



Interim report on excavations at Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis in 2013

Kathryn Grant BA MSc AIFA, Dr Paul Everill MIFA FHEA FSA,
Laura James BSc and Ian Colvin

With contributions by Benjamin Neil, and Antonio Reis

February 2014

www.nokalakevi.org

CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
INTRODUCTION.....	2
Overview.....	2
Site Background and Location	2
A Brief History of Excavations at Nokalakevi.....	2
Excavation Methodology	3
Post-excavation Methodology.....	4
The Site Archive.....	4
FIELD SEASON: 2013.....	5
Staffing.....	5
Aims and Objectives	5
Other issues.....	6
EXCAVATION RESULTS: 2013.....	6
Trench A: Summary	7
Trench A: Layers and Deposits	7
Trench A: Walls, Masonry and Structures	10
Trench A: Conclusions	10
Trench B: Summary	11
Trench B: Contexts.....	12
Trench B: Conclusions	12
Trench B: Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating results	14
PROPOSED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2014.....	15
REFERENCES.....	16
APPENDIX.....	18

FIGURES

Figure 1: The location of Nokalakevi indicated by a star (Everill 2012).....	3
Figure 2: Trench locations from the 2009 RTK GPS survey (Everill et al 2011b).....	6
Figure 3: Plan of Trench B showing location of the 2009-12 work in the cemetery; and 2013 Sondages ..	13

TABLES

Table 1: Quantification of site archives for NOK13.....	6
Table 2: Recorded contexts from NOK 13/A (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)	8
Table 3: Recorded contexts from NOK 13/B (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)	11
Table 4: Details of ceramic samples from Trench B for OSL dating.....	14
Table 5: OSL results from the RLAHA, University of Oxford.....	14
Table 6: Trench A 2013 Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)	18
Table 7: Trench B 2013 Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)	18
Table 8: Trench A 2013 Sample Register	18
Table 9: Trench B 2013 Sample Register	18

SUMMARY

The Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN) carried out excavations in the Samegrelo region of western Georgia for the thirteenth consecutive season at the site of Nokalakevi (Archaeopolis). The excavation took place between the 1st and 26th July 2013 and was carried out by a team of British and Georgian professionals with the assistance of student volunteers from Georgia, United Kingdom, United States of America, Holland and Germany.

Though hampered by poor weather, excavation in Trench A continued to produce fragments of the double-headed zoomorphic figurines that are a distinctive feature of Nokalakevi's archaeological record, and are dated by their style and stratigraphic position to the 8th/7th centuries BC. Much of this appeared to be residual material incorporated within later, Hellenistic or Early Antique, yard surfaces which still respect the orientation of Hellenistic structures excavated between 2007 and 2010. Further structural features were revealed which will be more extensively excavated in 2014.

In Trench B, the completion of the cemetery area at the south of the trench in 2012 indicated the presence of an early cultural layer directly overlying a sterile natural deposit. This sequence was tested in the north of the trench through the excavation of two 2m² sondages, which were then extended to cover most of the trench after the natural layer had been exposed. Samples of ceramic and associated soil were taken from the earliest cultural layer and submitted for Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating at the University of Oxford. The results of this dating demonstrate that a small amount of Chalcolithic material was present in the layer, probably via colluvial movement, but that the layer (and its equivalent layer excavated in 2012 in the south of the trench) represents *in situ* Middle Bronze Age cultural material.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Anglo-Georgian Expedition has received financial, administrative and academic support from a variety of individuals and institutions since 2001, without which it would not have been possible to continue our work. We are particularly grateful to Oxford University's Marjory-Wardrop and Craven funds and to Worcester College; the British Institute at Ankara; University of Winchester; University of Southampton; University of Cambridge; University of Bradford; and FaRiG. Professor David Braund (Exeter University); David Connolly (B.A.J.R.); and Professor Michael Vickers (Oxford University) must also be thanked for their invaluable advice and support.

In relation to the 2013 season we are particularly grateful to the University of Winchester, Department of Archaeology for its financial support; and to the Cambridge Archaeology Unit, and Archaeology South-East for enabling the participation of two of their staff members as Trench Supervisors.

As always, our greatest debt is to our Georgian colleagues, and the government and residents of Nokalakevi and Senaki, whose friendship and hospitality have been overwhelming.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This document is an interim report of the results of the excavation undertaken at Nokalakevi in the 2013 season. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with Georgian state legislation regarding excavation within ancient monuments and the relevant permissions were sought from and granted by the Georgian Ministry of Culture. All aspects of the fieldwork complied with the *Standards and Guidance*, and *Code of Conduct* of the UK 'Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA 2008; 2013).

Site Background and Location

Nokalakevi (which translates roughly as 'ruins where once a town was') is located in the west of Georgia in the province of Samegrelo, 15.5km northeast of Senaki (Figure 1). It sits in a loop of the River Tekhuri at the edge of the Colchian plain with hills on its northern and western perimeters. The standing remains at the site consist of a Byzantine period upper citadel atop a high hill, and a lower town on the river terrace below, linked by strongly fortified walls. Recent evidence now indicates that the site was first occupied in the Chalcolithic (c4000BC), with more significant quantities of Bronze Age material culture found and dated by OSL to 2500BC (see page 14). Archaeological evidence indicates the site was extensively exploited in the 8th/7th centuries BC, in the 6th/5th centuries BC, in the 4th-1st centuries BC, and in the 4th-6th centuries AD. This latter period saw the construction of significant fortifications as the Kingdom of Lazika (of which Nokalakevi, known as Archaeopolis to the Byzantine chroniclers, was capital) became hotly contested between the Persian and Byzantine Empires. After the Arab invasions of the 9th century AD, Nokalakevi was apparently abandoned as a fortified site until it became the seat of the princely Dadiani family in the 16th/17th century AD. Nokalakevi has, perhaps, the longest excavated chronology of any one site in Colchis

A Brief History of Excavations at Nokalakevi

For a fuller discussion of the history of study at Nokalakevi please see Lomitashvili *et al* (forthcoming). Key developments can be summarised as follows:

Modern study of Nokalakevi can be traced back to 1833 when the Swiss philologist Frédéric Dubois Du Montpéreux proposed the site as Aia, the capital of ancient Colchis in the Argonautic myths, and Archaeopolis, the capital of late antique Lazika mentioned in the *Novels* of the Emperor Justinian, and by Byzantine historians and chroniclers.

