



# THE KEFI CLUB NEWSLETTER

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## Christmas feast with a Greek twist

37 members and friends enjoyed the Christmas meal at Rushwick Village Hall on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December. It was the first time we had staged the meal at this particular venue and proved to be our most challenging yet as the food was kept hot using one standard oven and a hostess trolley. But, thanks to John and his helpers Bridget, Kath, Dianne, Lindsay, Les and Sherrod who all provided some element of the meal it all passed off without a hitch. What a feast we had with tzatziki, fava (Yellow split pea puree), spanakopita as starters, then village salad. As a treat this year home made olive bread. Main course Lamb yiouvetsi (lamb with tomatoes, garlic and pasta-orzo) and for those who like a sweet tooth because you need one, dessert was galaktoboureko (custard pie drenched in syrup) and melomakarona (Christmas honey cookies) and Kourabiethes (shortbread biscuits) which were generously dusted with icing sugar, which caused some amusement as the icing sugar went everywhere. Talking of amusement after the meal we had the longest and funniest raffle thanks to Ann. Nick I thought chose a very good red wine (Agiorgitiko, using the grape variety of the same name from the Nemea region) can't speak for the white as I didn't try any. Thanks again to all concerned. It was great to see those of you who are unable to make many of our monthly meets but make a special effort to come to our Christmas event.

## "To Istanbul in seeking of Constantinople" - 14<sup>th</sup> November



After a little consternation over the date published in the last newsletter as the 12<sup>th</sup> not the 14<sup>th</sup> November as it should have been, 27 members and friends enjoyed a very in depth talk given by Malcolm Delingpole on the history of Constantinople from its very beginning to its demise by the Ottomans in 1453. We were treated to some very good photographs taken by Malcolm on his visit to Istanbul whilst seeking out remnants of Constantinople that survive today untouched, uncared for and hidden from view by the present occupiers. Malcolm also came furnished with books on the subject and self-made posters to

illustrate this fascinating period of Greek history.

## Forthcoming Events

"The Legacy of Greek Sculpture" by Bill Denny - 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan

We welcome back Bill for our first event of 2009 as always at Rushwick Village Hall, commencing at 7.30pm. Bill, you will remember spoke last year on how Greek architecture had influenced many famous designers.



"The Italian Invasion of Greece 1940" by John Fryer - 20th Feb

For our February meeting we welcome a new guest speaker John Fryer who is a regular member of the Greek Club in Birmingham and the Anglo-Hellenic Club in Worcester. John uses newspaper cartoons from countries such as England, Italy, Germany and of course Greece and if memory serves me right there was even one from Russia to illustrate his talk.

A couple of years ago we held a very enjoyable evening sampling Ouzo. On that night we managed to gather 13 different varieties. For our next season Sep 09 – Jul 10 we would like to hold the evening again. That's where you come in. If at all possible would members bring back a bottle of Ouzo from their holiday to Greece. I have started with one from my trip to Corfu last October.



It is not produced in any other part of the world except Greece. Ouzo, is a 100% Greek product and country's national drink. This traditional herbal liqueur, similar to French Pastis, Italian Anice and Turkish Raki, is one of the major Greek exporting goods. It has a very long history dating back to the ancient times of the Byzantine Empire. Ouzo is made from a precise combination of pressed grapes, herbs and berries. It begins as alcohol made from grape skins or other local produce. It is then mixed together with herbs and other ingredients, including star anise, coriander, cloves, angelica root, licorice, mint, wintergreen, fennel, hazelnut and even cinnamon and lime blossom. The mixture is boiled in a copper still,

regulated by a taster. The resulting liquid is cooled and stored for several months before it is diluted to about 80 proofs, or 40 per cent alcohol. Ouzo is usually served as an aperitif on ice and water, in mixed drinks and cocktails. When mixing Ouzo with water it will turn whitish and opaque. The reason is that the anise oil dissolves and becomes invisible when mixed with a usual alcohol content, but as soon as the alcohol content is reduced, the essential oils transform into white crystals, which you cannot see through. The best Ouzo is considered that of the island of Lesbos. Most cafe owners in Greece will admit that the best ouzo comes from this island and they probably carry one of the more popular Lesbos brands. Ouzo drinking is an art. Or maybe it's a way of life, the Greek way of life. It can be found throughout the whole country, in numerous traditional ouzeries, serving ouzo together with typical Greek appetizers, called mezedes with the most popular sardines, calamari, fried zucchini and clams.

