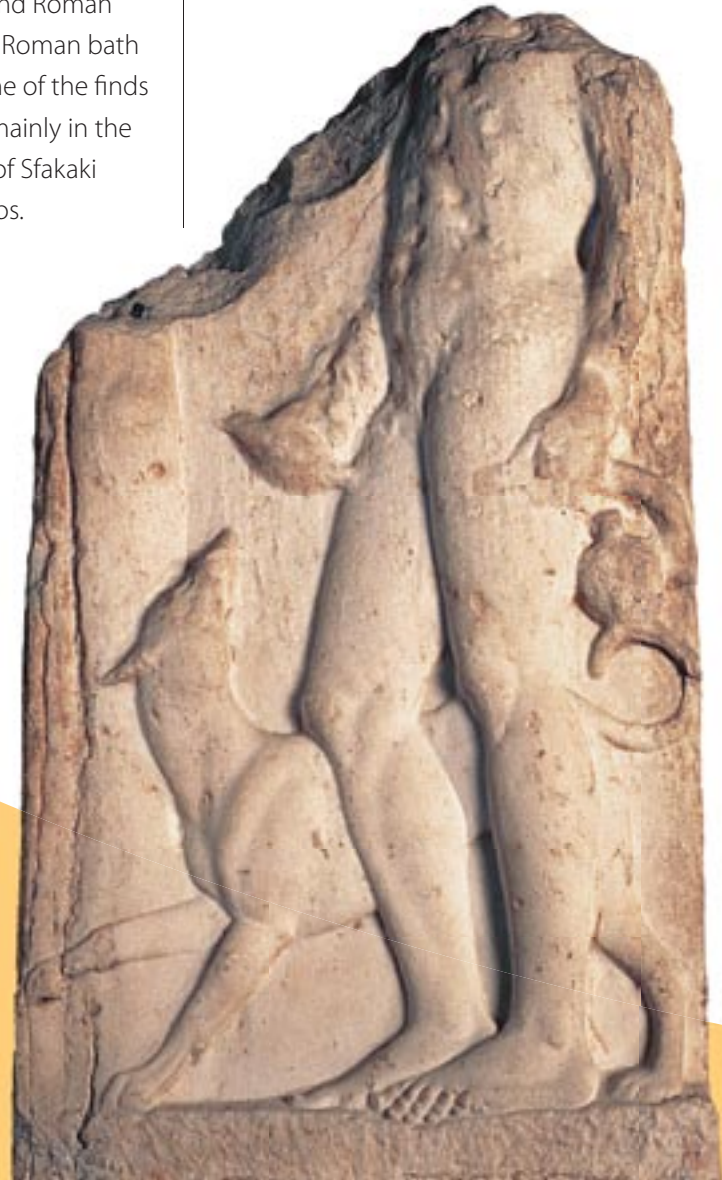


Pyxis with perforated base from a grave at Pangalohori. Rethymnon Archaeological Museum.

Larnax, 14th century BC.



Marble funerary stele of the 5th century BC, depicting a young hunter, which was found at the place called Palaiokastro in 1918.



Hamalevri. Olive press of Roman date (2nd-3rd century AD).

Arkadi Monastery

The Holy Monastery of Arkadi is located at an altitude of almost 500 metres, in the north-western foothills of Psiloritis. According to tradition, it was founded by the Byzantine Emperor Herakleios but its construction was begun by the Emperor Arkadios in the 5th century AD, after whom it was named. Expert opinion, however, maintains that both the foundation and name of the monastery should be ascribed to a certain monk named Arkadios. According to an inscription, the two-aisled church of Ayios Konstantinos and the Transfiguration of the Saviour was built in 1587. It is therefore a work carried out during the period of Venetian occupation, as can be seen from a multitude of elements of Renaissance architecture. The katholikon stands at the centre of the complex, which is square in plan; around the perimeter are the monks' cells and the ancillary rooms of the monastery. The event which without doubt brought about the designation of Arkadi Monastery as an historic symbol

was the revolution of 1866-69, during which Kostis



Occasional architectural details witness the connection between the architect of Arkadi and Renaissance architects such as Sebastiano Serlio and Andrea Palladio.



Representation of the siege of Arkadi and the explosion of the powder magazine (Athens, Gennadeios Library).

Yiampoudakis from the village of Adele set fire to the powder magazine where all the besieged had gathered, and blew up the whole monastery; thus it became an eternal symbol of freedom.



The Holy Standard of the revolution and other artifacts belonging to the monastery, such as ecclesiastical objects, gold-embroidered vestments, and weapons, are housed in its museum.



Exploring the villages of Arkadi

ROUTE 1

**Adelianos Kampos – Adele – Ayia Triada – Harkia – Kavousi
Arkadi – Amnatos – Asteri – Hamalevri – Stavromenos**



Adelianos Kampos with its large, super-luxurious hotels.

able number of prerequisites where cleanliness, organization, and safety are concerned. From the sign-posted road junction in the east of

Adelianos Kampos, we take the turning to the right which leads to the village of Adele.

The country road passes through the renowned olive groves of the region to Adele (2 km), the seat of the Municipality of Arkadi. Various opinions have been expressed regarding the etymology of the name of this village. Some assert that it derives from the word 'adilo', or from the name 'Adolos', while others say that it is of Arabic origin. Sporadic archaeological research carried

We are in Adelianos Kampos, about 7 km east of the city of Rethymnon; this is an imposing area of plain which begins from the sea and extends southwards to the village of Adele. It is inundated with hypermodern hotel complexes, which make it one of the most important resorts on Crete. The tended, sandy beaches are awarded the 'Blue Flag' every year, signifying that they fulfill a consider-

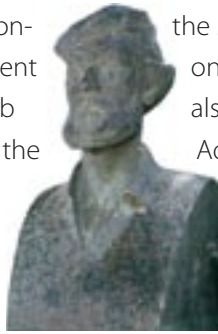


A passageway near the church of Ayios Pandeimon in Adele.