In the winter of 1930-31, a joint German-Georgian expedition led by Dr A.-M. Schneider of the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul undertook the first archaeological excavations at the site. Schneider's results were published in the German periodical *Forschungen und Fortschritte* in September 1931 and confirmed the identification of the site with Archaeopolis.

In 1973 the S. Janashia Museum of History established a large and well-equipped expedition to excavate and conserve the historical monument at Nokalakevi. This continued until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 when large scale works at Nokalakevi temporarily ceased. Three volumes of results were edited by Parmen Zakaraia (1981; 1989; 1993).

The current excavations at the site began in 2001 with the establishment of the Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN). Comprehensive accounts of each seasons' results were provided in the interim reports (Armour and Colvin 2004; Everill 2003; Everill 2005a; Everill 2005b; Everill 2007; Everill



Figure 1: The location of Nokalakevi indicated by a star (Everill 2012)

and Ginns 2005; Everill *et al* 2011a; Everill *et al* 2012; Everill *et al* 2013; Grant and Everill 2009; Grant *et al* 2010; Neil 2006) and were synthesised in the recent monograph (Everill *et al* forthcoming a and b).

Since the turn of the millennium, AGEN has focused on two areas within the walls, Trenches A and B. Trench A lies adjacent to the eastern fortification wall of the lower town, just north of the east gate. Work has been ongoing in this trench since 2001 and it was expanded to its current size (10m east-west by 13m north-south) in 2004. Trench B, located some 60m to the west of Trench A, was opened in 2002 and measures 7.5m east-west by 20m north-south. Excavation in Trench B was suspended during the 2006 to 2008 field seasons in order to concentrate resources on Trench A, but in 2009 it was re-opened with a view to reaching earlier cultural layers.

Excavation Methodology

Excavation is carried out by hand, using picks, shovels and trowels, in order to clean and reduce the level of the trench, define new layers and uncover archaeological features. All removed soil is scanned for the presence of artefacts, which are recovered and bagged for dating and analysis. A context number is assigned to the initial cleaning layer at the beginning of the season to ensure that any unstratified finds are kept separate from the underlying layer.

Local workmen are employed to help with spoil removal and spoil heap management.

A digital photographic record is maintained throughout the excavation of the trench, features and finds. A register of all photographs taken is kept for the archive. In addition, a blackboard, north arrow and scales were included within the photographs to ensure that the details of the feature/artefact/structure are

better illustrated.

Levels of deposits, layers, features and small finds are taken throughout the excavation. In addition, spot heights are taken across the trench at the end of the season.

Individual features and sections are planned at 1:10 and the trench is planned at 1:20.

In the event that graves are discovered, small tools will be used to fully expose and clean the skeleton and associated artefacts for planning and photographs. On the completion of a 1:10 plan the skeleton will be lifted and bagged by separate elements (e.g. left arm, right leg).

At the end of the season both trenches were re-covered using plastic sheeting, and backfilled sufficiently to cover the plastic, in order to protect the underlying archaeology until next season.

Post-excavation Methodology

Finds washing takes place at the end of each day's excavation. All finds are cleaned, dried and bagged according to context and type to facilitate quantification and assessment.

Ceramic material recovered from each context is sorted by fabric, form and style in order to be catalogued and analysed.

Selected small finds and interesting pottery sherds are photographed and illustrated for the archive.

The Site Archive

Two separate site archives are maintained (one for each trench) during the course of the excavations. Since the expedition is an international collaboration the archive is completed on site in both English and Georgian. This means that there are two copies of the site archive for each trench. The Georgian archive is stored at the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, and the British one in Cambridge, with security copies at the University of Winchester. The site illustrations, such as feature and trench plans, are also copied to ensure that the archive is fully maintained in both the UK and Georgia.

FIELD SEASON: 2013

Staffing

The staff and volunteers arrived in Nokalakevi on Saturday 29th June 2013. Work began on Monday 1st July with the reopening of both Trench A and B for the season's excavation. Protective layers of plastic and backfill from the end of the 2012 season were removed from the base of the trench. Excavation took place between Monday 1st July and Friday 26th July 2013.

The expedition staff, led by Professor David Lomitashvili (Head of the Expedition) and Ian Colvin, consisted of eleven specialists in total. The Georgian team was composed of Dr Besik Lortkipanidze (Historian), Dr Nino Kebuladze (Finds Conservator), Dr Nikoloz Murghulia and Ana Tvaradze (Site Supervisors). The British team consisted of Ben Neil (Co-Director of AGEN), Kathy Grant (Acting Site Director), Laura James (Senior Site Supervisor), Antonio Reis (Site Supervisor/Photographer and Illustrator) and Gemma Ward (Site Assistant).

Our Georgian students/ volunteers were: Levan Jajvani, Tamar Niniashvili, Givi Kemoklidze, Giorgi Lomitashvili, Giorgi Arziani and Guram Vashakmadze, Sandro Kartsivadze, Giorgi Kvetenadze and Tiko Antidze.

Our international students/ volunteers were: Alex Gray (University of Winchester), Jessie Melman (Leiden University, Holland), Martin Lohrer (King's College London), Thea de Armond (Stanford University, California) and Sean Doherty (Fitchburg State University, Massachusetts).

