



Another chance to Greek dance

A big thank you to Soula for providing yet another physical but hugely enjoyable evening of Greek dance for our May meeting. We started the evening with the AGM and the points from that I will mention later. As is also customary Soula had difficulty finding our venue. This was perhaps a blessing in disguise because by 10pm closing time I think even the fitter and younger members and guests were happy to call it a day. The more senior members by this time had well and truly taken to the side lines, still enjoying the evening clapping along to the music and the occasional 'Opa' thrown in for good measure. Soula introduced a few different steps to the Kalamatinos as she thought they might be easier as it is one of the first dances taught to children. Unfortunately for me that was not the case as my feet still wanted to carry on to do the last dance steps. There's always next time. As with previous years we were given another chance to master the Hassapiko (Butchers Dance).

AGM Points.

Our Chair Pat Marshall opened the meeting. The Club Treasurer Les Roberts gave an account of the clubs financial state. As Les pointed out we have seen a drop in actual membership of the club. This has affected our revenue from subscriptions and therefore has an effect on overall profitability. Therefore, it was discussed and passed that the membership of £10 stay the same but the admission fee be raised for members to £3 and non-members £4 and that is for our normal nights. Our special events of Christmas and the BBQ have a separate price.

As there was no one wishing to take on any of the committee roles this will stay the same. It was appreciated by the committee that a vote of thanks was giving by the members. (Alas, another year of me writing this, soon to recognised awarding winning master-piece, I mean newsletter).

The cookbook was the next topic covered. Members were shown a proof of the cookbook and the style of the book which was agreed on. The cost is approximately £6 to those who would like one. The completion is to be in time for Christmas and will be on sale during our next year in the run-up to Christmas.

Jo Taylor then spoke on the web-site. Less hits recently than we have had in previous years. All the newsletters from issue 1 (2004) to the one prior to this are on the website. Members thought a map would be a good addition to the website. This is now included. Those of you who have seen the website will have seen the links to other sites in the way of advertisements this was a way of earning a few bob, however this has not seen much take up.

The Kefi club does have a facebook group page and has been there for sometime. Those of you who have a facebook account can just type in kefi club to access it. At present there are 9 friends on it. I hope by advertising this in the newsletter we can promote to a wider audience and perhaps get some good discussions going.

Nick Kontarines our Club Secretary then spoke on our next years programme. Some of our old favourite events return as well as some new guest speakers making for another fun packed year ahead.

There being no other business the meeting closed.

Late Easter Celebrations

Our meeting in April consisted of an evening of sampling some of the food associated with Greek Easter in an informal way. There was the customary tradition of egg tapping which our club secretary undertook with some zeal with his box of 15 red coloured eggs. I was surprised at the length of time you have to cook the eggs to dye them and they were still edible. The other great tradition is of course eating lamb and there was an abundance of it and was flavoured with oregano, basil, thyme and black pepper. Another addition to the feast brought along by Nick was cheese and trakhanas pie. This for some was a topic of conversation for a while because they had not come across it before. I have looked it up, so you don't have to see below. With the addition of some Greek wine and Mythos beer what else could you wish for other than to being in Greece.

So what is Trakhanas? It is granulated pasta traditionally made from wheat boiled with sour milk, dried and stored. Although it is difficult to find on the menu in most places, as it considered to be poor people's food. Hence the reason it was widely eaten during the Ottoman rule by both Greeks and Turks alike. Trakhanas is a soup young Greeks do not know at all. Those that do know Trakhanas find it reminds them the old times of hunger and abject poverty. Trakhanas is the oldest recorded Greek soup. This dish of coarsely ground wheat and goat's milk was already known in ancient times.

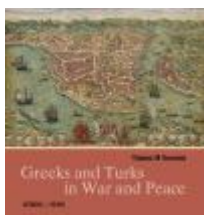
Nevertheless there are some hip lifestyle restaurants in the big towns which have rediscovered this light soup. And for good reason: its basic constituent keeps for a long time and, eaten as a fortifying soup in winter, it can work miracles. Nowadays you can only get self-made trakhanas in the country areas of Thrace and Epirus, whereas in Cyprus it is virtually considered a national dish. Trakhanas was originally made from leftover milk, because that was a way of conserving it. However, in these days of European overproduction, that is no longer of concern.



