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Corfu's English Language Monthly Magazine

February 2009

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No. 218

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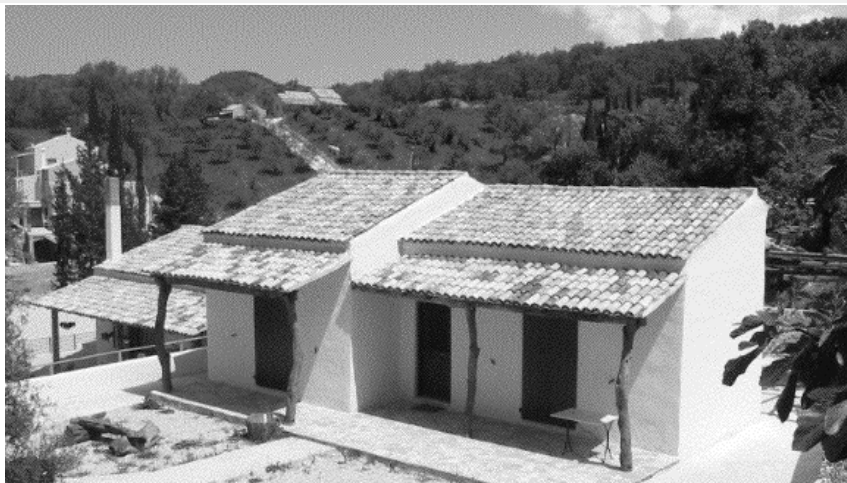
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ear to the ground

IN THIS COLUMN IN DECEMBER 2007 I PREDICTED THAT 'SOON WE'LL BE READING THAT 'CHOLESTEROL IS GOOD FOR YOU.' And it's happened sooner than I thought...

As reported by Liz Jones in the Mail, the latest diet is the 'non-diet'. The book which sells the diet is called 'Eat, Drink And Be Gorgeous' by Esther Blum, who is - to quote the Mail - 'a woman who is about to become as famous in the diet and fitness industries as Martha Stewart is in the world of home decoration, or Oprah Winfrey in the world of self-help. Blum is a registered dietician and certified nutritionist who is urging women brow-beaten by misleading science, peddled by quacks after a quick buck, to forget fasts and ditch the detox.'

Readers, Blum is a fan... of chocolate! In the book, she lists its beneficial nutritional qualities. 'It contains phenylethylamine, which releases endorphins in your brain, making you feel happy, as well as serotonin, theobromine and anandamide, all of which increase circulation and elevate mood. She recommends we eat one ounce of dark chocolate every day.' Hurrah! Greek-made chocolate, like the ION brand, contains a larger proportion of real cocoa than British ones. It seems now that the type called 'Ygeias' ('Health') really lives up to the claim of its name!

According to the article, 'Blum urges us to forget what we have ever been told about good and bad foods, with her second rule being that we women should all be eating full-fat food.' Our bodies need cholesterol in order 'to make oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone, the hormones that regulate our moods. Starving our bodies prevents our hormones from working properly, making us prone to depression.' That accounts for the fact that those hyper-skinny celebs all look so positively miserable. Ever seen Mrs Beckham with a real smile, as against a grimace? So, forget all those 0% yoghurts, and enjoy the real 'Total' ones.

For, according to Blum, we have been actually harming ourselves by avoiding saturated fats. For example, she tells us we are wrong to 'believe the hype about eggs raising your cholesterol level. It isn't true. "Eat the yolk and the white," she says. "Egg yolks contain more protein than the white, as well as lecithin and choline, which help the liver break down and metabolise cholesterol."'

Indeed, Blum's non-diet advises against fat-free foods, which can actually cause us to GAIN WEIGHT.

In the same column, I spoke out against the scam that is Flora margarine (how the company that makes this dangerous food product can be allowed to continue to sponsor the London Marathon is beyond belief!).

'In the 1970s,' I wrote, 'housewives were persuaded by TV adverts that buying Flora margarine instead of butter would prevent their husbands from having a heart attack. Cholesterol had just been 'discovered', and this margarine was supposed to actively diminish levels of the baddy. Now it turns out that all those gullible women were feeding their beloveds with dangerous trans fats.'

Finally, I am officially vindicated. The Mail emphasises Blum's creed 'that it is not the quantity of fat in your diet that could cause

breast cancer, but the quality of fat. Fabulous fats - as well as dairy, these are found in grapeseed, olive oil, nuts and seeds - should take pride of place in your larder. Meanwhile, you should discard low-fat, low-cholesterol spreads and margarines that are regarded by Blum as "frankenfats: the structure of margarine is not found in nature, so the body has a hard job breaking it down. This can lead to headaches, joint aches and a host of other problems."'

As well as the wonderful vegetable oils, what does she recommend? Butter!

(To avoid hidden trans fats in cakes, biscuits and pastries, look at the labelling. The ingredient called 'hydrogenated vegetable oil' is dangerous trans fat.)

So now, thanks to Blum, we can diet and still eat all that stuff we were told was fattening, including unpasteurised cheese such as feta, chocolate cake, avocado, chips, nuts and biscuits - 'just not all the time, and as long as we intersperse them with fruit and veg.'

TALKING OF DIETS, DUE TO CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS - for it is bound to have some effect on the number of tourists and thus on circulation - I've been on a 'credit crunch diet', and very good it is too: cheap and healthy. I provide some tips on our recipe page.

AH, YES - TOURISM! Amid bleak predictions about prospects in Greece (see inside), there IS some good news for us here in Corfu. Read all about it!

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Wednesdays 10.00 Coffee & Kids
Wednesdays 12.00-14.30 Lunch Box
Wednesdays 19.00 Scrabble Club (last Wed. in the month)
Thursdays 10.30 Bible Study, the Old Testament (new series)
Fridays 10.30-12.00 Informal Prayer Meeting

New locum Chaplain the Revd. Bruce Lyons and his wife Eileen will be at Holy Trinity from 3 February until Greek Easter.