Although the entire field team were involved in the initial opening of both Trench A and Trench B at the beginning of the season, it was necessary to distribute the field staff and volunteers between the two trenches once they were both fully operational. Trench A supervision was undertaken by Nikoloz Murghulia and Kathy Grant with a team of between 7 and 11 student volunteers, while Trench B was supervised by Laura James and Ana Tvaradze with between 7 and 11 students.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives for the 2013 field season, based on previous work within each trench, were outlined in last year's report (Everill et al 2013). For Trench A these were as follows:

- To fully remove **294** so that a full understanding of the daub concentration **288** and surface/layer **272** can be established.
- To investigate the stratigraphic relationship between **290** and **272**. To determine if **272** is actually truncated by a cut filled with **290** and, if it is, to interpret the negative feature.
- To concentrate on reducing the level at the south of the trench with the aim of revealing the topography of the underlying deposits.
- To consider the possibility that layer **272** represents an external yard/ surface as it seems to have been respected by the buildings of the Hellenistic period.
- To assign a context number to the recently revealed gravelly silt deposit and associated wall segment in the south-western corner of the trench. To investigate its stratigraphic relationships, and the possible implications if it is shown to be the first foundation cut to be observed.

The broad aims and objectives for the 2013 field season for Trench B were outlined as follows:

- With the cemetery sondage backfilled it will be safe to investigate the deposits adjacent to the cemetery walls (**104** and **105**) to assess the extent of the earliest cemetery which pre-dates those walls.
- To continue excavating the colluvial layer (**446**) to the north

- To complete the excavation of the earliest cultural layers and to reveal natural deposits across the trench

Other issues

Due to poor weather this season, eight excavation days were lost due to heavy rain or waterlogging of the trenches. When excavation within the trenches was not possible the days were used for teaching, with workshops conducted on archaeological stratigraphy, context recording and documentation, post-excavation processing, field and finds' illustrations, surveying and environmental processing and analysis. Because Trench B is located higher up the slope and benefits from better drainage than Trench A, work was often able to continue there even when Trench A was unworkable.

EXCAVATION RESULTS: 2013

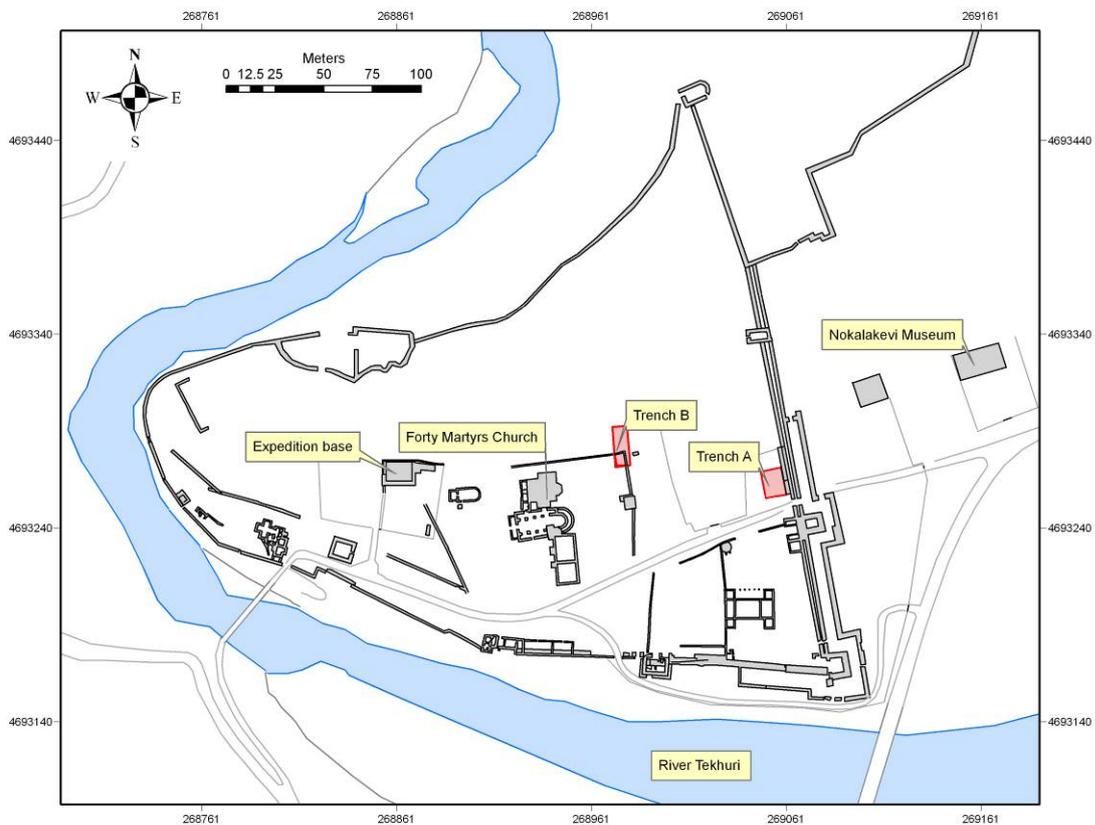


Figure 2: Trench locations from the 2009 RTK GPS survey (Everill et al 2011b)

The context register for this season continues on from previous seasons' excavations within each trench and therefore begins at **303** for Trench A and **461** for Trench B. The contexts have been tabulated below.

TRENCH	A	B
Number of Contexts	9	4
Plan and section drawings	0	5
Soil Samples	3	10
Small finds	13	2

Table 1: Quantification of site archives for NOK13

Trench A: Summary

The results of this season's fieldwork in Trench A have been presented below. Eleven context numbers were taken out for this trench this year (**303-313**) and excavation continued in some contexts assigned in previous years.

Thirteen small finds were identified and recorded during this season's excavations in Trench A. A list of these artefacts can be seen in Table 6 in the Appendix.