A traditional weaving workshop.

out in the district has attested to continuous habitation there since ancient times. For example, the tholos tomb in the place called 'Damourou' and the settlement structures at 'Pyrgos' witness that the area has been inhabited at least since the Minoan period. Today, the visitor to this neat village will observe that the central settlement nucleus dates from the period of Venetian occupation. Its 'fortress-type' architecture is evidenced, according to a certain number of scholars, by the two 'passage-ways' in the square of the church of Ayios Pandleimon, which in all probability constituted its medieval gates. Apart from its beauty, Adele is known for hospitality, and this was enthusiastically noted by the traveller C.R. Scott who passed through the village in 1834. The inherent sociability of the people of Adele was doubtless bolstered by their prosperity, which was derived from olive cultivation. Today, the area of olive groves in the Municipality of Arkadi is one of the largest in



Kostis Yiampoudakis, who set fire to the powder magazine at Arkadi.

the Mediterranean and produces not only a large quantity of olive oil, but also one of superb quality.

Adele was the birthplace of Kostis Yiampoudakis, the hero who according to tradition ignited the powder magazine at Arkadi Monastery and brought about the heroic holocaust there. It is worthwhile visiting his house amidst the narrow alleyways of the village, and pausing before

the monument with his bust which decorates the courtyard of the Town Hall. Outside the village, in the place called 'Sarakina', there is the memorial to the 18 people from Adele executed by the Germans.

About 200 metres beyond Adele, we turn to the right towards Ayia Triada. Once again, we have the opportunity to pass through part of the endless area of olive groves of the region before arriving, about 2.5 km further on, at the new village of Ayia Triada with its view out towards the hill opposite, on which the old settlement of Santa Trinita – as it was



The beautiful village of Ayia Paraskevi, dominating the mouth of a little gorge. We can visit it by making a little diversion shortly before reaching Adele.

Ayia Triada



The Renaissance church of Ayia Triada.



The church of Ayia Anna at Harkia.

Albanis; his house is preserved and still occupied today. From the middle of Ayia Triada we turn to the right and continue along the road towards Harkia, in a southerly direction. As we pass through the olive groves, about 1-1.5 km from Ayia Triada the landscape suddenly changes. The place of olive groves and cultivated fields is now taken by boundless expanses of rocks. Traversing this imposing and wild landscape we come, after a distance

of around 5.5 km, to the village of Harkia which was referred to by Barozzi as Charchia as early as 1577. In 1881 it was known as Harkeia and from 1920 onwards as Harkia. According to some, the name may be derived from the word 'Halkeion' or 'Harkeion' (meaning an ironworks); on the other hand, it is most probably connected with the name 'harakia' (rocky, rough places), since access to it is through such terrain. The village itself, small and relatively isolated, imparts an air of



called by the Venetians - is located. The Renaissance church of Ayia Triada, which gave its name to the village, dominates in the main square. It is two-aisled, and in addition to Ayia Triada, also dedicated to Ayios Nikolaos. Located amongst olive groves, this picturesque village has seen golden ages of olive production, a fact witnessed by the numerous olive mills there. It is worthwhile strolling through the picturesque alleyways to admire the Venetian buildings which later on were occupied by Turks, one of whom was the great landowner Aga



Quercus ilex

power and independence. Within it lies the church of its patron saint, Ayia Anna; outside is the majestic oak tree which has been characterized a 'monument of Nature'. At the southern exit from the village an elegant monument immortalizes the memory of its heroic forefathers. We continue in an easterly direction and after crossing the imposing uplands of the area arrive, after a distance of about 3.5 km, at the village of Kavousi. Its name derives from the word Kavouz which means 'spring'; it was referred to in 1577 by Barozzi as 'Cavussi'. In this beautiful village we should visit the church of Ayios Ioannis Theologos (St. John the Theolo-



Kavousi



A sacred repository in the church of Ayios Ioannis (Kavousi).

gian), which dates from the period of the Venetian occupation and has undergone conservation. Its bell originates from Trieste. Leaving the village we come upon a rare sight beside the road – a forest of a species of oak (*Quercus ilex*) which embellishes and relieves the otherwise wild landscape of the region. We continue our route eastwards for about 3 km and reach the road junction which leads to the right to Amari, and left to the locality of Arkadi. We can turn left here and after about 1-1.2 km, having passed through a forest of huge pines, arrive at the historic Monastery of Arkadi. Leaving the monastery, we take the road towards Amnatos. Moving northwards and following the course of the beautiful Arkadi gorge, we arrive after about 3.5 km at the village of Amnatos. Its unique location up on a hill with a panoramic view out towards Rethymnon, and the rich vegetation of the area, already charmed the people of antiquity. This is witnessed by the find of an inscription which mentions the place-name '(Amn) atos', as well as the opinion of a number of researchers that it was exactly in this area that a city called Tripodos must have existed in antiquity. Without doubt, the village achieved its greatest

flowering during the period of the Venetian occupation, when it was referred to as Amnato. This prosperity is witnessed by the fortress-type town plan and the unique Venetian buildings, of which the prime example is the Sanguinazzo mansion. In the triangular door-frame of this important house there is the coat of arms of the family, an eagle and the inscription: *Initium sapientiae timor Domini* (the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord). Later on, during the period of the Turkish occupation, the village was inhabited by Ottomans who must have built a mosque with a minaret there, since this is mentioned in descriptions given by the traveller Pashley. Remains of a Turkish tower of the same period have been located outside the village. In more recent years the village housed the famous 'Arkadi School', a place of study for those destined to become monks at Arkadi Monastery. Amnatos is closely connected with the holocaust of Arkadi, since most of its inhabitants were in the monastery at that tragic hour. Amongst them was the heroine Harikleia Daskalaki (or Daskaloharikleia) with her three sons. To honour her,



