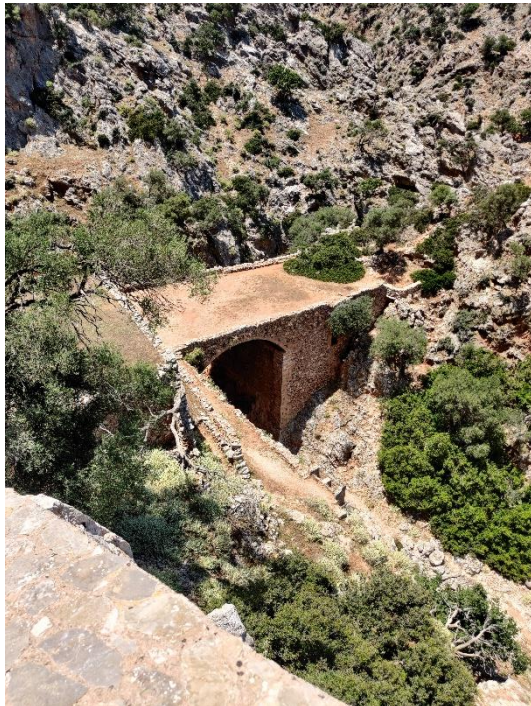


## Bridge of the Month 150, June 2023

### Monastery Katholiko, Crete

A family holiday in Crete has been the source for a Bridge of the Month before, written by Bill, but based on my photos and model, [of the collapsed bridge at Alikianos](#).

This time, we spent a couple of nights in Stavros, and took a day trip from there to the [Monastery Katholiko](#). This is monastery country – to get there, we drove past Agia Triada, and the walk starts Gouverneto, both still in use. Katholiko itself is a ruin.



The approach follows a ridge towards the coast, with views of the sea. It was a hot day, and lizards were busy on the path, including one with a missing tail.

The first glimpse came as we rounded the ridge. Monastery Katholiko sits in a deep ravine, the buildings perched on the hillsides. The bottom of the ravine is a steep sided gorge, and the main bridge spans this.

It seems more substantial – in particular, wider - than necessary to get monks from one side to the other. I think it was designed to provide the meeting square otherwise missing from the site.

The ruins here probably date from the mid 1600s. Information is hard to come by, at least in English. The only detail we found is [on cretanbeaches.com](#)!

This became a religious site because an ascetic hermit lived and died in a cave here, and was later beatified as Saint John the Hermit by the orthodox church. The buildings and bridge were apparently overseen by Venetian noble Jeremiah Tzagarolo, also credited with Agia Triada monastery nearby.

The main bridge wasn't the only arched structure worth nosing around.





Diminutive people in the next photograph give an indication of the scale. These photographs are from my phone, and really don't stand enlargement. Note the evidence top right of render.

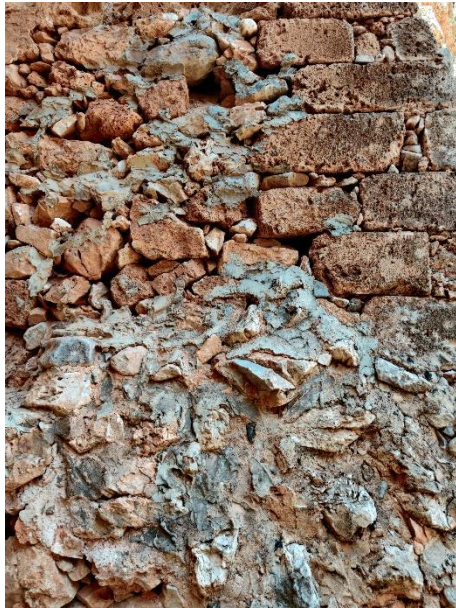


The right abutment in the photo above begins as a skin over the rock of the gorge, and springs from that rock. The way in which the irregular surface was accommodated is delightful. Where there is no solid platform to build on, we arch over.

Look closely at the corner to the right of the arch, and not one but two springers are visible for now-missing arches off to the right. The upper of those is highlighted by the sun in the photo above.







There is little sign of recent maintenance, except this odd superficial daubing with cement mortar (left).

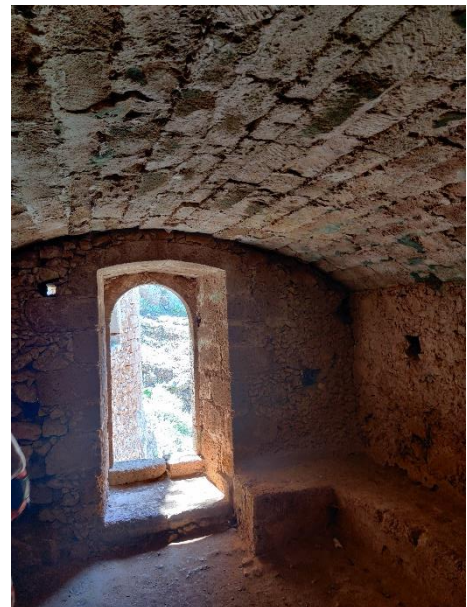
The wingwall (right) shows the construction well; unshaped stones away from the corners.



That is worth a closer view. There are a lot of walls around Chania not unlike this. The gaps were once filled, the surface smooth, the wall protected from gravity and the elements. Where that is not maintained, the stones are at risk. That this has survived as well is a testament to the builders' skill.

The big voids in the lower half of the wall were presumably filled with shards, still present higher up.

Notice the opening in the wall; the abutments are, of course, not full of hard to move material, but contain rather serviceable rooms.





There are some long stones in the ring near the springings, including one trimmed off level to carry the spandrel wall stones, though these give way almost immediately to the usual wall construction from unshaped stone. In areas that appear to consist entirely of shards, the larger unshaped stones are presumably still present behind. Perhaps the spandrel is built not with walls but with rubble through the width.



From there, the gorge continues to the tempting turquoise water of the sea and a bonus bridge, the sketchy remains of a roofed ramp cut into the rock. The top end steps by ~1.5m, so not intended for direct access from the top. A boat house?



All in all an excellent day out.