Due to poor weather this season, only ten days of excavation (including one day to open and one day to cover the trench) were possible within Trench A.

In preparation for the 2013 field season the sides and surface of Trench A were cleared of silt and vegetation that had accumulated since last year.

An initial cleaning layer was assigned (context **303**). It was necessary to use this number to identify and distinguish any residual/intrusive finds uncovered during the cleaning process since the trench had been open for a year and spoil had been partially backfilled to secure the plastic sheet laid down to protect archaeological remains. Finds were collected and bagged, and a pre-excavation photograph was taken.

Several contexts from previous seasons were investigated further during this season's excavations, including contexts **272**, **283**, **290** and **294**. These contexts will therefore be described in more detail in this season's report. New context sheets were written on site this season to ensure that the records were updated.

The 1m wide east-west aligned step, which was established across the full width of the southern extent of the trench in 2011 in order to improve access and protect the preserved street surface, was also maintained this year. More soil was added over this feature to ensure that it was adequately protected.

No inhumation or cremation burials were uncovered in Trench A during this season and no human remains were identified during the excavations.

Trench A: Layers and Deposits

Excavation in the northern part of the trench continued through layer **294**; a moderately compacted mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional daub flecks, assorted stones, cess mottling and rare fragments of crushed limestone and charcoal flecks. This deposit was first revealed last season and is located across the northern part of the trench where it meets **272** to the east and **290** in the middle (towards the south). This deposit is an Early Antique (6th-4th centuries BC) layer which continues beyond the current limit of excavation and will be further investigated in the 2014 season. An environmental sample was taken (Sample 3) from a charcoal rich area within this context and next to a concentration of daub (**312**). The layer became increasingly sterile with far fewer finds collected as the season progressed suggesting that a new context may be emerging beneath

First identified during 2010, layer **272** was described as having coarse components of varied size, from large unworked limestone blocks to small angular stones, within a matrix of silty clay. Further excavation last year revealed that this layer extended across the entire eastern side of the trench (except where it appears to be bisected by context **290** in the middle of the trench, raising the possibility that **290** is in fact a fill of a negative feature) c.11m north-south, and for 2.6m east-west. The initial interpretation of this context suggested that it may be the remnants of a collapsed structure, but the compaction and extent of this context now suggest that it may be a surface, perhaps utilising recycled demolition rubble from a

previous structure. It is interesting that the later Hellenistic structures (illustrated in the 2008 report) also respect the alignment of context 272 perhaps indicating strict property boundaries/external space in use for a prolonged period. Fragments of 8th century BC zoomorphic figurines were revealed within context 272 in the 2010 and 2011 seasons, but these were interpreted as residual or intrusive. The 2012 excavation of this layer (reducing c.100-200mm spit), however, revealed several additional fragments (10+) of zoomorphic figurines. More of the figurines were found this year (Small Finds 2-8 and 11, see Table 6 in the Appendix of this report) within a centrally located concentration. Including a fairly large body and head piece (Small Find 11), which had details of a collar around the neck and a small ceramic ball (Small Find 13) (c.4cm diameter) with markings and face detail. The weight of this find suggests that it may be a stone which has been covered in ceramic, but further analysis is needed. Towards the end of the season some small fragments material that may be preserved wood (Small Find 10) were also identified following the removal of a layer of cobbles. This is a very interesting, but an unusual find at Nokalakevi, as there are few previous examples of preserved wood at Nokalakevi and these were either relatively recent (<200/300 years old) or carbonised. Soil conditions would normally preclude the survival of wood beyond a few hundred years. Further organic pieces, including wood and bone fragments were also identified within this area and therefore an environmental soil sample was collected (Sample 2) to allow for further analysis. Further specialist analysis is required to determine if the wood is of ancient origin and not intrusive within the layer, the latter seeming more likely. A sample of daub was taken from context 272 (Sample 1) to establish if any carbonised seeds are preserved within.

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions/ Details	Max. Depth/ Thick.	Max. Height / Level
303	Deposit	Cleaning layer	Trench	100mm	-
304	Deposit/ Layer	Dark soil along eastern edge of trench	Full extent unknown in this season	100mm+	-4.07
305	Deposit/ Layer	Mid brown clayey silt deposit in northwest of trench	2.2m N-S, 2m (E-W)	100mm+	-4.12
306	Masonry	N-S aligned stones in southwest corner (above 308)	1.8m N-S, 0.3-0.5m wide (E-W)	300mm+	-3.92- to 3.99
307	Cut	Cut for possible foundation trench	3.5m+ N-S, 0.7 – 1m wide (E-W)	400mm+	-4.16
308	Masonry	N-S aligned limestone and riverstone foundation in 307	3.5+m N-S, 0.3 – 0.5m wide (E-W)	1 course of stones	-4.13 to – 4.17
309	Fill	Soil backfill around stones in 307	3.5m+ N-S, 0.7 – 1m wide (E-W), Depth currently unknown	100mm+	-4.21
310	Layer/ Deposit	Light to mid brown sandy gravel / possible metallated surface	Full extent unknown in this season	?	-4.16
311	Deposit/ Layer	Dark grey silty clay deposit in southwest of trench / possible fill of cut feature?	1.2 N-S, 1.8m+ E-W	100mm+	-4.29
312	Masonry?	Collapsed daub from structure ? / concentration	2m N-S, 1.5m E-W	150mm+	-3.98
313	Deposit/ Fill ?	Dark grey deposit in southeast corner / fill of possible cut feature	2.8m+ E-W, 0.75m N-S	100mm+	-4.19

Table 2: Recorded contexts from NOK 13/A (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

The removal of **284** in 2011 also exposed very dark grey silty clay (**290**) which was mainly concentrated within the central third of the trench orientated approximately NNW-SSE. This context was further excavated this year (removing c.100-200mm spit). The concentration of assorted, limestone blocks, loosely orientated on an east-west alignment continues. However, further cleaning around the limestone blocks this year demonstrated possible, individual stone-lined discrete features, which will require further consideration in the 2014 season. Half a bead (Small Find 9, see Appendix) which appears to be mid-way through the fabrication process (as the hole has not been fully drilled), was also found during the cleaning of this context. By the end of this season, a lighter context was emerging around the stones, so it is necessary to consider the possibility of a new context emerging next season.