Alas it has come to that time of year, where we find ourselves approaching the final event. As in previous years for our June meeting we will be holding a BBQ held at Rushwick Village Hall as usual, on Friday the 18th commencing at 7.30pm. As this is our last event before the summer recess we pull out all the stops. Fine weather has also been booked (to date we have only had one rain affected BBQ). So make a date bring along some friends and have a great time although the admission fee is increased the evening is still heavily subsidised for all to enjoy. Please inform our Club Secretary Nick if you are coming and the numbers in your party for catering purposes. Also please advise Nick if your have any special dietary requirements.

A book of interest perhaps?

Greeks and Turks in War and Peace By Thanos M Veremis



Greeks and Turks in War and Peace chronicles the tumultuous road of Greek-Turkish relations from the Ottoman conquest of 1453 to Turkey's current courtship dance with the European Union. Leading historian Thanos Veremis sheds light on the long-nurtured distrust that persists between the neighbours. At the same time, he highlights the areas of common interest between the two peoples and attempts an interpretation of their psyche.

The EVZONES - *I saw this in the Athens News and thought it may be of interest to you.*



Almost as much as the Parthenon, The Evzones symbolise Greece. The name for these elite soldiers derives from Homer's time and means the well-belted, another way of saying well-equipped. Today, these military men of great stature constitute Greece's ceremonial Presidential Guard. Their displays of heroism over the many years also include an often recounted but disputed act of bravery by one purported Evzone, Konstantinos Koukidis, who on 27 April 1941 is said to have defied the Nazis by refusing to hand over the Greek flag flying above the Acropolis. With the Koukidis anniversary around the corner, the Athens News went behind the normally closed doors of the Evzones' barracks in Irodou Attikou Street for a firsthand look at the making of an Evzone.

Practice makes perfect

Lieutenant Antonis Kougkas explains that at any one time there are about 180 serving Evzones. The men are drawn from the regular recruits performing their mandatory nine-month military service. Every three months, about 120 candidates are chosen to endure the six-week training necessary to become an Evzone. "Not all of them get through it," Kougkas says. "Only about half of them actually make it." Several Evzone candidates, wearing olive-green army fatigues, are struggling to discover whether they're made of the right stuff. Drill instructors, also in fatigues but wearing the blue beret that identifies them as full-fledged Evzones, put the candidates through their paces, showing them how to point their toes and march in the elaborate style of the Evzone. Sweat pours down the side of one candidate's face as he holds his leg outstretched. He struggles to hold the pose, his leg hovering so long that his thick thigh begins to spasm. But his face, like that of real Evzones, remains impassive and determined. Inside the barracks, Evzone Stelios Vaporidis and Evzone Dimitris Papageorgiou have volunteered to explain to a visitor the intricacies of their traditional uniform. Like all Evzones, both are tall, easily surpassing the 187cm height threshold that every soldier must match or exceed to even be considered a candidate.

400

The two speak solemnly of their roles and explain that the fustanella, a kilt-like garment, is made of 30m of white cotton, pleated 400 times to mark the number of years of Ottoman occupation. "They were the most difficult years of our nation," says Vaporidis, explaining why details such as the fustanella's pleats are so important. "We managed to free ourselves from the Turks, and in those 400 years we didn't lose our identity as a nation." Evzones are paired, with the same two always standing guard together. And due to the complexity and attention to detail, they also help dress each other, making sure nothing in their uniform is out of place, such as the hand-embroidered fermeli, the Evzone's black-and-white vest (the black representing the mourning of fallen comrades, the white the purity of the fight for freedom). Once dressed, they place on their heads the phareon, a red cap (red for blood spilled). The phareon's silk tassel is black, again in mourning for those who died defending Greece. "It's an honour [to wear the uniform]," Vaporidis says. "Very few people get to wear it." Asked how it feels when he stands on duty, Papageorgiou simply says: "There is no description for that."

