

## 'Every Little Bit Would Count'

### A Brief History of the Queensland Friends of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens Inc.

By Christopher Griffiths



*Above: Joanna Savage-Slater at right, with Alexander Cambitoglou and Olwen Tudor Jones, Torone 1992.*

*Below: the 1990 Torone team, including four Queenslanders: Andrew Sneddon (back row, 5th from left), Joanna Savage-Slater (back row, 3rd from right), Pat McNamara (front row, 4th from left) and Mila Zincone (front row, 4th from right).*

Professor Cambitoglou, at the 1986 Torone dig, reportedly spoke these words to Joanna Savage-Slater at the birth of the Queensland Friends.

In 2016, our 30th anniversary, the 'little bits' have added up to many thousands of dollars and countless hours of work by dedicated volunteers and students supporting the Institute's work in Greece and Australia.

Joanna was an archivist at the Torone dig in 1986. She had recently completed her honours degree in Greek and was enjoying the thrill of working on a dig, seeing the beauty of the Toronean landscape and being part of a team of like-minded people discovering an ancient civilization for the first time. Upon her return to Brisbane, Joanna set about approaching people with an interest in archaeology. She soon found them. Many of these people became the core of the Friends throughout its first decade. Dr Sam Mellick was the foundation chairman and first president. Professor Bob Milns, Pat McNamara and Marina Girdis were amongst the foundation members.

The Queensland Friends have had strong links with Brisbane's Greek community. One of the first contributions

was the Greek Community of Brisbane Archaeological Scholarship for Torone. The first successful student was Mila Zincone in 1987. Mila returned to Torone three more times. Amongst those student pioneers were Vicki Buchbach, Andrew 'Megalos' Sneddon, Scott McPherson, Ross Eddington, Ms Terri Ellis and Jacqueline Howgego.

When work at Torone ceased, the Greek Community Scholarship combined with the AAIA scholarship provided through the University of Queensland Department of Classics and Ancient History, continued to support outstanding UQ students. Fiona Sutton and Susan Philips were recipients who later contributed to the Friends. Daniel Priest was an AAIA scholarship winner and outstanding UQ Classics student.

The Friends also had a role in supporting Greek language students with an annual bursary. Over the years, this money had been used for the purchase of vital books, attendance at language courses at Macquarie University and other travel arrangements. Past winners include Peter Osborne, Kat White, Nicola Linton, Yannick Grams, Annabel Florence, Nile De Jong and, in 2016, Derek Scott.



Over the years, many individuals have made major contributions to the Queensland Friends. Amongst them are Dr Alex Kondos (1929–2001), committee member and Greek Community representative, Mr Alex Freeleagus (1928–2005), foundation vice-patron, Mr Con Carides, long serving newsletter contributor, Jena Woodhouse, poet and committee member, Dr Paul Eliades, life member and UQ Classics/Ancient History benefactor and Prof Bob Milns, foundation member and current committee member. Dr Nic Girdis, Dr Sam Mellick, Pat McNamara and Professor Milns have contributed as presidents. The work of our secretaries Mila Zincone, Bev Biggs and Carmel Trew is vital to our success.

The activities organised have been varied. There have been exhibition visits: 'The Gold of the Pharaohs', 'Ancient Macedonia', 'Secret Treasures of Russia' and 'Mary Rose'. Other popular events were the archaeological bush picnic dig, trivia nights, video brunches and the Christmas party. The main stay of the program has been the lectures and lunches held on Sundays. The AAIA Visiting Professor lectures are another well-supported event and an opportunity to socialise with our guests at a dinner after the lecture. Not all are fund raising functions but all have been stimulating and provide an opportunity to get together.

As a voluntary group, we have had to respond to many social changes. The biggest was the process of incorporation, which was completed in 2004. At that time, we also had to move to selecting new patrons. The Queensland Governor ceased patronage and so Dr Nicholas Girdis and Alex Freeleagus were invited to fill the roles. 2004 saw Sir James Foots (1916–2010) retire as vice-patron.

Today we face challenges such as an aging membership and greater financial demands with insurances and auditing. We use email for our communications and newsletter distribution. What the next decade has in store is impossible to say but the Queensland Friends will continue for as long as there are enthusiastic people to carry on. Every little bit has amounted to a good deal and what we have built should see us into the future.



*Four past presents together at the 20th anniversary of the Queensland Friends: Nic Girdis, Pat McNamara, Bob Milns and Sam Mellick.*



*Emeritus Professor Bob Milns playing the part of Dionysos in the annual "Bob and Jacque" show, now the "Bob and Con" show, a night of story-telling from Greek mythology and theatre.*



*AAIA Friends and staff gathered at the Brisbane Hellenic Club in September 2016 to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Queensland Friends.*