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This month's name days

01. Tryfon
03. Stamatis, Simeon
04. Isidoros
05. Agathi
08. Zacharias
10. Haralambos, Harikleia
11. Vlassis, Theodora
17. Theodoros
22. Anthousa
23. Polykarpos
26. Anatoli
26. Fotini
27. Asklipios

Name-day tradition dictates that you visit the home of the celebrating person, who will be holding an 'at home' - no invitation required. Take along a gift (alcohol, flowers, cake) and you will be offered a drink, nuts, cake, and possibly a meze.

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10% drop in UK arrivals predicted

Tourism Ministry adopts new marketing policy

Greek authorities are predicting a nationwide drop of 10% in the number of British visitors this summer, blaming the fall in sterling against the euro for the downturn. According to official statistics, UK arrivals peaked in 2003, when just over three million were registered (2,951,160 by plane and the remainder by rail, car or boat).

In 2007 - the last year for which the data was available - 2,618,542 UK visitors arrived, just under 3,000 more than in 2006. Of those, 2,521,847 came by plane, 42,000 fewer than in 2006, but the slack was taken up by seaborne arrivals, mainly cruise passengers, whose numbers more than doubled from the previous year.

On a 10-year basis, UK visitors increased from 1,711,942 in 1997 to the 3,008,382 peak in 2003, so a 10% fall this year would still leave the country with more arrivals than in the late 1990s. However, the authorities are also concerned about the quality of the holidays; data also indicates that the length of stay of each vacationer has shown a continuous downward trend during the last few years, with the average number of days falling from 10.5 in 2005 to 10.1 in 2007.

Despite the bad news, the Bank of Greece reports that the amount of money British tourists spent whilst on their visit has risen steadily, from 1.93 billion in 2005, to 2.01 billion in 2006, to 2.16 billion in 2007.

Rather than travelling abroad, British holidaymakers are taking their vacations in the UK, with hotel bookings in the south-coast resorts of Brighton, Bournemouth and Eastbourne increasing by 70%, 20% and 66% respectively. However, research by the Internet booking agent Last Minute.com indicates that Britain's unreliable summer weather means that many consumers are leaving holiday decisions until the last minute, both for reservations in the UK and on the continent.

Many of the problems in Greece are being blamed by the void left by last season's bankruptcy of the XL Leisure Group, which flew 300,000 UK tourists to destinations all over the country annually. Amongst the group's subsidiaries, the loss of Kosmar, a Greek specialist with long-term and close ties with the country, is being felt the most.

Specific destinations are generally reporting a drop in bookings, the exception being Kefallonia, where reservations are 8-10% up this year on last. Due to the downturn on Crete, local travel agent Zeus is expecting British tour operators to press for discounts, to the detriment of the quality offered. In parallel, the market for housing, which has been especially strong around Hania, has collapsed, and over 1,500 new-builds remain in the hands of construction companies. The good news in Crete is that arrivals from Russia are up 62% (131,000 from 80,000), while from other former Eastern-bloc countries the increase is 48%.

In order to combat the effects of the global economic crisis, the Greek Minister for Tourism Development Aris Spiliotopoulos is pushing for aggressive marketing, with separate plans to be worked out for the British, German, American, Russian, Balkan and Chinese markets. According to the Minister, tourism policy must be directed at quality and long-term benefits rather than at mass markets and temporary solutions.

'Quality is now the spearhead in an ever-intensifying world of competition,' he told Tourism and Property Magazine. 'Greek tourism must at last provide value for money.'

To this end, the Ministry is pursuing an outward-looking communications policy, targeting both separate markets and age groups with direct and indirect advertising, and at last is starting to exploit the Internet. Mr Spiliotopoulos is making environmental concerns a cornerstone of his policies. 'We are adhering to a policy that ensures sustainable growth in the tourism sector while safeguarding the environment,' he emphasised.

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NEWS

EasyJet expands Corfu service

Following its first year of flights from Gatwick to Corfu in 2008, easyjet has announced a major increase in its service from two regional airports. The low-cost carrier will fly twice-weekly from Manchester to Corfu from 4 May, and from Bristol twice-weekly from 22 May.

Additionally, a new twice-weekly Manchester to Athens service will be launched on 1 August, anticipating a large business clientele as well as tourists.

Since purchasing GB Airways in 2007, easyJet has substantially stepped up services from the regions. Last year, it flew 350,000 passengers from Manchester to eight destinations across Europe, including Crete and Malta, and it is looking to increase this figure to 650,000 in 2009. The airline will base a new £20m Airbus A319 at the airport as its network grows. A spokesman said that advance bookings to existing destinations 'are already looking very good for the next few months.'

As well as Corfu and Athens, additional routes include Bastia (Corsica) from Manchester and Bristol, Newcastle - Malta, and trans-European services such as Basel - Bordeaux, Paris Charles de Gaulle - Ajaccio, and Bilbao - Ibiza.

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Protests kick off construction at Club Med Albania

Despite angry protests from locals, construction has begun on Albania's first Club Med seaside resort village, located on the bay of Kakome, which faces Corfu. The government gave the go-ahead for the project four years ago, but work has been blocked so far by villagers, who say the developers have not obtained the correct building permit and the authorities had no right to let work begin before the appeals court has ruled on whether the land is owned by the government or by 129 local families.

The row highlights the confusion over title to property in post-communist Albania. Who owns what remains a key challenge to economic progress, and returning property to pre-communist owners is mired in corruption and favoritism.

French-owned Club Mediterranee will operate the venture in partnership with local firm Albanian Riviera, who won the license in 2004 from Socialist Prime Minister Fatos Nano. The resort will comprise 350 luxury villas with 700 beds and will cost 30 million euros. The developers hope that it will put Albania, which closed itself off from the world for nearly 40 years after World War Two under Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha, on the mass tourism map.

Villagers said work started at dawn on 9 January after 400 policemen, equipped with two armored cars and sniper rifles, smashed through a roadblock of their cars.

Chamber Music Festival on track for September

Cancelled last autumn, the 2009 'Divertimenti in Corfu' Chamber Music Festival has already attracted good bookings. The Festival will take place from 22 September to 6 October, and accommodation in a stunningly located boutique hotel and a two day excursion to Albania are proving most attractive.

