The Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus mourns the loss of a valued member and colleague, Dr Carole McCartney. Dr McCartney has been a member of the ARU since 2005 when she joined us as an honorary research fellow. Since 2019 she has been working at the Archaeological Research Unit as a post doctoral researcher.

Dr McCartney studied archaeology at the University of Edinburgh and came to Cyprus for the first time in 1987 as a member of Eddie Peltenburg’s team excavating a number of Chalcolithic sites in the Paphos district. This initial visit was decisive in many respects, as Carole became attached to Cyprus both in her professional and her personal life – she met and married Pambos Michael and moved to Kissonerga where they lived together with their two children Katerina and Aimilios. She went on to receive her Masters in 1989 and then her PhD in 1996 from the same University. The topic of her doctoral thesis was ‘The Analysis of Variability in Simple Core Technologies: Case Studies of Chipped Stone Technology in Post-PPN Assemblages from the Levant’. On completion of her thesis Carole continued to do research at a post-doctoral level on a variety of ancient materials, but of course her main focus has always been the chipped stone. Her approach was not solely technical but also theoretical as she explained: “A focus on stone technology enables me to explore a variety of research issues including cultural identity, raw material utilization, trade, and technological practice across time and space”.

The fact that over the last thirty years she worked as a lithic specialist for a number of excavations and surveys in Jordan, Syria, Egypt and of course Cyprus, means she was one of the best known and sought-after lithic experts in the Eastern Mediterranean region. She presented the results of her research in over 25 single authored and over 25 joint authored papers which have been published in scientific journals, conference proceedings and monographs.

Having studied the chipped stone industries of the region for so long, it is not surprising that she was one of the first archaeologists to identify the early date and importance of the material coming out of the Mylouthkia wells in Kissonerga, the lower strata of Kalavasos Tenta and the sites recorded during the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project. These finds pushed the limits of the Neolithic in Cyprus to the period known as the Pre Pottery Neolithic B or PPNB of the Levant, thus opening a whole new chapter in the island’s prehistory. Her involvement with other projects showed that initial, pre-neolithic visits to the island were even earlier, and that Akrotiri Aetokremnos is not a unicum. More recently she was working...
on the material from the early Neolithic site excavated by Nikos Efstratiou in the Paphos forest at Roudias.

It was her wish to understand better and unravel the origins of the Neolithic in Cyprus, however, which led her to finally initiate a project entitled Elaborating Early Neolithic Cyprus Project (or EENC) in 2005. This international cooperation between the University of Cyprus, Cornell University in USA and Trent University in Canada, undertook intensive survey in the margins of the pillow lavas, in order to record lithic scatters, as well as, chert sources. Eventually the main focus of the project turned to the excavation of what looked like the most promising site within the survey area, and that is Ayia Varvara Asprokremmos. The initial intuition was proven correct, and the excavations have unravelled one of the most important prehistoric sites of the island. Through the study of this rather unique and very specialized site Dr McCartney was able to re-consider the earliest phase of the Neolithic.

In 2016 she co-organized at the University of Cyprus together with Prof. Vasiliki Kassianidou, Dr Laurence Astruc and Dr François Briois, the "8th PPN Chipped and Groundstone Industries of the Near East Conference: Near Eastern Lithic technologies on the move. Interactions and Contexts in the Neolithic Traditions" which was attended by a great number of specialists from all over the world. The proceedings have been published in the Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology Series of Astrom Editions.

Since 2019 she held a post doctoral position at the University of Cyprus working with Prof. Vasiliki Kassianidou, Dr Stella Demesticha, and Dr Dora Moutsiou, with Dr Daniella Bar Yosef and other colleagues from Israel and colleagues from the Cyprus University of Technology on a project coordinated by Prof. Phaedon Kyriakides and entitled “Delineating probable sea routes between Cyprus and its surrounding coastal areas at the start of the Holocene: a simulation approach”.

We were fortunate that for personal reasons Carole chose Cyprus to be her home since 1995, and even more fortunate that since 2005 she was officially affiliated with the University of Cyprus as an honorary research fellow. Dr McCartney was one of the leading experts on Cypriot lithics on an international level, and knew the early prehistory of Cyprus better than anyone. Her work was greatly admired and respected. With her passing she leaves a huge gap which will be hard to fill. Her work will keep her memory alive, and her name will continue to be mentioned in current and future scholarship.

Above she was a wonderful person, a good and dear friend. She was a wonderful colleague. She was patient with new colleagues and was eager to train the new generation of archaeologists studying in the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus. All her colleagues here at the Archaeological Research Unit and indeed all the Cypriot archaeological community are finding it extremely hard to believe she is gone. Our thoughts are with her family.