Getting the message

While on guard, each Evzone carries an M1 Garand .30 calibre semi-automatic rifle. Designed for the United States army in the mid-1920s by Canadian-born John Garand, the iconic M1 today is the staple of drill teams and honour guards around the world. While the Evzone's rifle is unloaded, it is, however, mounted with a menacing bayonet. The rifle serves as an effective means of communication. While on duty, the honour guards are not permitted to move or speak. However, an Evzone can express his displeasure if, say, a tourist being photographed beside him acts inappropriately by, for example, performing a mock salute. In such a case, the Evzone loudly raps the butt of his rifle on the ground, invariably startling the offender and drawing the attention of the ever-present Evzone supervisor. "Tourists try to make you laugh, but with no success," says Papageorgiou, the hint of a smirk crossing his face. Back at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Keenan marvels at the Evzone supervisor, wearing fatigues and a blue beret, as he straightens out an immobile guard's uniform. "I just think it's really cool that they're so squared away and perfect for presentation for whoever comes from all over the world to see them," Keenan says. "That's how important it is."

Handled with care

THE LEVEL of craftsmanship is truly astounding. Each fermeli - the elaborately embroidered vests worn by Evzones - takes about six months to make. "You have to love the job to do it," head tailor Vangelis Lazos explains. Lazos, who has worked at the Evzone barracks in Athens for almost two decades, and his staff of more than a dozen artisans ensure that the Evzone uniforms are always top quality, handmade products with a keen attention to detail paid. It's a tradition that's been handed from father to son, as with Lazos, whose father devoted 33 years to being a tailor to the Presidential Guards. Similarly, cobbler Ioannis Skandalis has spent the past decade making the Evzones' distinctive tsarouchia, or clogs. An average pair requires 600 stitches and a week to make. Made of calf leather, a pair weighs about 3kg and lasts about three years. "Legend has it," Skandalis says, "that they used to hide a small blade beneath the red tsarouchia's black pompom." The fine uniforms and discipline the Evzones are known for strike a chord with Greeks and tourists alike. "I saw them 32 years ago," Inge Wolff, visiting from Copenhagen, said after a recent changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "And it's fantastic to see them again. It really is a must-see."

27 April 1941: the myth

ON 27 APRIL 1941, several Nazis are said to have clambered up to the Acropolis and ordered Evzone Konstantinos Koukidis to lower the Greek flag flapping high above the Parthenon. He reluctantly complied, taking down the flag he was guarding but stopped short of surrendering it, as the Germans had ordered. Instead, it is said that Koukidis wrapped the symbol of his nation around his body before hurling himself off the Acropolis rock, choosing to plunge to his death rather than fail in his duty. The only problem, it never happened. "This story is not true," says Yannis Mylonas, an expert on military uniforms and weapons at the Athens War Museum and author of a book about the Evzones. "This is a myth."

Nevertheless, today a small marble plaque at the Acropolis recalls the alleged act of heroism, while in 1994 the commander of the Evzones barracks, now deceased, erected a similar plaque recounting the story and naming the square used for drills in Koukidis' honour. "He was a friend of mine," Mylonas says of the late commander. "But I was against [the placing of the plaque]." The Koukidis' story, says Major Dimitris Housianitis, a member of Greece's armoured division, "is something that is not true, but for some people it is nice to hear." Both Housianitis and Mylonas were recently interviewed together at the museum. Mylonas says a Cypriot newspaper journalist appears to have been the first to report the story in 1942, but existing film footage shows the German soldiers lowering the Greek flag themselves. In the ensuing years Greece's military authorities investigated the claim extensively, the historian adds. "This person [Koukidis] does not exist," he says.

