



# Olive Press

Newsletter of the Kefi Club



**W**elcome. We start this year off with a few announcements so I thought it best to do the opening page in an editorial style format.

During our short recess I have been scouring the on-line Greek news sites for snippets of information that you would enjoy reading about. Unfortunately, the news is very much like over here all doom and gloom. Again, Athens has had devastating fires affecting large areas. Also in Athens a far-left militant group were blamed for the bomb which exploded outside the stock exchange causing extensive damage and a woman cleaner working opposite was injured by flying glass. One went off at the same time in Thessalonika outside a government building. Staying with Thessalonika they are currently hosting the World Athletics final. Also over the weekend just gone flash floods has affected Evia with scenes more associated over here with helicopters plucking stranded people from their rooftops. Finally the Greeks go to the polls on 4th October as the Greek Prime Minister, Costas Karamanlis, has called a snap General Election as he seeks a fresh mandate to deal with the economic crisis there.

After that something that you may find enjoyable and rewarding, that is, we start our new year of events off with an evening of **Meze and ouzo on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September** at our usual venue of Rushwick Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm The evening is based on one of the most enjoyable experiences that Greece offers, drinking ouzo with a selection small plates of food (mezethes). The purpose of a meze is two-fold: to complement and enhance the taste of ouzo in this case, it could be wine or Raki and to provide the backdrop for a social gathering (I looked this bit up), unlike appetizers (orektika in Greek) which are intended to whet the appetite for the meal ahead. For those who are the designated driver for the night and for those who are not fans of ouzo there will be non-alcoholic drinks. So come along and share several delightful dishes of food and enjoy the conversation and laughter.

Also during the recess we have had to juggle with the programme a little as detailed below. You will notice that Malcolm Delingpoles' talk on the Elgin Marbles has been brought forward. This has worked well in one sense as our next big announcement is that due to the interest Malcolm's talk will provoke we are planning a trip the British Museum on **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2009**. Members may remember that we tried this trip before but did not get enough people to fill a 30 odd seater coach. After the hugely successful trip to see the Byzantine exhibition we will aim to fill a 46, no a 15 seat coach this time (my place is booked). As we did last time pickups will be in Malvern at the Great Malvern train station (0830hrs) and in Worcester at the bus and lorry car park by the river (0900hrs). We will also have a meal afterwards in a Greek restaurant. Cost for coach is £25. The entrance to the museum is free. The meal is at extra cost. Names to Nick Kontarines, the Club Secretary, as soon as possible of those wishing to come along.

All we will need to do then is see the rest of the marbles in the new museum opened in Athens. One of our members has done just that and I have included his letter further in the newsletter.

Talking of letters also included we have received another from David Rees with his, "Impressions of Crete". Thanks for taking the time. Who knows it may inspire members to go for themselves. Those that have been I'm sure will have happy memories come flooding back from their time spent there.

## Changes to the programme

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|--------------------|---|
| Friday 23 October  | The Elgin Marbles by Malcolm Delingpole.    |
| Friday 19 February | The Fight for Independence by John Gatfield |
| Friday 19 March    | Ancient Greece & The Nazis by Martin Harris |

## IMPRESSIONS OF CRETE



The mountains glinted white in the sunlight, just as expected since Crete is, in geological terms, a young island of limestone only recently folded up from below the sea. The high, rugged mountains are called the White Mountains for good reason. A second look from thirty thousand feet showed white peaks too brilliant for even the purest limestone. So my first sight of Crete had been of snow persisting until May. As the island drew closer other colours appeared: the greys and browns of sun-baked rocks, the bluish green of trees, pines and olives, the white, red and brown of buildings and the shades of blue flecked with white of the sea. That view was my introduction to the island of history, of impressive natural scenery and of a local people who are notably tolerant of tourists sitting on their coastal strip.

I am not an explorer by nature and seven summer holidays would anyway be too little to see more than a fraction of a large island. So what I can write now is an impression largely reflecting my own interests. Our first holiday needs were a beach and a good hotel not too far from the archaeological museum in Heraklion. Our choice of the Rethymnon area met our three objectives with the bonus of proximity to the hills so that a walk of an hour or so takes one to places with an away-from-it-all feel with views that are well worth the climb of four or five hundred metres. A drink at a taverna sets off the morning, perfectly complementing the away-from-it-all feel.

So if one wants to see how man shaped the island what does one look at? The European short list of archaeological sites, museums, churches and forts (the farms that powered the whole enterprise get less attention) also applies to Crete remembering always to include monasteries under the heading of churches. Which to visit is very much a matter of personal taste, but for us sites and museums came first. Knossos is renowned and it being open to guided tours only actually proved a benefit because our guide Costas, an archaeologist himself, helpfully separated fact from myth. Was the palace at Knossos actually a palace? There is no evidence for it. Was it Greek? Not known, but if Linear A is ever deciphered it might clarify the matter. He pointed out foundations that might have been the original labyrinth. If so they confound the myths. Then to the question that archaeologists are really good at: what happened to Knossos? It burned down and was rebuilt a few times until earthquakes finished it off.

A couple of hours later we were at the archaeological museum in Heraklion, which is also guided tours only. Again Costas provided the insight that turns dead artefacts to a picture of the people who made and used them. So how was the intricate gold jewellery of the Minoan period made? Well numerous quartz lenses have been found, quite remarkable for 3500 years ago. Costas insisted there is no direct evidence, but possibly they were combined as in a microscope. We expected to see works of art and were duly impressed, perhaps most of all by statues from the classical and Roman periods, but images of the gods were made to impress.