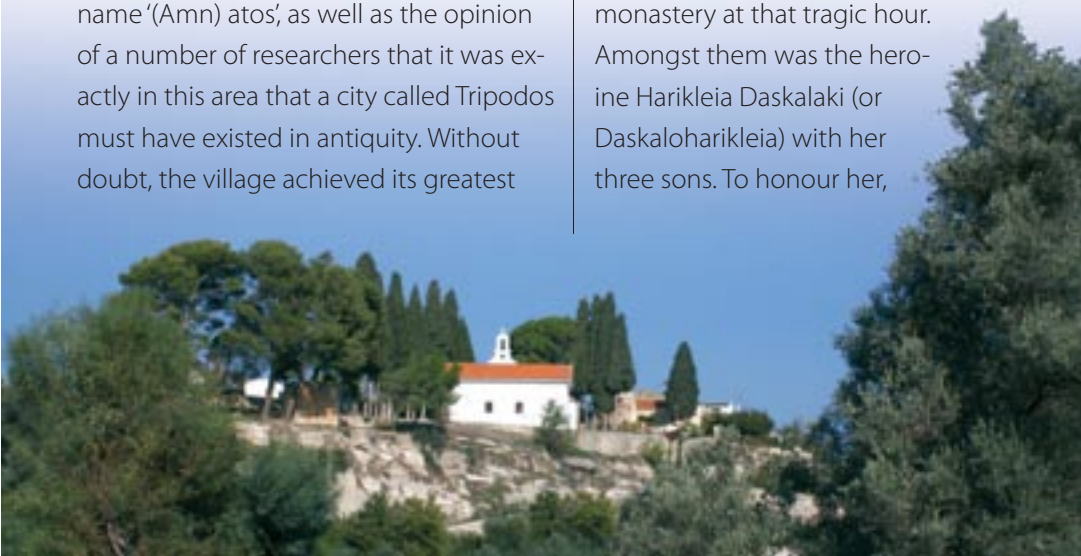
The School Museum at Amnatos.



The Folk Museum at Amnatos.



The Renaissance doorway of the Sanguinazzo mansion.





Above: Part of the Folk Collection at Asteri.

Below: Revolutionaries of 1912 at Asteri. A coloured-in photograph from the Collection.

and all the Fallen of Amnatos, their proud descendants have erected a memorial in the centre of the village. Visits to the Folk Museum and the Municipal Museum of the History of Greek Education are well worthwhile here.

Leaving Amnatos, we take the road which runs from the village in a northerly direction. After a distance of around 3.8 km it brings us to a crossroads which leads to the left to Loutra, and to the right to Viran Episkopi. Continuing northwards, we arrive 1 km further on at Asteri. Situated on a hill and on part of the slope of the Arsani torrent which runs to the west of it, this beautiful village is overwhelmed by luxurious villas today. A memorial has been built in the village to those who fell during the Resistance to the Germans. Continuing northwards again, we come to Hamalevri (about 0.5 km); the village was already referred to by the name of Chamalevri in 1577. The inland villages of Asteri and Hamalevri, and the coastal settlement of Stavromenos towards which we now descend (about 1.5 km) constitute an extended archaeological area. Apart from the archaeological sites there, a visit is worthwhile to the memorial in Stavromenos, raised to honour the Australian and Greek fighters who fell in the struggle against the Germans.

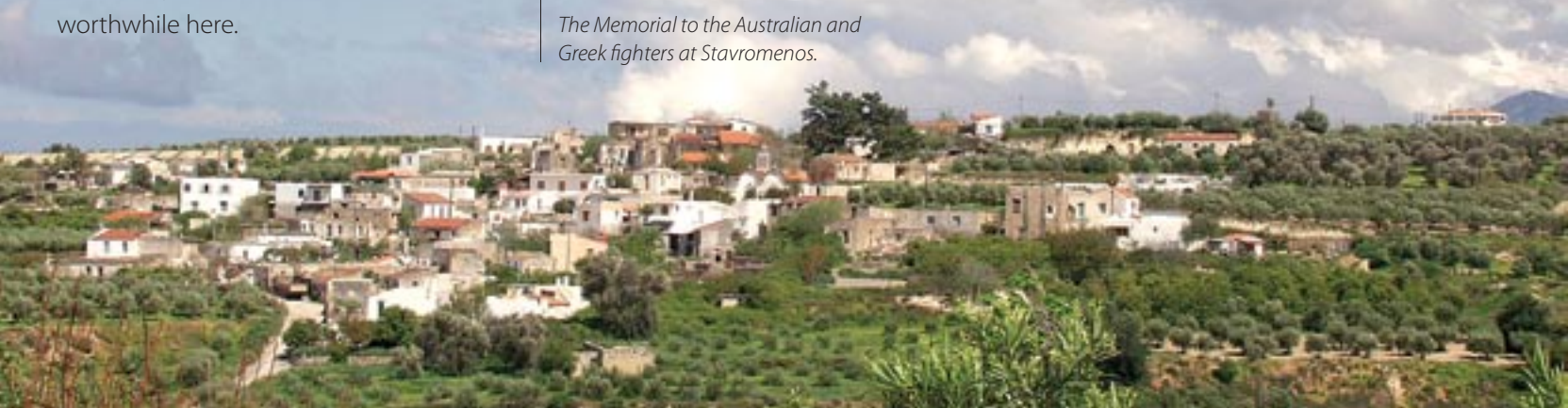
The Memorial to the Australian and Greek fighters at Stavromenos.



The restored Venetian tower at Hamalevri.



The Roman baths at Stavromenos.



ROUTE 2

Adelianos Kampos – Pigianos Kampos – Pigi – Loutra – Pikris Roupes – Skouloufia – Erfi – Prinós – Skaleta

About 1 km to the east of Adelianos Kampos lies Pigianos Kampos. It is a large, coastal area about 3 km in length and about 2 km wide which extends as far as the village of



A picturesque alleyway in Pigi.

