



# THE KEFI CLUB NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 10

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## Biggest turnout for Christmas meal

The popularity of our Christmas meal grows ever larger with 58 people in attendance, now our fourth such event and probably the maximum that could be catered for. This was due to members from the Anglo-Hellenic Club attending as this was our first joint venture. Also in attendance were John and Doreen Fryer from the Greek Club in Birmingham (it was great to see you). With bunting and posters provided by the Anglo-Hellenic Club to decorate the room and with the addition of table flags of the Union flag and the Greek flag the scene was set for a most enjoyable evening.

Lucas played live music on the piano during courses, which was a real treat and had not been done before (thanks again). Due to Silvia's persistence we had a couple of goes at singing the Greek National Anthem in Greek for those who knew how but for the rest of us in English and quite fittingly finished off the evening. Thanks to James the chef and to Wendy and Sara assisting behind the scenes to ensure the meal ran as smoothly as possible. Thanks to Total-Fage for providing yet again a considerable amount of feta cheese and yoghurt to enhance our meal



## Sweet tooth required

Our January meeting held on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> would you believe, put paid to anyone on a slimming regime for New year as the evening was about some of the traditional festive food eaten during the Christmas and New Year period in Greece. Nick briefly spoke on some of the traditions at this time and introduced what was on offer to taste namely melomakarona- a cookie style biscuit plunged into a honey syrup as soon as it comes out of the oven, kourambiedes – a type of short bread doused in icing sugar and vasilopita-New year's cake. We had three variations of melomakarona to try two hand made and one shop bought (although Colin tried to convince us otherwise) this version had the centres stuffed with walnuts. Interestingly the two hand-made versions by Lyndsay and Jo both followed the same recipe but were different in taste and texture both still devilishly gooey and yummy. There were two variations of kourambiedes. Both were shop bought if I can put it like that and differed in size and slightly in texture. We had two versions of vasilopita, one made with yeast, so it resembled a bread like consistency the other a more traditional cake style filled with almonds, walnuts and pistachios. As is customary both had coins put in them. This was all washed down with of course sweet wines. The well-known Mavrodaphne and a Muscat from Patras (which I must confess I am getting a liking for).



## An old favourite returns

What year would be complete without some wine tasting of Greek wines and this year is no exception. So clear those diaries and toss the coin to see whose driving to make sure you don't miss out on what has been a very good night sampling some different grape varieties than we are usually accustomed to. Held at our usual venue the Bradbury Centre on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February. Please note the extra charge than normal of £6 members and £8 non-members.



## Toppling the topless towers of Troy

This is the title given by our guest speaker Martin Harris from the Department of Classics, Malvern College for our meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March. Martin's last visit you will remember gave us an exceptional evening with dramatic readings performed by three Upper Sixth students from the College.

## News reports

### Greeks are EU's 'most religious'

Greeks are the most religious people in Europe and the eighth most devout in the world, according to the results of a worldwide survey conducted across 68 countries over the summer and made public yesterday.

An overwhelming 86 percent of Greeks claim to be religious, according to the poll, which was conducted upon a sample of 53,749 respondents by TNS ICAP in association with Gallup International Association. The most devout people in the world are Ghanaians, 91 percent of whom claimed to be religious. The least religious were in Hong Kong and Japan, where only 14 percent and 17 percent respectively claimed to be religious.

The poll defined "religious" as believing in a faith rather than attending church regularly. "Religion may not play a decisive role in daily life but religious faith is, to a large extent, a matter of tradition," Panayiotis Pachis, a professor of theology at Thessaloniki's Aristotle University, told Kathimerini yesterday. For example, the overwhelming majority of Greeks attend church during Orthodox Easter, he said.

### Early Greek writing unearthed on Crete

Archaeologists in Crete have found an important trove of archaeological treasures containing some of the earliest known examples of Greek writing, the Culture Ministry said Saturday. It is said the finds were excavated at a long-abandoned site on a hill overlooking the port of Hania in western Crete, which has been identified with the Minoan city of Kydonia. Among the discoveries was an amphora containing an intact text written in Linear B, the language of the court at Mycenae where the legendary Agamemnon ruled.

Also found were two terracotta tablets containing texts in Linear A, an even older alphabet — used around 1,700 years before the common era — which has not yet been deciphered. The ministry said the archaeologists found evidence of a violent fire believed to have destroyed a town on the site around 1450 BC. (AFP)

(ekathimerini.com 12 Nov. 2005)

### Beware of Greeks wearing perms (The Daily Telegraph 4 Jan 2006)

Lloyd's liability specialist Marketform has launched a public liability product —for Greek hairdressers. Apparently there is a growing demand for insurance from the Greek hair and beauty industry. Bad hair days could become big business then.

Risky though. There are almost as many dodgy bubble perms in Greece as occupied the dressing rooms of the great Liverpool FC sides of the late 1970s and early 1980s. If only Thommo, Sounes, Johnstone and the rest had access to such a service in their pomp. They could have sued.



## Prespa Lakes [ekathimerini.com 12 Jan 2006]

A major recent achievement in which MedWet is involved is a program on an integrated approach to culture and nature in the Prespa Lakes Basin. This area, shared by Albania, Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, has a rich cultural and natural heritage and landscapes of unique beauty. The program established the Prespa Center for Nature and Anthropos (PCNA) to undertake research, action and communication on the interface between human activities and the natural environment.