Concerts with the outstanding Herold String Quartet will take place in spectacular settings, including a winery, a historic Venetian mansion, an exclusive Country Club, an 18th century estate with a concert hall in a converted olive press. The organisers, Chamber Music Holidays and Festivals, are also hoping to finalise plans for a concert in a monastery on mainland Greece opposite Corfu, in conjunction with the bicentenary celebration of Byron's stay there.

The Herold Quartet played in England recently at the world famous Eden Project in Cornwall - a huge glass house complex with plants from all over the world. They launched their new CD of quartets by Vaclav Zahradnik and sold about 150 on the spot! They were recently on a European tour and were touring Spain in January. This month, they are on a tour of the UK.

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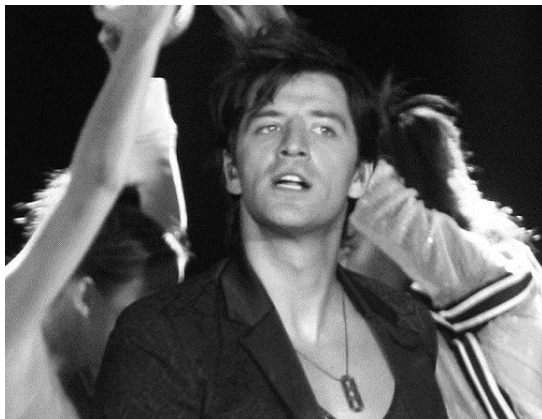
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Sakis heads for Eurovision!



Corfiot-born singer Sakis Rouvas will represent Greece in this year's Eurovision Song Contest in Moscow. Sakis (37), has been performing since 1991, and has sold over two million albums. He is also an actor, record producer, athlete, model and songwriter and has shared the stage with renowned performers such as Nana Mouskouri, Antonis Remos, Anna Vissi, Elena Paparizou and Despina Vandi. He has won innumerable awards. In 2004 he gained third place for Greece in the Eurovision contest with the song 'Shake It'. In August of that year, Rouvas also performed at the closing ceremony for the 2004 Summer Olympics, where he was lowered on to the stage from the air and sang traditional Greek songs. In May 2006, he co-hosted Eurovision, which was held in Athens. He has recently been hosting the first season of the Greek X-Factor. Although 43 countries will take part in this year's competition, Sakis must count as one of the favourites!

Women's World Day of Prayer

(International and Interdenominational)

'In Christ there are many members yet one body'

On Friday, 6 March over three million people worldwide will be praying and worshipping together during an annual day of prayer, using a service prepared by Christian Women in Papua New Guinea.

Emma Wilcock, President of the National Committee for Women's Day of Prayer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, said:

'This is always an exciting day. The extent of the unity in prayer is shown by the fact that the first service will begin at sunrise in Tonga and travel around the world until the sun sets in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then, the Day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries, and throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland alone over 5,000 services will have been held.'

Papua New Guinea is a land of many ethnic groups and over 800 distinct languages of which more than half are unrelated. As a result, there is great cultural diversity, yet the women of Papua New Guinea have emphasized the oneness there is in Christ.

In spite of gender inequality, women in Papua New Guinea are beginning to take their place in professions previously closed to them. There are now women who are pilots, engineers, doctors, lawyers, judges, lecturers and also officers in the military forces. In this way, they make a very positive contribution to their nation.

Further information can be found on the
Women's World Day of Prayer website at

www.wwdp-natcomm.org

Winter Walks

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SATURDAY, 7 FEBRUARY **Arillas: Two Beaches, a Hinterland and a Headland** (3 - 3 1/2 hours *** long but not tough NEW!). Meet at Arillas Seafront, 10.00. Lunch at the Night Owl.

SATURDAY, 14 FEBRUARY **Benitses: Stavros and the Waterworks** (2 - 2 1/2 hours ***). Meet at Benitses Seafront in coffee bars, 10.00 for 10.30 start. Lunch at Paxinos Taverna, Benitses.

SATURDAY, 21 FEBRUARY **Vatos: Myrtiotissa - 'the best beach in the world'** (2 1/2 - 3 hours **** steep climb). Meet in Vatos Square, 10.30. Lunch at Kostas Taverna, Agios Ioannis.

SATURDAY, 28 FEBRUARY **Lafki: Foothills of Pantokrator** (2 - 2 1/2 hours *** NEW!). Meet in Lafki Square, 10.30. Lunch at Stamatis, Strinilas.

SATURDAY, 7 MARCH **Lakones: Alimatades and the 'Bella Vista'**. (3 - 3 1/2 hours *** long but not tough NEW!). Meet at Lakones, first coffee bar, 9.30 for 10.00 start. Lunch at Doukades.

SATURDAY, 14 MARCH **Sidari: Two Ridges** (3 hours *** NEW!). Meet at Kouros Bar next to Markato Supermarket, Sidari Crossroads, 10.00 for 10.30 start. Lunch TBA.

RATINGS

- * very easy
- ** easy with some climbing
- *** moderate, some steep climbs
- **** difficult with rough terrain
- ***** only for the fit!

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Top 'folkrock' musicians for Agios Ioannis Music Week

The future looks like Glastonbury, as Fairport Convention / Jethro Tull artists set to perform

The annual Agios Ioannis Music Week may be set to metamorphose into a mini-Glastonbury Festival, after the organisers secured the participation of members of the famous folkrock/rock groups Fairport Convention and Jethro Tull at this year's September event. The musicians, who perform together as The Dylan Project, have a repertoire which includes folk, rock, country and contemporary, with their own compositions and references to Bob Dylan, as well as Fairport Convention and Jethro Tull numbers.

The founder of the Agios Ioannis Music Week, Paul McGovern, is being assisted by Philip Mawson - who owns a villa nearby and who was the 'point of contact' between the band and Paul - and by a professional who will look after the nitty-gritty of the event. Anticipating success, they have already sent out feelers to other well-known bands with a view to expand the event in the future. It is already being compared to the Cropredy Folk Festival, which takes place every August near Banbury and which was the 'baby' of David Pegg ('Peggy'), the former Jethro Tull bassist and current Fairport Convention stalwart who will perform at the concert. They have christened it 'Cropredy in the Sun', but it could become 'Glastonbury without the Mud' if it takes off!