Pigi in the south. This fertile region includes areas under cultivation with vegetables and grain, as well as olive groves. Tourist development is vigorous in the coastal section with its sandy beaches, while numerous, mostly luxurious dwellings are under construction inland. At a distance of 8 km along the old national road from Rethymnon to

Heraklion there is a turning off to the right which leads to the village of Pigi. Following this road and passing amidst olive groves for a distance of around 2 km, we come to Pigi which is mentioned by the same name in Venetian records of the 16th and 17th centuries. According to certain researchers, the name derives from the existence of a spring near the river 'Pigiano' or 'Pigio', which was destroyed by earthquake and has run dry. The neat and verdant greenery of the village does honour to its forefathers, among them the famous literary figure Pantelis Prevelakis and the Abbot of Arkadi, Dionysios Psaroudakis. The house of Prevelakis can be found by



strolling through the picturesque alleyways of the village, while at its eastern entrance, there are

Centaurea spinosa. One of the most beautiful and rare plants found on Pigianos Kampos.



Pigi. Olive groves predominate in the surrounding countryside.





The Monument to the Fallen at Pigi.

the memorials with busts of Abbot Psaroudakis and Nikolaos Yiapintzakis, the sergeant of gendarmerie who was executed by the Germans. The elegant square of the village is embellished by the Monument to

the Fallen of Pigi and Ayios Dimitrios in the great battles of the 20th century. It is worthwhile walking a little way out of the village to find the church of Ayios Nikolaos of Nispita, which lies to the north-west and is a Byzantine church of the 14th century with preserved remains of wall-paintings. Returning to the main road from Pigi to Arkadi and continuing eastwards



Detail from a wall-painting in the church of Ayios Nikolaos. The relief rendering of the halo is worthy of note.

for a further 1.5 km, we come to Loutra, which is referred to by the same name (Lutra) in Venetian sources of the 16th century. Elsewhere in parallel sources it is called Lustra or Lucia. The village was once occupied by a number of Ottomans who were replaced in 1922 by people from Asia Minor. It is worthwhile taking a stroll through the beautiful alleyways of the village, with their stone houses and flower-decked balconies. We can stop at the fountain with the Turkish inscription, and at the house of Ilias Spantidakis, leader of a workers' union of coalminers in Colorado, USA, who passed into history under the name of Louis Tikas.



Above: Ayios Pandeileimon at Loutra.

Below: An alleyway in Loutra.

Loutra: the house of Louis Tikas.



Outside the village, a little track leads to an extremely picturesque spot with the church of Ayios Pandleimon and the memorial to 10 people from Loutra who were executed by the Germans. From the village, we can follow the road which runs east to Viran Episkopi. After about 3 km we come to a road junction and turn right towards Pikris (not towards Viran

Episkopi). Proceeding for about a further kilometre, we then turn left. This fine country road runs between olive groves and traverses a small gorge, bringing us after a distance of 2.5 km to the exceptional village of Pikris - already called Picri in the 16th century - located in the Arkadi gorge. Its natural beauty due to a riot of greenery is favoured by the course of

the river Arios (or Arkadiotis) which gave life to the village by watering the fields and powering its many watermills. Pikris is a Venetian village with many magnificent mansions. Without doubt, a walk through the picturesque alleyways is worthwhile, passing

beneath the vaulted passageways to visit the Villa Clodio with its impressive doorway and the inscribed pediment which bears the date 1610. The church of the village cemetery is also Venetian; remains of wall-paintings are preserved in it. We leave Pikris and continue our route in a south-easterly direction, arriving after a distance of 1.5 km at Roupes with its neat houses and flower-filled courtyards. Proceeding northwards for another 1.5 km brings us to a crossroads which leads to



The impressive Venetian doorway at Pikris.

A passageway in Pikris.



Pikris





An alleyway in Roupes.



Skouloufia

Above: The restored 'fabrica'.

Right: The picturesque area of Kavousi.



The wild goat (Capra aegagrus cretica) is the most representative species of the Cretan fauna.

The only place where it still roams free is the Samaria Gorge.

dant of Crete. We can refresh ourselves in the tavernas and cafés down on the verdant green bank of the torrent-bed and visit the restored 'fabrica', i.e. the mill for the production of olive oil where the whole traditional process is faithfully reproduced. Leaving Skouloufia, we proceed northwards. The expanses of plain and the fertile fields are calming to the disposition, while a pleasant surprise is offered by a prototype farm where there are wild goats, on the right just outside the village. About 2 km further on we come to Erfi, which according to the researcher Paul Faure derives its name from the word 'erifos'. The church of Ayios Ioannis is one of the places worth visiting in the village; it is decorated with wall-paintings of superb quality, dating from

Below: The church of Ayios Ioannis at Erfi.

Right: Wall-painting from the same church.



the right to Skouloufia (1 km). Before going there, we might decide to continue straight on to visit the abandoned village of Rousonavli, and would be particularly lucky if we were there on 29th August, since this is the day dedicated to its patron saint, Ayios Ioannis Rigologos. The village of Skouloufia itself, referred to in 15th and 16th century sources as Spilufia, was the birthplace of Eleni Volanopoulos, the mother of Veli Pasha, the Comman-