From its headquarters in a traditional building in the village of Lemos in Greek Prespa, it will initially carry out research on land use and habitation patterns in Prespa during the 19th and 20th centuries, develop a Web-based information management platform, and research the cultural heritage of Prespa and a strategy for its conservation. It will also be involved in the conservation of traditional fishing methods and boat construction, as well as the study and promotion of local products in Prespa gastronomy. Some of these activities have already started and the program will be fully operational by the end of 2005.

## Groups revive Ionian estate

*A view of the Sarakina mansion in its dilapidated state after the 1953 earthquakes that rocked the Ionian Islands.*

ALEXANDRA KOROXENIDIS [ekathimerini.com 12 Jan 06]

Sarakina is the name of an impressive, late 19th century mansion in Zakynthos, the biggest country estate on the island and one of the most important in the Ionian Islands.

After the disastrous earthquake of 1953, this island's landmark of architectural pride was abandoned. It gradually fell into a decrepit state and is now facing complete ruin.

But that fate may be avoided thanks to the initiative taken by the Lountzi family, who own the estate, and the Benaki Museum. Two years ago, the two parties instituted "Friends of Sarakina of Zakynthos," an association that works toward finding the necessary funds and establishing a foundation that will be responsible for restoring the damage to the building. After it is renovated, Sarakina is expected to function as a multidimensional cultural center. Its spacious capacity allows for several exhibition halls, a conference center, a library and a concert hall.

The original Sarakina was likely built in the early 19th century and was first depicted in a drawing by Anastasios Sargin from around 1855. But in the late 19th century, the original premises were substantially expanded and it is in this state that it has survived today. Like most mansions in the Ionian Islands, the building's architecture is heavily inspired by Italian villas, especially those of the Veneto area. It belongs to a type of Ionian mansion, many specimens of which were built while the Ionian Islands were still under Italian rule. These mansions served as country homes and were usually built on large plots of land and agricultural properties.

The Sarakina mansion resonates with the aura of a bygone time and evokes the style of life of a genuinely Greek bourgeois class. Its renovation will highlight one of the island's architectural landmarks and will also enliven its cultural life.

## Greek National Anthem – The Hymen to Freedom

The Greek Anthem is based on the "Hymn to the Freedom" a 158 verse poem written by Dionysios Solomos, who was a notable poet from Zakynthos. The poem was inspired by the Greek Revolution of 1821. During 1828 the eminent musician from Kerkyra Nicolaos Mantzaros composed the music for the hymn.

### Artist wants Accommodation

In Cyprus 1 to 2 weeks  
February/March  
For painting trip

Contact Pat Marshall  
(Kefi Club Chair)  
Tel. 01905 745567  
07740 866242  
trishmarshall@tesco.net



## The Anglo-Hellenic Clubs forthcoming events

January 26 Bob & Liz Johnson touring Crete (Their talk on Cyprus was very good with loads of slides and brought back many fond memories of my living there)

February 23 Peter Coxhead on the flora of Athens

March 30 Dr Chris Stockdale on Diving for the Marbles

## Greek New Year

New Year's Eve and Year's Day celebrations are more elaborate than Christmas for most Greek families. The Greek equivalent to Santa Claus is Aghios Vasilis – St Basil – who arrives on New Year's Eve as the clocks strike midnight and, at least traditionally, is when good children receive their presents. Back in October a bright scarlet pomegranate may have been hung at the front door and if so, at midnight, the head of the household will rush to open the door to let the old year out and the new one in, and throw the by now dried out pomegranate against the front step, causing it to shatter and scatter its red seeds all around, symbolising the riches, wealth and happiness that will be bestowed on the family during the coming year. The first visitor to enter the house on New Year's Day was also considered very significant, depending on how luck he or she was considered, or in some cases how unlucky and thus unwelcome! Some households dealt with this by sending out a member of their own family early in the morning through the back garden to run round to the front of the house, knock and be let in, thus ensuring the *kalo pothariko*, as it is known, literally a "lucky footing" – not a million miles from the "first footing" tradition in Scotland! On New Year's Day morning all the children go round to friends or relatives in small groups and sing "*kallanda*" outside the door. These are very similar to our carols, but with different forms for Christmas and New Year respectively. For New Year, the emphasis is on good wishes to the family for a lucky and happy year ahead. St Basil's Cake – the *vasilopitta* -waits at a prominent position on the festive table for the arrival of the New Year, when it is specially cut. A coin is traditionally placed in the pie before it is baked (in the past, affluent households would usually put in an English sovereign!). The *vasilopitta* is sliced in the following way: firstly, a piece for the *Panaghia* (the Virgin Mary), then a piece for the patron saint of the household, then a piece for the house, and lastly a piece for members of the family and guests, with all the mystical pieces kept in the *ikonostasi* – the icon corner of the house. The discoverer of the hidden coin (assuming it doesn't go to the icon corner!) is hailed as the luckiest person for the year ahead. There are various recipes for *Vasilopitta*, some made with yeast, some not. *Extract taken from the inter-net.*

## Useful contacts

Club Chair  
Pat Marshall (01905 745567)  
Email: [pat@theartiststree.com](mailto:pat@theartiststree.com)

Club Treasurer  
Les Roberts (01684 591156)  
Email: [lesvroberts@hotmail.com](mailto:lesvroberts@hotmail.com)

Website Editor  
Jo Taylor  
Email: [jo.taylor@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jo.taylor@hotmail.co.uk)

Club Secretary  
Nick Kontarines (01684 566323)  
Email: [kontarines@btinternet.com](mailto:kontarines@btinternet.com)

Newsletter Editor  
John Gatfield (01905 356431)  
Email:  
[John\\_Gatfield@hotmail.com](mailto:John_Gatfield@hotmail.com)



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