Fairport Convention was formed in 1967, in suburban north London. The group gained its name from a house named Fairport, family home of rhythm guitarist Simon Nicol, where the band rehearsed. By 1969, with regular work at several underground venues, a record contract, and four albums under their belt, the band was inventing its signature 'folkrock' sound, a hybrid of imaginative revivals of traditional material with modern instrumentation and rhythms. The next LP, *Liege & Lief*, was a classic, arguably Fairport Convention's finest album, and one which established British folkrock as a distinct and influential genre. Critics say that it marked the transition of the band from one that used folk music as an influence on their sound, into a group that specialised in reinterpreting traditional English music, and described the album 'one of the monumentally great records of the last 40 years.'

In 2006 *Liege & Lief* was voted 'Best Folk Album Ever' by Radio 2 listeners, and in the same year it was awarded a Gold Disc for continuing sales.

Fairport Convention is still one of the busiest bands around. The current line-up of Simon Nicol (lead vocal, rhythm and electric guitars), Dave Pegg (backing vocals, bass guitar, mandolin), Ric Sanders (violin), Chris Leslie (lead vocal, fiddle, bouzouki, mandolin) and Gerry Conway (percussion and drums) still packs venues on its frequent tours.

Each year starts with Fairport covering the length and breadth of Britain on its Winter Tour. In August, the band stages Fairport's Cropredy Convention music festival in Oxfordshire. Most years, there is a tour in the USA and Canada and UK tours by the Fairport Acoustic line-up and by spin-off band The Dylan Project.

It is said that 'Fairport did for real ale what the Grateful Dead did for LSD.'

The line-up for the Agios Ioannis Music Week is expected to be Simon Nicol, Dave Pegg and Gerry Conway from Fairport Convention, joined by Steve Gibbons and PJ Wright, who together with Dave Pegg form the trio Dylan Project. >10

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

9> Born in 1950 and brought up in North London, Simon Nicol was a founding member of Fairport Convention. He has been the band's main guitarist and lead singer since 1975. He has also released two solo albums and has toured with a number of well-known artists, including Art Garfunkel.

Born in Birmingham in 1947, Dave Pegg joined Fairport Convention in 1969, after having been involved in the vibrant local rock scene throughout the 60s. In 1980, he joined Jethro Tull as bass player and spent 15 years with the band (when Fairport Convention toured the USA with Jethro Tull, Peggy had to play bass twice every night!). Dave has also co-organised Fairport's Cropredy festival since the early 1980s. From small beginnings, it has grown into a major event that attracts 20,000 fans each August. He is also an accomplished mandolin player.

Born in 1947 and brought up in London, percussionist Gerry Conway joined Fairport Convention in 1998. He played with Cat Stevens for six years, touring all over the world, and also spent a year on the road with Jethro Tull. His session credits include Paul McCartney, Steeleye Span and Ralph McTell.

Steve Gibbons has been playing with rock bands since 1960, and formed the Steve Gibbons Band in 1971. The band worked the pub and club circuits until 1975 when they were spotted by Pete Townshend of The Who. They subsequently toured with The Who in Britain, Europe and the USA, and continue to tour in their own right today. At the end of the 1990s, Gibbons formed the trio Dylan Project, innovatively using fretless bass, guitars, accordion and piano to perform classic Dylan songs, as well as his own material.

PJ Wright is best known as guitarist and lead vocalist with Little Johnny England, slide and pedal steel guitarist with The Dylan Project, and sideman with Steve Gibbons. He is also a talented songwriter, with an ability to blend a poetic sensibility with an understanding of traditional song. He has released a solo album, Hedge of Sound, and he supported Fairport Convention on their 2006 Winter Tour.

In conjunction with the main Agios Ioannis concert, the musicians plan to perform in various combinations at other localities on the island during their visit.

Referring to promotional aspects, Philip Mawson said: 'We are hoping to set up an interview with band members, and a CD will be distributed to Corfu/Greek radio stations. In principle, TV rights and a sensibly priced DVD of the Festival could be used to further future interest. There is so much scope, and with the right enthusiasm and interest this event could become a household name in the music world akin to a mini-Glastonbury. It will be, I trust, a little more controlled but it should provide an opportunity for those involved in the Corfu tourism business and local entrepreneurs to flourish, and as a result it may be considered another aspect of eco-tourism which will boost not only the economy of Corfu but the national one.' Holiday companies will be encouraged to offer packages

based around the event, and the new expanded easyJet services, now flying from Manchester and Bristol, will allow individual travellers access to the Festival.

This year's Music Week is the sixth to take place at this inland village close to the Aqualand Water Park. To date, the event has featured three concerts of diverse music, ranging from classical recitals by organist Lionel Mann and flautist Elke Hornig to evenings of folk and pop with Jim Knight, Richie Henderson, and Russ Bartlett and the Good Old Boys. Given an anticipated audience of over a thousand for the Fairport gig, a new open-air venue will be used instead of Villa Theodora.

Blessed neither with proximity to the beach nor spectacular surroundings, Agios Ioannis seems an unlikely venue for an event which will attract a new category of visitors to the island - and not those in search of a cheap package of sea, sun and booze. But in fact, the village was one of the very first to cater for tourists; in the early sixties, young 'hippies' would pitch their tents in the olive groves near the square, and this area is still referred to as the 'Cactus Hilton'. Soon the old mansion was converted into a Youth Hostel, while some of the cottages along the main street became holiday apartments. More recently, a Dutch cycling company moved in, attracting from April to October family groups who enjoy the novelty of cycling up and down the hills that their homeland lacks. A further ingredient went into the Agios Ioannis tourism cocktail with the conversion of an edge-of-village ruin into the luxurious Villa Theodora, venue to date for the Music Week, which was the brainchild of English/Greek owners Paul and Lula. Unlike at Pelekas - another 'touristic' inland village - development has hardly changed the appearance of the settlement, and summer visitors blend with the local scene. Kostas Taverna - 100 years old and now run by the third generation of the family - is the sole facility in the village centre and combines the character of a traditional kafenion with home-made local and international cuisine.