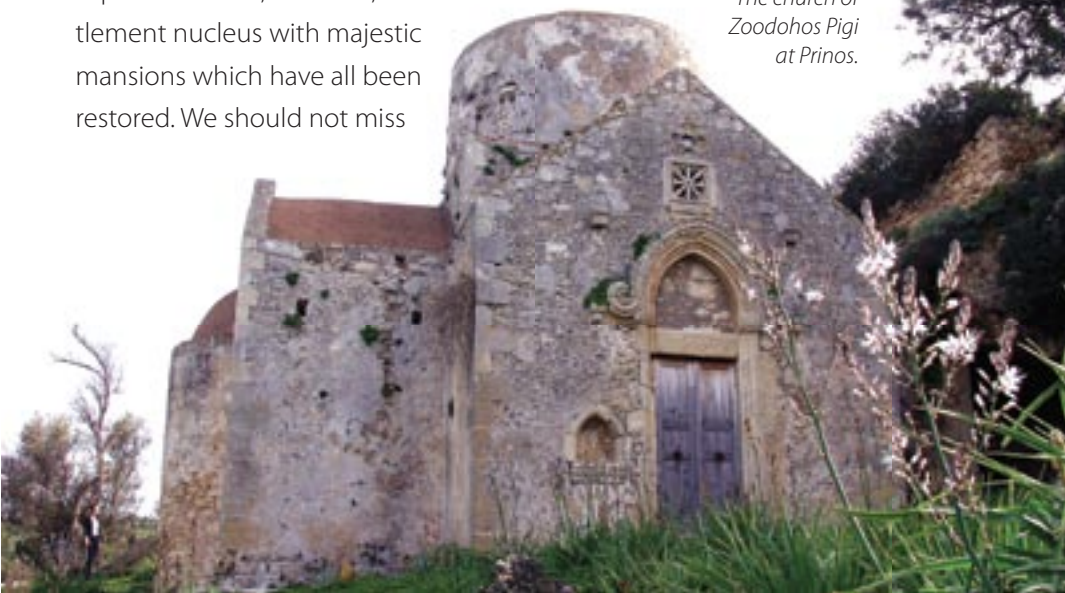
Iconostasis in Prinos

the 14th century, of academic character and in the spirit of the Constantinople tradition. We continue northwards from Erfi and after a distance of 2.5 km reach a crossroads where we turn left and 1 km further on come to Viran Episkopi (see route 4).

After passing through the village we turn right exactly at its northern exit and continue on to Prinos (1.5 km). This beautiful and very interesting village stands at the highest point of one of the sides of a ravine and offers refreshing shade and a wonderful view out over the landscape. It is full of modern villas. What makes it of especial interest, however, is its old settlement nucleus with majestic mansions which have all been restored. We should not miss

a visit to the church of Zoodohos Pigi, south-east of Prinos. In this cruciform, domed church with wall-paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries there is an impressive mausoleum in the shape of a stone sarcophagus which bears the coat of arms of the Zangaroli family. Also of particular interest is the cave called 'Fantaxospiliara' up on the hill known as 'Koules'. Finds from here, dating from the Minoan, Hellenistic and Roman periods, witness that the cave must have constituted a place of worship throughout antiquity. From Prinos we descend towards the seaside settlement of Skaleta, about 1 km to the north. This area with its wonderful sandy beach, pristine waters, and numerous luxury hotel complexes, is one of the most important resorts not only of the Municipality of Arkadi but also of the whole of Crete.

The church of Zoodohos Pigi at Prinos.



The impressive entrance to the Fantaxospiliara cave at Prinos. The cave has a total length of 210 metres and consists of 11 chambers, two of which have wonderful stalagmite and stalactite decoration. Finds from the interior of the cave date mostly from the Hellenistic period, while outside sherds of Late Minoan pottery have been discovered. (Photo: Haris Stratidakis)

ROUTE 3

Pigianos Kampos – Pigi – Ayios Dimitrios – Mesi – Kyrianna – Amnatos – Kapsaliana – Arkadi – Eleftherna

From Pigianos Kampos we move on to the village of Pigi (see route 2). About 300 m east of Pigi, we can turn right towards Ayios Dimitrios which lies about half a kilometre from the crossroads. This beautiful little village owes its name to the Byzantine church of the same name located in the NW of it. A cruciform, domed church dating from the 11th century and considered to be one of the most important on Crete, it has been restored and a considerable part of its wall-painting decoration is extant. Of equal importance is the church of Ayia Triada with its well-preserved wall-paintings. Continuing southwards for 1.5 km we come to the village of Mesi, the birthplace of the scholar Yeoryios Hortatsis. The village is referred to as 'Messi' in 16th century sources, while earlier on it was the seat of a Byzantine bishopric. It is not inconceivable that the

Ayios Dimitrios stands out because of its picturesqueness.



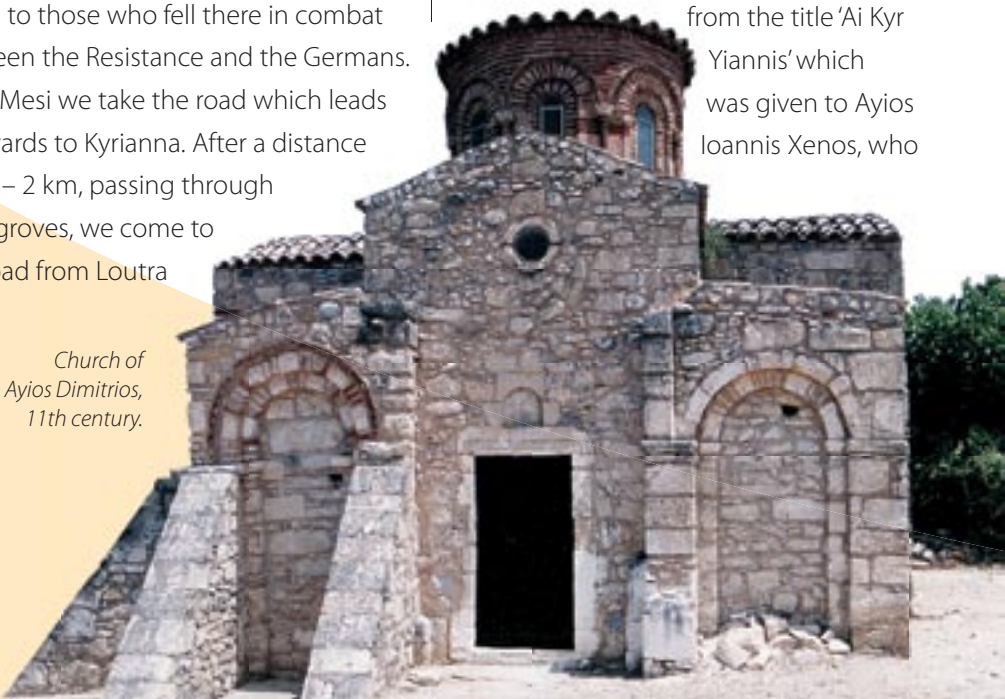
Wall-painting from the church of Ayios Dimitrios.