A newly revealed context (**304**) was recorded, mostly in section, under the steps on the eastern side of the trench this year. The full extent of this deposit was therefore not observed and it cannot be further interpreted at this time. The deposit consisted of loose dark grey clayey silt with occasional small sub-angular limestones, occasional pottery sherd inclusions and fine roots and may, therefore, be intrusive.

Another new context this year was **305**, which was located in the northwest corner of the trench. This deposit consisted of moderately compacted mid brown silty clay containing weathered limestone, charcoal and daub flecks, as well as occasional pottery sherd inclusions. The deposit was recorded in an area measuring c. 2.2m (north-south) and 2m (east-west), but it continued beyond the western baulk. Further investigation of this context and the adjacent contexts **290** (to the south) and **294** (to the east), will be required to provide possible interpretations for its deposition.

The compact sandy gravel deposit revealed in the southwest corner of the trench towards the end of last year was assigned context number **310** this season. Its full extent is still unknown at this time, due to the complexity of features that seem to be cut into it (including **307** and a small pit/posthole against the western baulk), but it seems to continue beyond the western baulk and perhaps even under the preserved street surface to the south. A firm, dark, brown-greenish grey deposit, **311**, containing rare gravel-sized limestones, occasional cess patches, and rare charcoal and daub flecks, was also emerging in the south western corner of the trench this season. The deposit may be a fill of a possible cut feature which is in turn cut by the foundation trench **307**. Further excavation is required within this area to interpret this context further. This context is, however, very interesting, because it contained the first zoomorphic figurine fragment (Small Find 1, see Table 6) found thus far outside of context **272** within Trench A.

Due to heavy rain and waterlogging this season, excavation in the southern part of the trench was limited to the removal of layer **283**, which was first identified in 2011 within the structure defined by wall **280**. The removal of this layer appeared to reveal new features, but further cleaning will be necessary next season in order to better understand the size, shape, function and character of these new contexts.

The removal of **272** in the south of the trench revealed a new context **313** consisting of very dark grey silty clay with some greenish brown mottling, containing rare charcoal patches, frequent weathered crushed limestone flecks, rare gravel-sized daub pieces, occasional pottery sherds and animal bone fragments. The full extent of this feature is unclear but it measures at least 2.8m (east-west) by 0.75m (north-south) and it is likely to continue to the west. It is possible that this context is the fill of a large cut feature, for which, the edges are not yet clearly defined. A possible worked bone needle (Small Find 10, see Appendix) was found within this deposit.

Trench A: Walls, Masonry and Structures

Following the initial cleaning of this trench at the start of the season, the possible foundation cut revealed last year along the western baulk in the southwest corner of the trench was cleaned further in order for it to be assessed. The cut was assigned context **307**, the stones **308** and the fill **309**. The north-south aligned stone line **308** is made up of 21 undressed limestone blocks and 10 natural river cobbles. The cut for this feature is clear, an unusual trait in this Trench as the similarity between contexts often result in obscured divisions. The feature was not fully exposed as it extends beyond the baulk to the west and south beneath the preserved street. The dimensions of the feature as it is currently observed are 3.5m north-south, and between 0.7m and 1m wide tapering into the section at the southern end.

Positioned slightly higher than **308** (at a maximum height of -3.92 relative to the site zero established in the 1980s) and extending into the western baulk was another line of limestone and riverstones which were observed last season, but were recorded more fully this year. This consisted of a single course of stones, including six undressed limestone locks and one natural riverstone.

This year's excavations also revealed new daub concentrations within **294**, which were similar to those revealed in 2010 and 2011 (recorded as **274** and **288** respectively). However, one area in the northwest of the trench **312** was particularly concentrated and emerged as a conglomerate of fired-clay, charcoal and compact daub, thought to have originated from a collapsed structure. This deposit was identified beneath the cobbles that make up **272**. While the daub, charcoal and cress inclusions within deposit **294** may be evidence of domestic refuse, the presence of these concentrated daub areas within the context may also indicate discrete workshop/industrial activity. Cleaning around this deposit indicates that probable *in-situ* firing has probably caused some of the surrounding soil to become heat-affected. Further investigation in this area next year will be required to understand the more complex strata of these contexts.

Ground reduction within the north of the trench, revealed a possible circular stone feature towards the northwest, which has not been assigned a context number this season as further excavation is necessary to better understand its function. The feature consists of two fairly large, centrally positioned undressed limestone boulders with frequent small limestone blocks forming a surround. It measures 1.7m north-south and 2m east-west. It was revealed at a height of -4.09m.

Trench A: Conclusions

The broad aims and objectives for Trench A, as outlined in last year's report (Everill *et al* 2013) and summarised above, were addressed as follows:

- Context **294** continues to be removed and interpreted. The results of the reduction of this deposit this year suggest that the deposit continues beneath context **272** in the east of the trench with a more dense concentration of fired clay and daub within this part of the trench.
- Further cleaning of the deposit recorded as **290**, which surrounds the WNW-ESE aligned concentration of stones, suggests that this deposit is probably the same as **294** in the north of the trench (or at least is contemporary to it).
- The evidence this year, therefore, suggests that context **272** is probably later than **294** and **290**. This evidence may also support the interpretation of **272** as a possible external yard surface associated with the later Hellenistic structures (the 8th-7th century BC figurine fragments present within this layer may be residual). The excavations this year may also be a step towards discounting the possibility that the WNW-ESE aligned concentration of stones is a negative feature and may even be indicating the possibility of individual, stone-line features (possible graves). Further excavation is required next season to clarify the interpretation.