**Dave Pegg (left)
with PJ Wright**

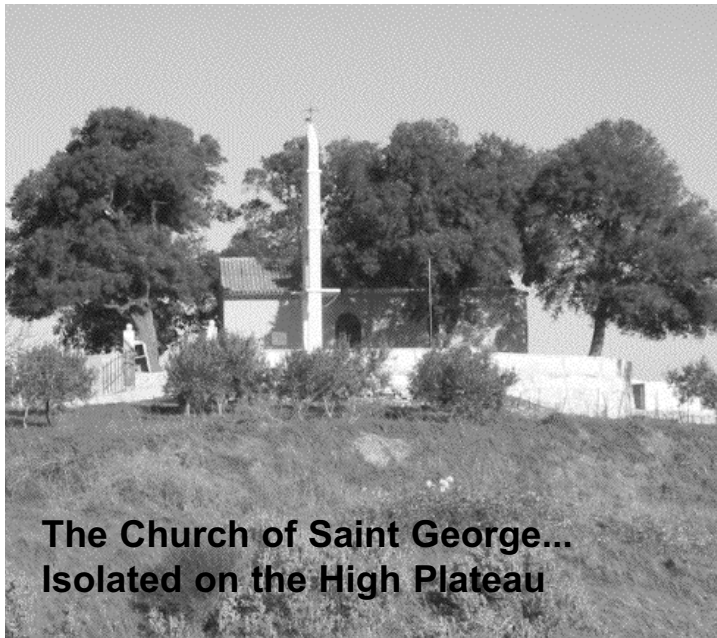


Vitoulades and the High Plateau

✍️ Hilary Paipeti

For much of its way, the road between Makrades and Troumpetta leads across a high and rather bare plateau. It is essentially an extension of the long ridge which pushes westwards from the main Pantokrator Massif and which divides the central - 'Messis' - area of Corfu from the north west 'Girou' (as they were called in Venetian times). This section pushes a finger south-west from the Troumpetta Pass and tumbles into the sea at Angelokastro. Between Agia Anna (where the road up from Doukades tops the rise and crosses down to Alimatades) and Vistonas no habitation is to be seen, for it's a bleak place in winter when the rain clouds descend to ground level and there is little shelter from the wind, from whichever direction it blows. But in the summer, the air is cooler than on the coast - after all, the plateau is a thousand feet above sea level. Its highest point is the great round hulk of Mount Arakli, which rises to 505 metres (1500 feet approx). This is the mountain which backs south-facing Lakones and which protects that blessed village from prevailing strong north-westerlies.

15>



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Varipatades House



PLACES OFF THE MAP

>12 Most people drive across the plateau to enjoy the splendid views, which in many spots take in vast tracts of countryside as far as the sea in both directions, north and south. Otherwise, Mount Arakli, like a giant upturned bowl, dominates in an otherwise featureless landscape.

But look more closely and Corfu - as ever - springs surprises. Coming from the direction of Makrades and immediately after you pass from under the shadow of Arakli, a walled churchyard stands just above the road on the left. Six massive holly oak trees ring the church, the only trees of any size on the exposed plateau. The church, dedicated to Saint George and home of a small cemetery, is set at a major crossing of ways - where the route along the plateau (now the motor road), crosses the ancient 'kalderimi' mule track which comes up from Lakones (and from Paleokastritsa) and which possibly continued on down to Alimatades (this part is now a track). Perched on a knoll above the crossing, the church has a truly amazing view to each side of the plateau - and with its dark trees it surely must be visible on the skyline from below. Its strategic position, the placing and evident age of the trees (holly oaks take centuries to grow to this size) prompt the now unanswerable questions: Was it a prominent guide for travellers? Since a large part of Northern Corfu is visible, was it a beacon point, used to transfer warnings from the one side of the great ridge to the other?

Like many 'beauty spots' (Mouse Island come to mind), the church itself becomes less interesting once you are within its yard. The tall, slim campanile is modern, and reroofing of the building has been terribly botched with corrugated panels in place of tiles. But the trees are venerable and of course there is the view...

Gaze out southwards and, tucked under the crest of the ridge you spot some old buildings, appearing almost as part of the natural terrain. This is the abandoned settlement of Vitoulades (not to be confused with Vitalades in the South), now comprising fewer than a dozen houses, huddled together and most in a ruined condition. Once, the inhabitants must have cultivated this section of the plateau intensely, with only the foodstuffs they could not produce themselves supplied via the 'kalderimi' path (the walk from Lakones and over the top takes only 30 minutes). Somewhere, there must be an aloni (threshing floor) but I have yet to discover it.

in 1917, the French, who were occupying Corfu, carried out a survey entitled 'The Agricultural Abundance of the Island of Corfu', in which they documented resources and production in every community. Though separated by the wall of rock which backs Lakones, Vitoulades was part of the same 'koinotita'. With a population of 760, it had 10 acres under potatoes, 40 acres under vines, and 30,000 olive trees which gave 240,000 kilos of oil.

Additionally, it possessed 300 sheep and 150 goats. Vines, and some vegetables, are still grown on the plateau, even though the producers no longer live in the vicinity.

Abandoned villages can be spooky, and in winter Vitoulades certainly has an eerie atmosphere. To visit the settlement and maybe meet the ghosts, take the concrete lane opposite the church. Immediately, turn off left on a grassy path, walled on the right and raised slightly above the fields on the left. It takes just a few minutes to reach the houses. The path continues just below the buildings, very soon meeting a track. Go left and follow the track through patches of cultivation. Don't miss a covered well on the right - perhaps once the main supply for irrigation. Though it is dated 1956 in its present form, it is probably much older, as evidenced by the huge tree, now dead, which once provided shade. The track leads on to meet the road, where a left turn takes you back a few hundred metres to the Church of Saint George.

Now get out your picnic and enjoy another *Place off the Map*.

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Extra-Terrestrials?

✍ *Lionel Mann*

Some forty years ago I was appointed Director of Music at a boys' Preparatory School in a former British colony. The country is very sparsely populated and children as young as six from remote locations need to attend boarding school for their education.

The appointment was alleged to be one of the most prestigious in the land; twenty-four of the hundred-and-twenty pupils were Choral Scholars, singing services in the Chapel. When I had attended for interview the Headmaster told me, "Of course, we cannot make this completely a home-from-home, but we do our best." He had shown me the dormitory of the six- and seven-year-olds, each bed with a teddy-bear or similar on its pillow. I had hesitated before accepting the post as I was very happy where I was, but eventually I yielded to a barrage of telephone calls from the Head and moved in.