name of the village is indicative of its position, since it is located 'between' the two other bishoprics of 'Kalamonos' and 'Mylopotamos'. The cave of 'Kioubra' to the SE of the village is worth a visit; at an idyllic spot a memorial has been raised to those who fell there in combat between the Resistance and the Germans. From Mesi we take the road which leads eastwards to Kyrianna. After a distance of 1.5 – 2 km, passing through olive groves, we come to the road from Loutra

to Kyrianna and turn right towards Kyrianna (2 km). As its etymology indicates, the name derives from a certain 'kyria Anna'. Some believe however that it derives from the title 'Ai Kyr Yiannis' which was given to Ayios Ioannis Xenos, who

Church of Ayios Dimitrios, 11th century.





A traditional café in Mesi.

travelled in the area in the 11th century. It is referred to as Chirianna in archives dating from the 16th century, and later on as Kyrianna. During the 16th century, the whole area was a fiefdom of Mathaios Kallergis, a very wealthy feudal lord who held nearly all the north-easterly villages of Rethymnon, including Arkadi. He worked together with Abbot Klimis Hortatsis to restore the façade of the katholikon of Arkadi Monastery. It is said, in fact, that a certain palace in the village



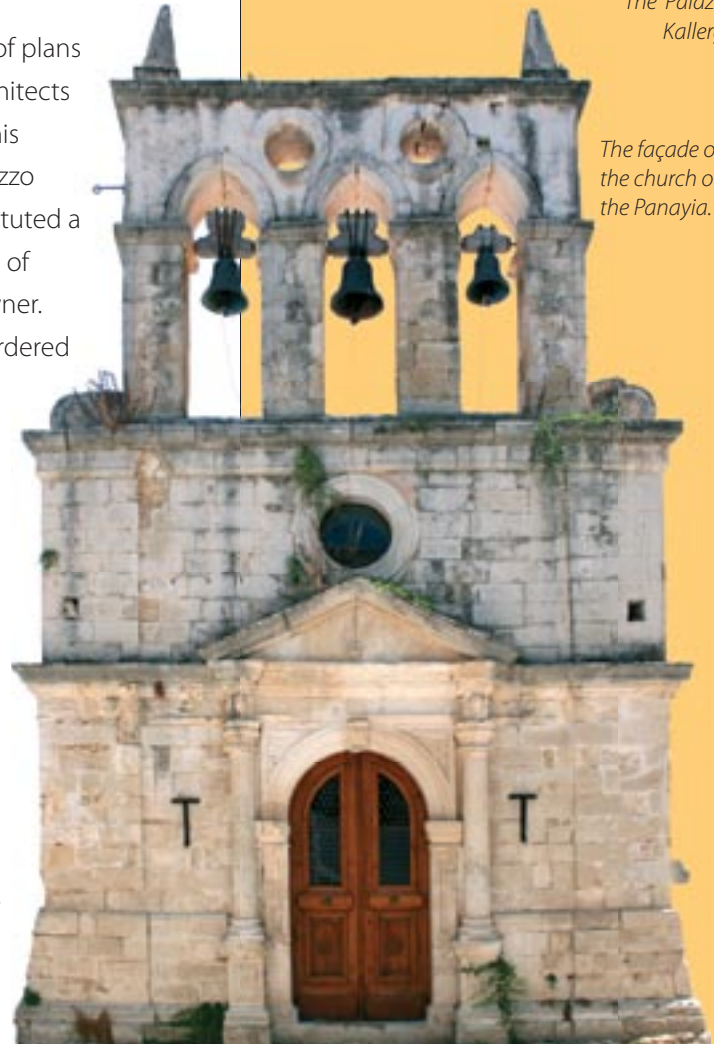
was built on the basis of plans drawn up by the architects of the monastery; this Renaissance Palazzo must have constituted a country mansion of the great landowner. Kallergis was murdered in 1572 and his family moved to

Venice, to the majestic building known as the Palazzo Calergi. While in Kyrianna we should not miss a visit to the church of the Dormition of the Virgin, the façade of which resembles that of Arkadi. The church has the shape of a Free Cross, with a dome and side chapel in the SE corner; the

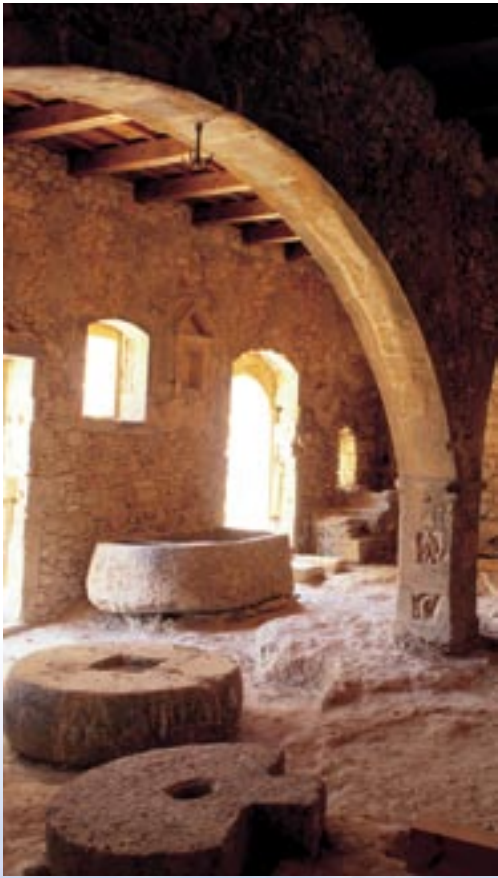


The 'Palazzo' Kallergis

The façade of the church of the Panayia.