Passing from the ancient to the more recent world, what should one look at when visiting monasteries? Many have notable works of art representing thousands of hours of painstaking work reflecting a religious tradition different from ours in Britain. But the monks were more than artists and theologians. At Arkadiou (some ten miles south of Rethymnon) a roofless shell marks the place where, in 1866, Greek defenders killed themselves and the attacking Turkish soldiers by igniting the gunpowder store. Then at Preveli on the south coast the monks heroically helped Allied soldiers escape following the Battle of Crete in 1941. In my view history is about people and artefacts provide the evidence.

An impression of Crete has to mention beaches. They vary from stony to fine sand. The key, explained by the manager of an hotel at Nea Kydonia, just west of Chania, is that the west is more sandy and the east more stony. To illustrate the point, his own establishment is on a sandy cove where the shallow water becomes enticingly warm under the afternoon sun. While an hotel manager might just be biased in favour of his own, the east-west trend is something I can believe.

[David Rees, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009]

Have you viewed our website lately? [www.kefi-club.org.uk](http://www.kefi-club.org.uk)

Hi Nick

I hope you are well.

As you know I cannot make the Kefi Club as I shall be in Crete. I thought that you might like an update on our Athens trip?

Easy Jet flights out of Manchester were very good. One flight out on Wednesday and one coming back in on Sunday pm.

Athens Classical Imperial in Karaiskaki Square is now part of Grecotel Chain & recently refurbished. Local area between Omonia & Karaiskaki now dominated by refugees from Africa, Albania, Yugoslav republics & Arab states & crime at night time is a major problem.

Spent a day at the archaeological sites - 12 euros for any 6 sites so managed the Parthenon, Hadrian's Library, Temple of Dionysus & the Ancient Agora. Also went to the new Acropolis Museum which is amazing just for the glass floors which are placed over discovered artefacts.

We found a fabulous restaurant opposite the hotel "Alexander the Great" which was reasonably priced & the food quality was excellent.

Next day we trawled up Lycabettus which was simply amazing. The views of suburban Athens were fantastic & Agios Georgios Church a little gem given the commercialism of the Teleferique & the café / restaurant. Pat couldn't resist spending an afternoon wandering around the shops in Kolonaki.

That evening we had booked to eat at the restaurant on the balcony of the Benaki Museum - something they do weekly on Thursday evenings. That was a fabulous experience as the museum remains open until midnight & after the meal we strolled around the museum.

Next day we spent at the National Archaeological Museum until mid afternoon when with sore feet we returned to the hotel for a swim in the roof top pool! Ate in the Plaka at a very good open air restaurant (Estria)

Last day we climbed Filipappou Hill looking down across to Piraeus & of course sensational views of the Acropolis etc But also views of the smoke coming in from the fires. From taxi window on way to airport the sky became increasingly black & from the plane window the sight of the fires was horrific.

All in all a well enjoyed visit.

Regards.

Sherod

## The Elgin Marbles By Malcolm Delingpole – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 09

As mentioned previously we have had to change the original speaker and are pleased to have Malcolm back to speak about this very emotive subject of the Elgin Marbles or should that be the Parthenon Marbles. The legality of the removal has been questioned and the debate continues as to whether the Marbles should remain in the British Museum or be returned to Athens. What ever your view on the subject, come along to our usual venue of Rushwick village Hall 7.30pm, Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October to hear Malcolm's take on the subject.

### Titbits from the Editor

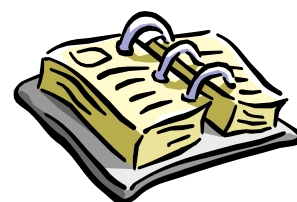


For those of you who missed the talk Les Roberts gave about Leros will notice that he is giving his talk to the Greek Club Birmingham on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October at the University of Birmingham. This may be the excuse you have needed to meet other like-minded people who have a love of all things Greek. The club has always made me feel most welcome on my visits there in the past.

### Gentle reminder

As of yet we have no paid up members which is a first for the club and is a timely reminder that subscriptions are now due. As was stated at the AGM back in May membership is staying at £10 and club night entrance fees are also staying the same £2 for members and £3 for non-members unless otherwise stated in the programme given upon paying fees.

## Forthcoming Events of Clubs in the Local Area



### The Greek Club Birmingham

- October 1** Leros: a little island with a big history - Les Roberts:  
**November 5** To Istanbul in search of Constantinople - Malcolm Delingpole  
**December 3** Christmas celebration

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

- Sept 24** **Film Night** - The classic this year is 'A Matter of Dignity', a black and white film by Michael Cacoyannis who directed 'Stella' and 'The Girl in Black', which we have seen in previous years.  
**Oct 29** **Acrocorinth** – John Fryer explores a topic which leads the listener into Medieval Greece. It hasn't been 'sexy' in archaeological circles so the tours and the guide books gloss over it at the best.  
**Nov 26** **Tales from Corinth Part 2** – Eleni Carrol continues her saga of life in Corinth. The story of 'Just a small Greek Polis!' in January 2007 held everyone in raptures and the second part promises to be as engaging and humorous.  
**Dec 6** **Christmas Dinner** – As usual we enjoy exclusive use of The Quay in Worcester for our annual end of year supper party warmly hosted by owner-chef Russell.

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)

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