However, by the time I arrived to take up my post, the ethos had changed. Many of the former pupils going on to Public Schools at thirteen had asked to be taken away because of the harsh conditions in secondary schools in that land, and parents were complaining of the 'cosy' conditions prevailing at the preparatory establishment where I took the job. The Head had appointed a Housemaster from a Public School with the mandate to 'toughen up' the pupils. All boys, even the six-year-olds, were roused from bed at seven in the morning to run naked across the field, white with frost in the winter, to the swimming-pool and there forced to swim a length before returning to the school where those taking a warm rather than a cold shower were denounced as 'wimps'. Additionally, a strict regimen was enforced by Matron and Housemaster with a multiplicity of petty rules, infringements being met with savage beatings. This was in the second half of the twentieth century, but nobody had told the populace that the Old Queen was dead, and a very archaic system of education prevailed country-wide. The main winter game was Rugby Football and the boys were urged on with, "This isn't a game, it's war. Go for it, get your man." (Their national team still performs a war dance before its matches). Three times we of the staff were required to drive around the sparsely-populated rural locality to find pupils who had run away. They were hauled back to very severe punishment.

I stuck with it for two terms before resigning, sick of witnessing the distress caused by the barbaric conditions. As a result, I was also declared a 'wimp'; but word spread and within two days I received a telephone call offering me a cathedral appointment that I immediately accepted.

All this is but to set the scene for very intriguing incident. Of course, given such a Spartan environment, boys were very loth to risk breaking rules, one of which forbade leaving bed after lights-out. However, one morning all thirty eight- to thirteen-year-old occupants of one dormitory, prefects included, admitted to having scrambled from their beds to watch a very strange aircraft, "like a fried egg", passing their windows, uncurtained and open day and night except to driving rain. The machine was glowing brilliantly white and emitting a musical hum, "Just like the organ in the Chapel, sir." They saw this phenomenon vanish

behind a nearby hill. Their various accounts were significantly similar, and even iron authority refrained from punishing misdeemeanour under such circumstances; moreover a day-boy, from a farm in the direction that the aircraft had disappeared, arrived that morning telling of a large circle of scorched crops in one of his father's fields. I have never ridiculed any tales of UFOs since!

Planet Earth has been around for four-and-a-half billion (4,500,000,000) terrestrial years, give or take a few either way; only a brief five million (5,000,000) years ago our ancestors came down from the trees; a mere one-hundred-and-fifty thousand (150,000) years ago had they become recognisably hominid; a scant ten thousand (10,000) years ago were the first signs of 'civilisation' apparent. (Debatable - we still go to war - a total relapse into barbarism.) Given reasonable conditions - unless some brainless US president starts throwing nuclear missiles about or we manage to destroy completely our environment through widespread industrial and internal-combustion pollution - the human race may expect to be around at least another three billion (3,000,000,000) years before our orbit becomes too close to the Sun to support life. We must beware of intellectual arrogance; there is so very much more to be learnt; we are yet in the nappy stage of knowledge and technology. I always warned my pupils, "The more you know, the more you realise that do not know."

Does anybody seriously believe that we are the only inhabited planet amongst the many thousands spinning around in space? And as there are other life forms out there, may some not be infinitely further along the road of development and able to travel around the universe at will? Too, they will also be truly civilised and pose no threat to our lower form of life. 'Star Wars' is no more than a tragically distorted fantasy; no genuinely intelligent power seeks to dominate and exploit others.

What would be the purpose of an 'alien' visit to Earth? Exploration? Research? They would naturally be very reluctant to become embroiled in the rash of hostilities that currently plague this planet; might they even leave 'missionaries' with the purpose of trying to guide us to better things? There are also records of the inexplicable disappearance of notable personages - "Beam me up, Scotty!"

Accounts of mysterious appearances exist, the most widely publicized allegedly having been accompanied by strange music and exotic beings. The depositing of an exemplary alien would explain the event at least as plausibly as the more widely accepted but somewhat incredible infantile account, and it would also explain the arrival's amazing adult knowledge of curative procedures!

Scoff if you will, but there are infinitely more things in this universe than are dreamt of in our current very primitive philosophy. UFOs and benevolent extra-terrestrials are by no means beyond the bounds of possibility.

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Eat to Beat the Crunch!

In the middle of a long winter and, with the pound in free-fall and tourism in the doldrums, not knowing what the rest of the year holds, it's time to tighten belts, and get healthy at the same time! The new 'non-diet' diet which we announced in this month's 'ear to the ground' is great news since it means that with care you should be able to lose weight without resorting to expensive 'diet' foods. The best way to cut back on the shopping bill, and on the calories at the same time, is to cut out the 'empty' calories, those that give you no nourishment - cakes, biscuits, crisps - and processed foods like sausages and ham. More good news is that animal fats are allowed, so you can eat the cheaper and less lean cuts of meat (in moderation), as well as cheese (feta and myzithra are better for you than calorie-laden hard cheeses - less expensive too!), eggs and full fat yoghurt.

No Waste, More Taste

A chicken (5-6 euros cost) will feed two people for three meals.

Day 1: Roast the chicken, well seasoned and with a little olive oil or butter. Serve the legs, wings and the crispy skin off the breast with baked potatoes and veg or salad. Reserve some of the juices or gravy if you've made it - do not remove the fat.

Day 2: Detach the breast meat from the carcass and pull into long, thin pieces. Heat up gently in the juices or gravy.

Day 3: Put the remaining carcass, including the neck, into cold water with onion, garlic and herbs, bring to the boil and simmer for about an hour to make a stock. Strain and press the onion and garlic through a sieve back into the stock. Remove the bits of meat from the carcass and neck and add to the stock. Now you can use the stock to make a soup - with rice, egg and lemon; or diced vegetables; or some soup pasta.

The 'Holy Trinity' of Winter Vegetables

There are a surprising number of dishes you can make with the cheapest of winter vegetables - potatoes, carrots and onions - either just by themselves or with the addition of greens, tomato, leek and beans. I'm not giving you quantities for most of the dishes, but leave it to your judgement.