The memorial at the 'Kioubra' cave.



The old olive mill of Arkadi at Kapsaliana.

coat of arms of the Kallergis family can be seen on its northern side. Also in the village is the church of Christ Saviour with a coat of arms set into its southern wall. Three kilometres SE of Kyrianna lies the village of Amnatos (see route 1). If liked, we can make a small diversion to the left immediately outside the village to visit Kapsaliana, about 1 km NE of Amnatos. This village was first mentioned in documents dating from 1842 and constituted a 'metohi' (dependency) of Arkadi Monastery; among its 15 buildings was its olive oil mill. The mill was in operation until 1958, and the village was home to 15 families; thereafter, unfortunately, they moved away and the village was left deserted, to fall into ruins. The village is now being restored under a private initiative and will house the 'Museum of the Olive' in the very mill



The Heroon (Monument)





The stone bridge and its inscription.

of the monastery. Continuing southwards for

3.7 km we come to Arkadi Monastery. The greater part of the road runs parallel with the Arkadi gorge, a place of great natural beauty. At one point, it descends



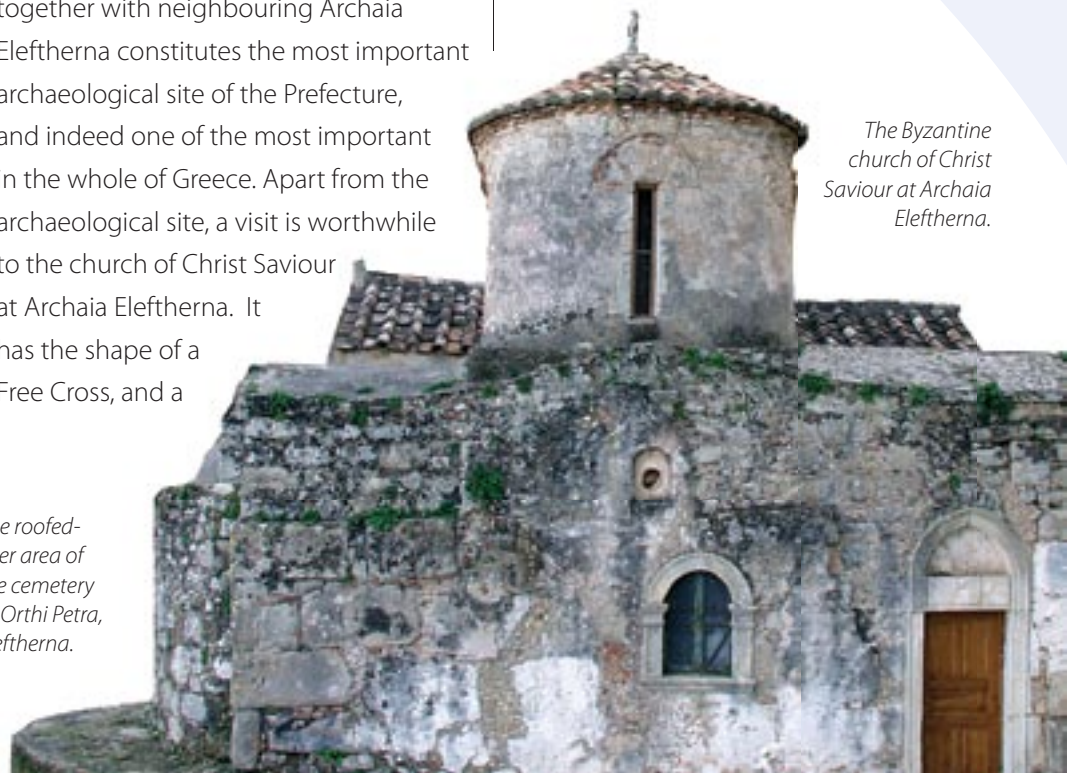
The roofed-over area of the cemetery at Orthi Petra, Eleftherna.

to such a degree that it nears the bed of the river with the little stone bridge and the buildings housing the tannery of the monastery; thereafter it ascends again to bring us to a plateau of unique beauty, where historic Arkadi Monastery has dominated over the centuries. Apart from a visit to the monastery itself it is worthwhile taking time to walk around the whole site, to admire the unique forest of umbrella pines and have a rest at the refreshment kiosk of the monastery. Leaving Arkadi we follow the road in a NE direction to Eleftherna. After passing the reservoir of the monastery and crossing a mountainous and rocky landscape dominated by maquis vegetation, we arrive around 7 km on at the village of Eleftherna, which together with neighbouring Archaia Eleftherna constitutes the most important archaeological site of the Prefecture, and indeed one of the most important in the whole of Greece. Apart from the archaeological site, a visit is worthwhile to the church of Christ Saviour at Archaia Eleftherna. It has the shape of a Free Cross, and a



Archaia Eleftherna

dome in which the wall-painting of the Pantocrator is an example of Comnene art and dates the church to the 12th century.



The Byzantine church of Christ Saviour at Archaia Eleftherna.

ROUTE 4

Stavromenos – Nea Magnesia – Viran Episkopi – Loutra – Pangalohori – Arsani – Sfakaki



Sketch dating from 1745 showing the Monastery of Ayios Yeoryios (Arsani), by the Russian monk and traveller Vasilios Grigorovich Barskij.