## Kourabiethes - Butter and Almond Shortbreads

### INGREDIENTS - Makes twenty to twenty-two

225g/8oz/1 cup unsalted butter  
 150g/5oz<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup caster sugar  
 2 egg yolks  
 5ml/1 tsp vanilla extract  
 2.5ml/<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp bicarbonate of soda  
 45ml/ 3 tbsp brandy  
 500g/1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>lb/5 cups plain flour sifted with a pinch of salt  
 150g/5oz/1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups blanched almonds, toasted and coarsely chopped  
 350g/12oz/3 cups icing sugar

1. Cream the butter and beat in the caster sugar gradually, until light and fluffy (food mixer). Beat in the eggs yolks one at a time (I beat them first and added them in gradually), then the vanilla.
2. Mix the soda with the brandy and stir into the mixture. Add the flour salt and mix to a firm dough. Knead lightly, add the almonds and knead again.
3. Preheat the oven to 180°/350°/Gas 4. Cover half the mixture with clear film and set aside. Roll out the remaining dough until about 2.5cm/1in thick. Press out star or half moon or what ever shapes you have to hand, using pastry cutters. Repeat with the remaining dough.
4. Place the shapes on the baking sheets and bake for 20-25 minutes, or until pale golden. Do not let them brown. (I put mine in the centre of the oven and cooked for 20mins. I felt that they could have done with longer but were beginning to brown).
5. Meanwhile, sift a quarter of the icing sugar on to a platter. As soon as the *kourabiethes* come out of the oven, dust them generously with icing sugar. Let them cool for a few minutes, then sift the remaining icing sugar over them, making them pure white. (That was the hard part).

Recipe taken from "The complete book of Greek Cooking".



### El Greco returns to Greece

El Greco's "The Coronation of the Virgin", bought by the Alexander S. Onassis foundation, has been given on a long-term loan to the National Gallery of Greece, in Athens. The 17th century painting was bought from an unidentified American art dealer last summer. Its previous owners include the Filipino dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. The painting will be added to the eight masterpieces by Dominicos Theotokopoulos already exhibited in Greece.



### Byzantine icon repatriated

A Byzantine icon that was stolen from a monastery in Serres, northern Greece, 30 years ago and was discovered in London in the hands of an art collector was returned to Greece on 20 November, following a British court ruling. The 14th century icon which depicts Christ's removal from the cross is believed to have been a gift by the emperor Andronikos Paleologos to the Timios Prodromos monastery. It was handed over by the Greek Embassy in London to the Culture Ministry in Athens and will find its way back to the monastery after the necessary restoration.

*Pictured left, the icon depicting Christ's removal from the cross*

## Greek speaking tribe in central Asia

A direct association between the ancient Greek language and the spoken word of the Kalash tribe of North-West Pakistan was established during the Greek Linguistics lecturer Elisabeth Mela-Athanasopoulou's lengthy stay in the area bordering Afganistan. The oral tradition has it that the Kalash descended from one of Alexander the Great's generals .

*Extracts taken from the Greek Embassy Newsletter*

## Forthcoming Events of Clubs in the Local Area

### The Greek Club Birmingham

AGM and a Vasilopitta to share on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 in the Staff Common Room on the first floor Faculty of Arts University of Birmingham 8pm start. Contact: Jennie Marathas on 0121 624 0359 or email: [jennie.marathas@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jennie.marathas@blueyonder.co.uk)

### The Anglo-Hellenic Club

World War Two in Crete by John Gatfield on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 followed by the film: "The 11th Day" about the Battle of Crete. For further information, Contact [petersfoxwood@hotmail.com](mailto:petersfoxwood@hotmail.com) or visit the Club's website [www.wahc.org.uk](http://www.wahc.org.uk)

### 3 Counties Ancient History Society

"Three plagues that changed the Ancient World" by Prof. Rob Arnott at the Village Hall, Upton Snodsbury on 15th Jan 2009 at 7.30pm

Contact email: [secretary@cahs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cahs.org.uk) or visit [www.3cahs.org.uk](http://www.3cahs.org.uk)

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