Potato and Carrot Mash

Boil potatoes in salted water with carrots and a couple of onions. Once all is done, drain and mash everything together, with enough of the cooking water to make a puree. Stir in a little butter or olive oil. Nice with boiled eggs. For a change, spread the puree in a gratin dish and sprinkle a layer of breadcrumbs (made from a leftover loaf) on top, perhaps mixed with grated cheese, then put under the grill for a few minutes

Carrot and Potato Soup

Boil carrots with an onion, a potato and a chicken stock cube, with water to cover. Once done, puree (an electric hand-blender is great for this) and add enough water to make a thick or thin

soup according to your taste. Drizzle with oil at the table, and provide paprika for those who wish to spice it up.

Carrot and Red Lentil Soup

Simmer red lentils with chopped carrots, tomato puree (* see below), an onion or two and some paprika. When all is soft, puree and season with salt to taste.

Easy Mingstrone

In a large casserole, fry a chopped onion gently in olive oil until getting soft. Add garlic, a diced carrot and some chopped garden celery (selino) if you have it and fry a little more. Finely shred a wedge of cabbage, add it to the pot, turning until it is coated with the oil and beginning to go limp. Add a couple of diced potatoes, a couple of tablespoons of tomato puree and water. Season (you can use a stock cube) and allow to simmer until all the vegetables are soft. Just before serving, open a tin of cannellini beans, drain, rinse in cold water and add to the pot along with a handful of soup pasta, previously cooked until just tender. Heat through and serve, with a little grated cheese if you like.

Vegetable Stew

1 wineglass olive oil, 2 large onions, 2 tablespoons tomato paste or a tin of chopped tomatoes, 2 leeks, 2 carrots, some cabbage, 6 medium potatoes, bunch of dill or parsley, salt and pepper

Roughly chop the onions, carrots, cabbage and dill or parsley, slice the leeks and cut the potatoes into wedges.

Heat the oil and sauté the onions until it has taken a little colour. Add the rest of the vegetables and mix well, then mix in the tomato paste or chopped tomatoes. Pour on enough hot water to come up level with the ingredients.

Simmer at a lively rate for about an hour until tender and the liquid mostly absorbed. Raise the heat if necessary at the end to evaporate any excess water. Allow to cool for a few minutes before serving.

You can make this with cooked leftover pork, adding it a few minutes before the dish is ready. For a change, omit the tomato and sprinkle with lemon juice just before serving.

You can stretch out a small quantity of any sort of vegetable stew by boiling some red lentils (they cook in no time) and adding them to the reheated veg.

It's Called Scrumping!

You can't find it in the dictionary, but in rural North West England the word describes - ahem! - gathering fruit or other produce from elsewhere than your own garden (don't, of course, scrump from obviously cultivated patches). In winter, if you live in the country, you can scrump citrus fruit to your hearts content, since many people do not harvest their orange and lemon trees. If you feel bad about this, gather the undamaged windfalls. You should never have to pay money to get your vitamin C! Juice them for your breakfast or serve them as a salad, like many locals used to do. Although it sounds unlikely, it's a wonderful way of using up oranges when they're plentiful, like now.

Orange Salad

Peel oranges, removing as much of the white pith as possible. Cut into chunks and place in a deep salad bowl. Pour on olive oil, and sprinkle with salt and paprika to taste. Serve immediately.

I'm not sure whether picking wild greens counts as scrumping, but it's a valuable foodstuff, rich in vitamins B, K and E as well as minerals, depending on the location and type of plant - and is virtually calorie-free. I've written about which greens to pick and how to prepare them in the past - see the November issue, now free to view on the website

www.thecorfiotmagazine.com. A bowl of greens drizzled with olive oil and lemon juice, served with feta cheese and good crusty bread, makes a surprisingly satisfying meal.

Sautéed Greens

Leftover greens can be recooked. Drain, squeeze dry and chop. In a frying pan, sauté chopped garlic in olive oil until it takes colour. Add the greens and turn in the oil until coated all over. No lemon juice with this. You can also add it to some leftover lentils to make an iron-rich and very inexpensive meal.

Quick Fixes

~ A tin of cannellini beans, drained and rinsed, mixed with a tin of tuna in olive oil, finely sliced onion, parsley and black pepper.

~ An avocado, peeled and sliced and arranged on a plate with myzithra cheese and finely sliced onion.

~ A large tablespoon tahini paste, mixed with the juice of half a lemon. Slowly beat in enough cold water to make a creamy dip and serve with raw carrot sticks. Tahini is not cheap, but a little goes a long way.

~ Nuts, too, are not cheap. But they're filling, and they'll give you your ration of vitamin E. For a good breakfast, or a quick lunch, serve some walnuts, almonds and husked sunflower seeds - you'll only need a small fistful of each per person - maybe with a little dark chocolate.

~ Total full-fat yoghurt is still the best, and it's excellent with a good tablespoon of honey, or preserved fruit made by St. Dalfour, which contains no added sugar.

* Tomato paste is now sold in little wedge-shaped soft packages containing 70 grams - that's 2-3 tablespoons, the perfect amount for a stew or soup. While weight-for-weight these packs cost more than tins, there's no waste, and you'll never again find forgotten, half-used tins growing fuzz at the back of your fridge!

Buddha taught giving

Maureen McNamara

Buddha taught the practice of giving. He said 'giving is a virtuous mental intention to give or a bodily or verbal action of giving that is motivated by a virtuous state of mind.' We find many opportunities to give at this present time and if we do so with the right mind we receive great benefit, both now and in the future. However, if we give money or gifts in order to look good or to a person who does not need them it is not as beneficial as to put them aside until we can give, with a mind of love and compassion, to a needy person.

It is better to give a crumb to a hungry insect than a diamond with a motivation of pride or attachment or so that the recipient will think highly of us. Similarly, if we give in order that the person will be in our debt and feel obliged to us with either material things or help, again it is not a good mind. If we give with unconditional love, expecting nothing back, this is most beneficial. We should examine our motives honestly. It is also not ideal to give with resentment, thinking how we would like to keep the gift but do not wish to be considered mean. Maybe we give to a beggar and then realise that he might spend the money on drink, or that he may have more than us. This should not be our concern, likewise if our gift is passed on to another, we should be happy that we have enabled another to be generous. Motivation is all important and we can always transform negative thoughts into positive ones.