- Further cleaning in the north of the trench also revealed contexts **304** and **305** in addition to further revealing the circular stone feature in the north, which could be made out in the 2012 end of season plan. Further excavation is required next season to better understand and interpret these features.
- Further cleaning in the south of the trench made it possible to assign contexts and record the sandy gravel deposit (**310**) and north-south aligned foundation trench (**307-309**) revealed at the end of last season within the southwest corner of the trench. Some shallow ground reduction in this area also revealed a complex area of features which appear to be cut into the sandy gravel, metallated layer/surface **310**, including the north-south aligned foundation trench **307**, a small pit/posthole by the western baulk, another possible cut feature to the south (containing **311** and cut by **307**) and a possible northwest-southeast aligned ditch. The stratigraphic relationship between these features and **290** and **272** is still ambiguous (particularly because this is the first season in which the cuts for features were visible and as such there is a possibility that they were in fact cut from higher up through later deposits) but it seems likely that **310** predates **294/290**. Further excavation will be required next season to better understand and interpret these features.

Trench B: Summary

A summary of the results from this seasons field work in Trench B have been presented in the table below. A total of 4 new contexts were assigned this year (**461-464**) and some previously assigned contexts were further investigated (**444;429**). A list of this year’s small finds can be seen in Table 7 in the Appendix.

Context	Type	Description	Details	Max Depth/ Thick.	Max Ht/ Level
461	Layer	Mid greyish brown silty clay in Sondage 1 and Extension this deposit is situated above 462	Sample 7 (bulk soil sample) taken	0.62m	-2.21m
462	Layer	Same as 413 medium cobbles/rocks situated within a silty clay matrix	Colluvial	0.35m excavated	-2.56m
463	Fill	Fill of pit 464 dark grey/black silty clay Fill contains large dump of pottery and some animal bone	Sample 10 (bulk soil sample) taken; Small Finds 1 and 2	0.78m	-1.53m
464	Cut	Pit cut. On surface it has a semi-circular shape, the extent is found to continue under the baulk to the south. Step near vertical sides and roundish base	Contains a dump of pottery within 463	0.78m	-2.31m

Table 3: Recorded contexts from NOK 13/B (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Due to poor weather only 11 days of excavation were completed this year, however, a number of tasks were completed. In addition to the ongoing investigation of a number of deposits, a sampling strategy was in place to collect samples from the earliest cultural layer (**444**) for Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL). A total of seven OSL samples were taken, which included not only the ceramic material but a sample of the deposit surrounding them so that moisture content could be calculated.

In preparation for this year’s work a day was spent opening and clearing vegetation from Trenches A and B. Two sondages were excavated this season to ascertain the depth of remaining archaeological layers down to natural. Both sondages were then extended to include most of the northern half of the trench.

Trench B: Contexts

Last season's work completed the excavations to the south of the cemetery wall with the lowest cultural layers producing prehistoric material. The focus this year was therefore on revealing the earliest layers in the north. Two sondages, measuring 2m x 2m, were opened in the southwest and the northwest corners of the remaining trench (Figure 3).

Sondage 1 was opened at the level of deposit **429** and was situated against the southern and the stepped, western edge of the open trench. Excavations continued in spits through **429** until the underlying layer was revealed. It was then decided to extend Sondage 1 a further 2m to the east. Once **429** was fully removed from the extension, the underlying layer (**461**, a darker soil) was recorded. Layer **461** appeared to separate two areas of dense colluvial rubble (**462**) which was very similar to **413**, and in hindsight **461** may have been the fill of a negative feature. The darker deposit (**461**) was excavated revealing the full extent of the rubble, **462**.

Sondage 2 was opened at the level of deposit **444**, the layer thought to be the earliest cultural layer in the north of the trench. The sondage was situated 0.5m from the edges of the previous season's excavations in the northwest corner and measured 2m by 2m. Sondage 2 came down onto natural at a depth of 30cm (at -0.99m relative to the site zero established in the 1980s). The sondage was then extended significantly, creating an area of approximately 5m by 6.5m which was then excavated to the natural layer.

After completion the natural was cleaned one final time and a circular cut appeared pronounced, continuing under the southern excavation edge. The section was cleaned and it appeared that its cut (**464**) was through **444** and into the natural underneath. The fill (**463**) of this cut contained a large amount of pottery along with small quantities of animal bone and appeared to be a dump of domestic refuse within a steep-sided, round-based feature. The pit was half sectioned and recorded with the remainder left *in situ* under the baulk. A sample was taken of the fill of this feature, and two small finds were recovered. These were two small lengths of copper alloy, one of which has been identified as a needle. Both had a small circular cross section with a slight tapering to one end.

A total of ten samples were taken from Trench B this year. One from **461** in Sondage 1, one from pit fill **463**, and the remaining eight from the lowest cultural layers of the northern part of the trench.

Trench B: Conclusions

The broad aims and objectives for Trench B, as outlined in last year's report (Everill *et al* 2013) and summarised above, were addressed as follows:

- With the cemetery sondage backfilled it was safe to investigate the deposits adjacent to the cemetery walls (**104** and **105**) to assess the extent of the earliest cemetery which pre-dates those walls. This was accomplished in the excavation of Sondage 1, which was cut adjacent to the wall within the Trench. In this Test pit no human remains were found leading to the conclusion that the wall marked the extent of the cemetery. The colluvial rubble found in previous seasons at the bottom of the cemetery sondage were also found within this sondage and were recorded as **462**.
- The excavation of the colluvial layer in the north of the trench was completed by the extension of Sondage 2 across the northern part of the trench. The earliest cultural layer (**444**) was observed to directly overlie the natural layer, which was revealed in the two sondages.