9 January 2010: the real deal

ABOUT this act of bravery, there is no dispute. On January 9 of this year an anonymous caller warned a Greek newspaper that a makeshift time-bomb had been placed near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in central Athens and was about to explode. Evzone Marios Theodorou, who was that evening's supervisor, informed Evzone Vassilis Vernikos and Evzone Ioannis Andreakos, the guards on duty, of the imminent threat. "They were asked if they wanted to leave their posts," Lieutenant Antonis Kougkas said. "They each blinked their eyes twice, which means no." With that Theodorou joined his comrades and waited. Hidden in a garbage bin on the pavement about 30m away from the guards, the bomb soon detonated, but without injuring anyone. For their devotion to duty, Theodorou, Vernikos and Andreakos were later honoured by President Karolos Papoulias. In describing their decision to stay put, Evzone Stelios Vaporidis said the men rightly performed their duty. "I think everyone here [at the Evzone barracks] would have done the same," Vaporidis said. "Because that's what we do. We don't move."

Advertising Feature

Greek *Beach by the Thames*

Come and join us for a great fun day out and enjoy Greece in the heart of London!!

From the 18th to the 27th of June from 10:00 to 19:00 visit us and...

- ✓ relax on the sun beds and let your imagination take you to the majestic Greek islands
- ✓ taste delicious Greek recipes and beverages
- ✓ enter the competitions to win trips to Greece and Greek products
- ✓ dance under the rhythms of the contemporary Greek music
- ✓ create your own sand sculpture masterpieces
- ✓ become a champion on beach soccer, beach rackets and beach volley
- ✓ enjoy face painting and other activities for our younger friends

The event promises to be a great family day out with admission free to the public.

How to get there:

The Greek beach takes place on the South Bank Riverside walkway by Gabriel's Wharf (<http://www.coinstreet.org>). London SE1 9PP. Nearest tube is Waterloo or Southwark.

Opening Hours:

Event opens to the public from 10am – 7pm from Fri 18 – Sun 27 June

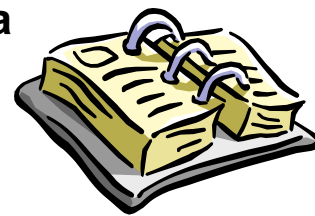
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I hope someone is able to go to this. Just so we get an idea of what it's about. Perhaps some photographs?

Forthcoming Events of Clubs in the Local Area

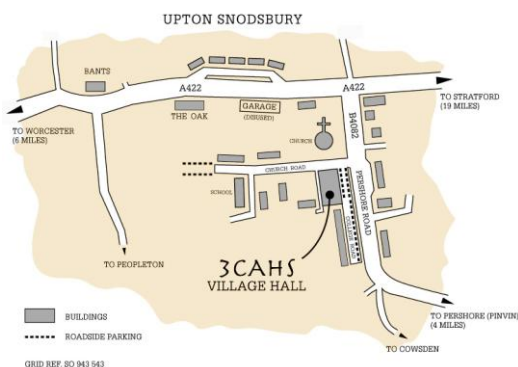


Worcester Anglo-Hellenic Club

June 24th AGM & Symposium - Following the annual report and accounts we turn our attention to a night for members and friends to tell stories, share information and experiences and recall exciting trips and tours.

July 17th Summer Garden Party - We are awaiting confirmation of this year's venue and hosts. As always we are warmly invited to bring a little sunshine, Greek food and wine to share.

Three Counties Ancient History Society



On Wednesday 21st July Diana Wardle will be giving a talk on "Mycenae, is there ritual in the ruins?". I have added a map for those who may be interested in this talk but have never been to this particular club.

Useful Contacts		
Club Chair	Pat Marshall (01905 745567)	Email: trishmarshall@tesco.net
Club Secretary	Nick Kontarines (01684 566323)	Email: nkontarines@btconnect.com
Club Treasurer	Les Roberts (01684 591156)	Email: lesvroberts@hotmail.com
Website Editor	Jo Taylor	Email: jo.taylor@hotmail.co.uk
Committee Member	Ralph Eskenazi	Email: ralesk@metronet.co.uk
Newsletter Editor	John Gatfield (01905 356431)	Email: John_Gatfield@hotmail.com