Viran Episkopi lies 1.3 km SE of Nea Magnesia. The word 'viran' is Turkish and means 'a ruin'. This, together with the fact that the village is not mentioned in Venetian sources but its existence is only first recorded in 1842, corroborates the theory held by Gerola about its foundation - that after the liberation of Crete from the Saracens, the old bishoprics were re-established

From Stavromenos (see route 1) we follow the road towards Viran Episkopi. After 1.5 km we pass through the village of Nea Magnesia which, as its name suggests, was founded in 1923 by 14 families from Asia Minor. We continue southwards; shortly before reaching Viran Episkopi there is a turning to the left towards the little settlement of Ayios Nikolaos.



Arsani Monastery



Nea Magnesia, the church and children's playground.

but the locations of some of their seats were changed. At that time, the first bishopric of A(g)riou was founded in this place. The episcopal church was either that of Ayia Irini, which today lies in ruins, or that of Ayios Dimitrios which is 1.2 km SW of the village on the road towards Loutra. The latter is a three-aisled basilica, roofed with domes; in the arch of the entrance there is a wall-painting depicting Ayios Dimitrios. The excavations conducted by Kalokyris in 1959 uncovered a temple of Artemis-Diktyнна which had previously stood there. In the village, we turn right and then right again after 200 metres. Passing the church of Ayios Dimitrios we come,



Viran Episkopi. The olive mill under renovation.

2.5 km further on, to the road junction which leads on the right to Stavromenos, straight on to Loutra, and left to Pikris. We continue on to Loutra through olive groves (3 km), and then turn left towards Pangalohori (1.5 km), a picturesque

The semi-ruined church of Ayios Dimitrios.



Arsani Monastery

Arsani Monastery lies 12 km east of Rethymnon. It must have been founded during the period of Venetian occupation by a certain monk named Arsenio who gave it his name. There is another opinion, however, which maintains that the name is derived from a certain Arsinoe who left her estate for its building. The cruciform, domed church we see there today was built in 1888 and is dedicated to Ayios Yeoryios. This is the second church, built on the site of the previous one which was consecrated in 1600. The monastery, which houses a museum and a congress centre, was renovated in 1970 and the katholikon decorated with wall-paintings around 1988/90.



village with restored houses and also newly-built villas. A memorial to those executed by the Germans is located in the SE of the village. Half-way between Pangalohori and Sfakaki there is Arsani Monastery, which is worth a visit.

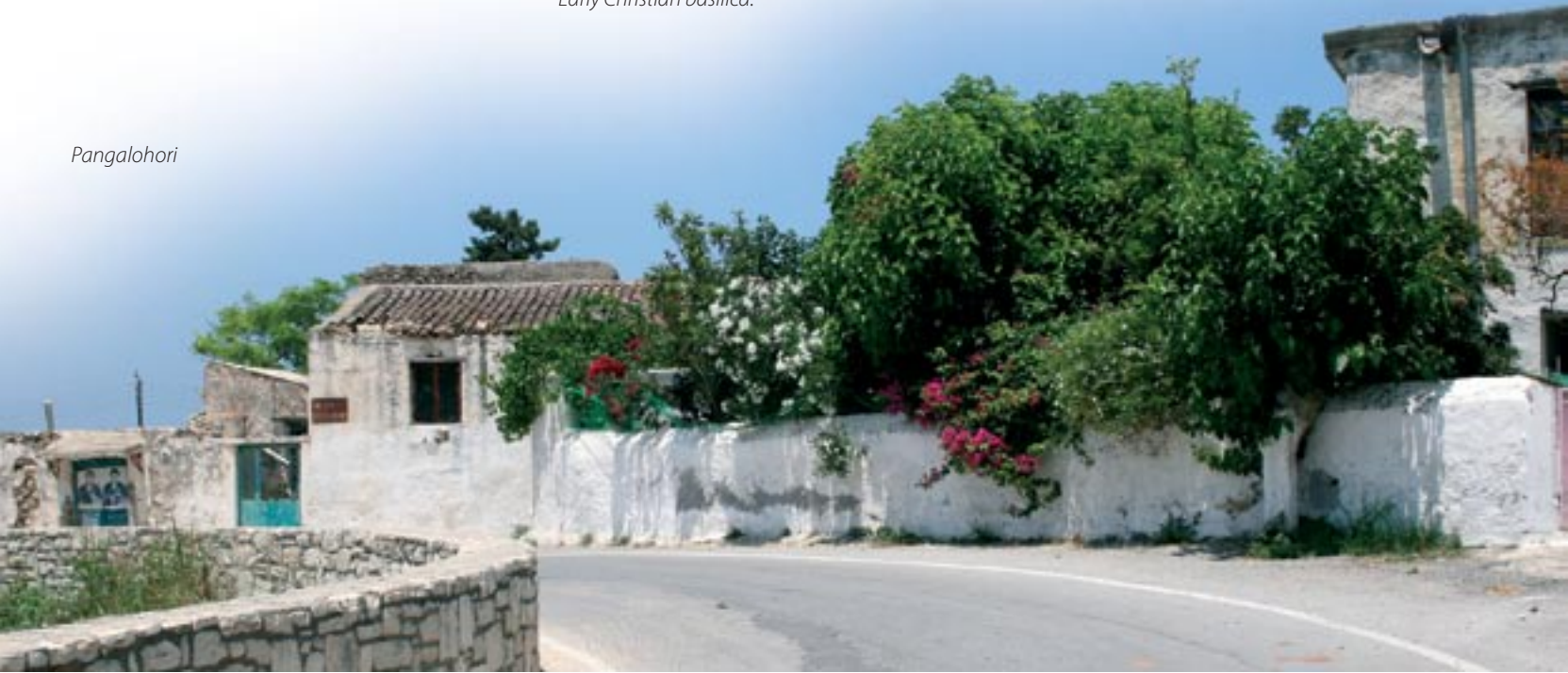


Ano Viran Episkopi. The ruins of the Early Christian basilica.



Viran Episkopi

Pangalohori



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