Anglo-Georgian Expedition to
Nokalakevi, Trench B, 2013
End of season plan

Drawn by Laura James; Gemma Ward;
Sean Doherty; Paul Everill

Georeferenced and digitised by Paul Everill

Figure 3: Plan of Trench B showing location of the 2009-12 work in the cemetery; and 2013 Sondages

Trench B: Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating results

During the 2013 field season, a total of seven ceramic samples (Sample Numbers 1-6; 8) were collected from the earliest cultural layers in Trench B (Table 4) for OSL dating at the *Research Laboratory for Archaeology & the History of Art* (RLAHA) at the University of Oxford. Funding from the University of Winchester was only sufficient to pay for three samples to be dated (at a cost of £1650) with additional funding also secured from the same source to pay for thin sectioning and petrological analysis of all the samples (£200). Of the seven samples, Samples 1, 3 and 4 were of the same fabric and therefore Sample 4, consisting of two sherds, was selected for OSL dating and petrological analysis. Sample 5 was a distinctive red and black fired fabric and consisted of 13 sherds and was therefore also selected for OSL. Sample 8 was the only decorated sherd, and was stylistically consistent with the decoration and fabric observed from the south of Trench B in 2012. As a result it was also selected for OSL dating.

	Site grid co-ords	Site level	Depth below turf line	Weight of soil sample	Dimensions of sherd(s)	Notes
1	102/217.6	-0.67m	2.53m	98g	7g; 15mm x 30mm x 8mm	Undecorated body sherd. Reddish brown (brighter red on outer surface). Same fabric as 3 and 4
2	101.8/216.6	-0.78m	2.48m	98g	19g; 45mm x 33mm x 8mm	Undecorated body sherd. Reddish brown
3	102.1/216.3	-0.7m	2.34m	255g	22g; 50mm x 30mm x 8mm	Body sherd. Undecorated. Reddish Brown outside of vessel, Greyish brown interior. Same fabric as 1 and 4
4	103.9/214.7	-0.78m	2.18m	285g	2 sherds: 5g; 30mm x 10mm x 11mm AND 15g; 35mm x 30mm x 11mm	Body sherds. Undecorated. Reddish Brown outside of vessel, Greyish brown interior. Same fabric as 1 and 3
5	104.2/213.8	-0.74m	2.04m	165g	130g (13 sherds of same fabric)	Body sherds of distinctive coarse ware - undecorated. Very friable. Outside of vessel fired black. Interior red.
6	101.8/214.1	-0.8m	2.16m	194g	34g; 40mm x 30mm x 14mm (base) or 8mm (body)	Base of vessel
8	105.0/212.4	-0.89m	2.06m	98g	57g; 80mm x 45mm x 6mm	Wavy applied decoration

Table 4: Details of ceramic samples from Trench B for OSL dating

A full report is currently being prepared by the RLAHA and petrologist, Dr Rob Ixer, and will be written up for publication in 2014. However, the dates produced from the samples (Table 5) show that Samples 5 and 8 are from the Middle Bronze Age (2552 BC +/- 420 years; and 2492 BC +/- 415 years respectively); and Sample 4 dates from the Late Chalcolithic (4042 BC +/- 485 years). Samples 1, 3 and 4 (the Chalcolithic ceramic) consist of only four sherds in total, and most likely represent cultural material brought to the area through colluvial movement. The earliest *in situ* cultural material from Trench B, including ceramic and stone artefacts found in 2012, therefore dates to the Middle Bronze Age and most likely represents part of the Colchian Bronze Age tradition.

Client code	Lab code	Years before 2013	Error
Sample 4	X5494	6055	485
Sample 5	X5495	4565	420
Sample 8	X5496	4505	415

Table 5: OSL results from the RLAHA, University of Oxford

PROPOSED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2014

Trench A

- To further expose the circular, stone-filled feature in the northwest
- To see if context **305** continues or if it has been entirely removed. If the latter, to record this context in the east-facing section in the future
- To see if context **304** is clear in the west-facing section in the future
- To excavate and record the small pit/posthole against the western baulk
- To further clean around the newly identified features (to include possibly **311** and **313**) in the south of the trench in order to determine context/feature boundaries
- To remove the remnants of **272** (and collect any remaining fragments of zoomorphic figurines) along the eastern edge of the trench in order to further investigate underlying deposits and features (to include **294?** **312** and **313**)
- To see if there are any emerging discrete features, perhaps demarcated by stones within the centre of the trench following the removal of **290**
- To investigate the foundation trench **307-309** in the southwest of the trench
- To see if the zoomorphic figurines are present in any additional contexts (other than **272** and **311**)

Trench B

- Although the natural layer has been exposed across most of the trench. The colluvial rubble (**462**) is still *in situ* within Sondage 1 and the other half of pit **464** remains *in situ* underneath a baulk. Further investigation could be undertaken, but it is unlikely that it will add to the site interpretation.
- The section drawings completed in 2012 should be amended to show the natural topography revealed in 2013.

Trench C

- A new 5m x5m trench will be opened in 2014 in order to further develop our understanding of the site. The favoured location for Trench C is currently the area of the old village hospital adjacent to the current expedition base, in the west of the lower town.

REFERENCES

- Armour, N. and Colvin, I. 2004. *Nokalakevi Expedition Interim Report 2001-2003 Seasons*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Bokeria, M. 2009 *Report on Environmental Samples: Nokalakevi 2007* in Lomitashvili, D. (ed) *Angarishi 2008*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report.
- Dubois du Montpéreux, F. 1839. *Voyages autour du Caucase*. Paris.
- Everill, P. 2003. *Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2002-2003*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2005a. *Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2004*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2005b. *Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2005*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2007. *NOK 07/A Interim Excavation Report*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2012. Excavating a memory: the British in Georgia. *Anatolian Studies* 62: 153-162
- Everill, P. and Ginns, A. 2005. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench A 2004*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Colvin, I., Neil, B. and Lomitashvili, D. 2010. Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis: ten years of Anglo-Georgian collaboration. *Antiquity* 84 (326) <http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/everill326>
- Everill, P., Slater, A., James, L. and Colvin, I. 2011a. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Interim report on excavations in 2010*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Marter, P., Lomitashvili, D., Murgulia, N. 2011b. [In Georgian] Mapping Archaeopolis: GPS survey at the multi-period site of Nokalakevi. *Bulletin of the Georgian National Museum*. Series of Social Sciences #2 (47- B): 117-130
- Everill, P., James, L., Bone, K., and Colvin, I. 2012. *Interim report on excavations at Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis in 2011*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Grant, K., James, L. and Colvin, I. 2013. *Interim report on excavations at Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis in 2012*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Armour, N., Lomitashvili, D., Murgulia, N., Grant, K., Neil, B. and Slater, A. Forthcoming a. AGEN Trench A Results: 2001-2010. In Everill (ed.) *NOKALAKEVI • TSIKHEGOJI • ARCHAEOPOLIS: Archaeological Excavations 2001-2010*. BAR International Series. Oxford, Archaeopress
- Everill, P., Lomitashvili, D., Tvaradze, A., Neil, B., James, L. and Russel, C. Forthcoming b. AGEN Trench B Results: 2002-2010. In Everill (ed.) *NOKALAKEVI • TSIKHEGOJI • ARCHAEOPOLIS: Archaeological Excavations 2001-2010*. BAR International Series. Oxford, Archaeopress
- Grant, K. and Everill, P. 2009. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Interim report on excavations July 2008*. Unpublished AGEN report.

Grant, K., Russel, C. and Everill, P. 2010. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi. Interim report on excavations July 2009*. Unpublished AGEN report.

IfA 2008. *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation*
http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/ifa_standards_excavation.pdf (Accessed Oct 2013)

IfA 2013. *Code of Conduct*. <http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/Code-of-conduct-Nov-2012.pdf> (Accessed Oct 2013)

Kvavadze, E. 2010. *Palynology Report: Nokalakevi 2009*. In Lomitashvili, D. (ed.) *Nokalakevis saertashoriso arkeologiuri ekspeditsia 2009*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report.

Lomitashvili, D. (ed.) 2010. *Nokalakevis saertashoriso arkeologiuri ekspeditsia 2009*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report

Lomitashvili, D., Lortkpanidze, B., Kapanadze, T. and Zamtaradze, M. Forthcoming. Previous archaeological work at Nokalakevi, 1973-1998. In Everill (ed.) *NOKALAKEVI • TSIKHEGOJI • ARCHAEOPOLIS: Archaeological Excavations 2001-2010*. BAR International Series. Oxford, Archaeopress

Neil, B. 2006. *Area A Field Report*. Unpublished AGEN report

Schneider, A-M. 1931 'Archaeopolis (Nokalakewi)' in *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 7 Jahrg. Nr 27 p. 354-5.

Zakaraia, P. (ed) 1981. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi I 1973- 1977*. Tbilisi

Zakaraia, P. (ed) 1987. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi II 1978-1982*. Tbilisi

Zakaraia, P. (ed) 1993. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi III 1983-1989*. Tbilisi

APPENDIX

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	311	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (SW Fragment)	96.8, 202.86	-4.29
2	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Head)	105.45, 209.00	-4.02
3	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Legs/South)	105.55, 209.05	-3.98
4	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Legs and body/North)	105.55, 209.20	-3.94
5	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Large Body)	105.85, 209.85	-3.94
6	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Leg/next to 5)	105.77, 209.85	-3.96
7	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Ear/Horn/Nose?)	106.00, 209.80	-3.92
8	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment (Leg/ East edge of trench)	106.10, 209.25	-3.85
9	272	Half a bead – mid fabrication process?	99.63, 207.30	-4.12
10	272	Preserved pieces of wood	105.12, 211.65	-4.01
11	272	Zoomorphic Figurine Fragment / middle of 272, near 290	104.85, 206.35	-4.01
12	313	Worked bone (needle?) with hole in one end	104.77, 204.90	-4.19
13	272	Ceramic ball with decoration and face (?) Child's Toy? Possible stone with ceramic surround	104.84, 208.45	-4.08

Table 6: Trench A 2013 Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	463	Cu alloy length	103.42/211.34	-1.84
2	463	Bronze needle	103.55/211.14	-1.94

Table 7: Trench B 2013 Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Sample No.	Context No.	Description	Sample Size
1	272	Daub fragment (15 x 20cm)	3kg (1 piece)
2	272	Bulk soil sample where possible preserved wood (small find 10) was identified – check for organics, including preserved wood	c. 15 litres (2 bags)
3	294	Bulk sample of charcoal-rich soil around daub area (312)	c. 5 litres (1 bag)

Table 8: Trench A 2013 Sample Register

Sample No.	Context No.	Description	Sample Size
1	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 102.00/ 217.60 (-0.67)	20g
2	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 101.00/216.60 (-0.78)	20g
3	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 102.10/216.30 (-0.75)	20g
4	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 103.90/214.70 (-0.78)	20g
5	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 104.20/213.80 (-0.74)	20g
6	444	OSL pot sample with associated soil 101.80/214.10 (-0.8)	20g
7	461	Bulk soil sample from dark deposit within TP1 and extension of test pit (charcoal rich)	c. 15 litres
8	423	OSL pot sample with associated soil 105.00/ 212.4 (-0.89)	20g
9	444	Bulk soil sample from layer above natural – for general environmental processing	c. 30 litres
10	463	Bulk sample from charcoal-rich fill within pit 464	Large bag

Table 9: Trench B 2013 Sample Register