If we are miserly and hang on to possessions we do not need, they are of no use to anyone as they will just deteriorate and have to be left behind when we die. This does not mean that we should donate everything indiscriminately, without wisdom, when demanded - for example weapons or even too many sweets to a child.

We can also give love and assistance to people and animals and our time to those who are sick or troubled, our patience to listen when somebody needs to talk even if it makes us late or we find it boring. We can give fearlessness and protect and rescue others from danger, like natural disasters. We can save animals and insects which are trapped or starving and put ourselves in their place instead of looking the other way. In circumstances when we cannot help physically we can pray - it really does help; we are quick enough to pray for ourselves.

The most superior form of giving is to offer spiritual help and advice. This is permanent and can be taken to the next life, whereas all other actions are only temporary and cease when this life ends. Again, this should be offered with a pure intention to help the person stop their suffering and find permanent happiness.

Finally, we can realise that this practice benefits ourselves as well as the recipient. Because not only do we feel good, but the action creates the causes to be reborn with plentiful resources, whereas miserliness creates the cause to be reborn in poverty. This is obvious when we see the haves and have nots in this life. This does not happen by chance. If we have the pure positive wish to help all living beings when we give, this multiplies the act enormously.

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WHERE INDEED TO PUT THE RUBBISH?

I have no answer to the question of the title; wherever the rubbish goes, as the years pass those places will also get full. I used to live in Northumberland, and they use abandoned open-cast mines which are contracted for about ten years, after which time the sites have to be restored to their natural beauty. But not knowing the ins and outs of the toxic content of waste, this may not be an option here. So the answer is perhaps not where to put the rubbish but to reduce the amount of rubbish we all produce. Manufacturers need to make more products that are bio-degradable rather than recyclable.

Dr Lionel Mann could instantly reduce his discarded tins of cat food to zero. Why not buy large paper sacks of dried cat food - they have all the nutrients cats need, and the packaging easier to break down. If tins are the preference then many websites sell 'tin crushers'; which reduce the bulk of the waste but does not solve the problem. I remember back in the 80s in Greece it was nearly impossible to find tins in any supermarket, so going back to basics could be the answer now.

Living on an island, I am certainly more aware of the waste and how to reduce it. I try to buy bio-degradable items; in the long term this has to be part of the solution. More companies need to use such material in their packaging.

Reusing items also is a suggestion - keep jars to make marmalades, plastic bottles to make home-made lemonade, tubs used for dips to store homemade soups in the freezer.

In Britain we are told to pick up dog poo in plastic bags and dispose of it in bins. With so many Brits on the island, I have to wonder how everyone clears the dog mess from their gardens - the same way most probably. I was guilty of this but have now ordered an 'eco dogloo' to put in the garden, so the waste breaks down.

Those of us with gardens should have compost heaps. There are so many available through the web and lots of companies will deliver out here. Or make your own.

My home and life do not speak 'green' to me or anyone, but I am now starting to look for solutions to reduce rubbish - and saving money at the same time is a bonus.

I have one more suggestion for The Corfiot. Why not have a section for people suggestions 'green solutions'? Maybe The Corfiot could start

by not using a plastic sleeve over their newspaper. I can only think it is so no-one can read the paper before they buy; but as there is no WHSMITH

on the island, I doubt anyone would. Put staples in the paper, or use a paper bag to cover it and maybe thinner paper for the magazine.

Comparing Greece to the UK I think Greece has a far better system of refuse collection -

large bins everywhere that are always emptied, instead of homes having to keep smelly waste bags in their homes for a week or two. Some may say England has a good recycling system, but news recently showed warehouses full of things to be recycled but no money to do it.

Marina, by email

Regarding presentation of *The Corfiot*, the plastic bag is purely to protect the paper from the elements, given that it sits on the stands for a month, whereas the most of the newspapers it shares the space with are on sale only one day. EVEN IF we used staples, we would STILL have to protect it - no-one wants to buy a grimy copy. And a PAPER bag would be opaque so people wouldn't see what they were buying! At least we are saving on one process and on one resource (metal staples). The paper is the thinnest we can get away with, bearing in mind complaints from many readers when we used 'newsprint-quality' paper rather than the slightly thicker one we print on now we have gone into partial colour.

Regarding the use of tins, my two dogs eat one 400 gram tin between them daily, mixed with dry food. If I give them purely dry food, after a few days they refuse to eat it. Dr Mann does give his cats dry food, but probably like me needs to vary their diet, cats being notoriously fussy.

For my own eating, I admit to buying lots of tins of beans, chickpeas, tuna, sardines etc. Unless you have a family, it is not cost-effective to cook a single portion of dry beans from scratch; and I don't want to boil more than I need and then have to eat beans for days! Same goes for fish - what fishmonger is going to sell me half a dozen sardines? (By the way, I eat no meat at home, so fish is my main animal protein).

Regarding running a 'green tips' column. Great idea! But we did it once a few years ago, and ended up writing all the suggestions ourselves under various pseudonyms, because readers failed to contribute...

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Win a meal for two by solving an

Anagram

In his bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown writes that 'once [her grandfather] had written the English word 'planets' and told Sophie that an astonishing ninety-two other English words of varying lengths could be formed using those same letters. Sophie had spent three days with an English dictionary until she found them all.'

Can anyone beat that? (I'm on 114 and counting.) There's a prize of a dinner for two at the Night Owl at Afionas (Friday or Sunday evenings only) for the person who finds most. Another next month.

RULES:

- ✓ Words must have three letters or more.
- ✓ Each letter can only be used once in a word.
- ✓ No sticking 's' on the end to get a plural or third-person verb.
- ✓ No abbreviations/proper nouns, unless in normal use as such.
- ✓ No foreign words unless in common use.

Entries alphabetically, by email only, to corfiotm@otenet.gr
Closing date 28 February - result in April's issue.

The Editor reserves the right to disallow words.

Here's the word again:

planets

Joke of the Month

An older lady gets pulled over for speeding.

Older Woman: Is there a problem, Officer?

Officer: Ma'am, you were speeding.

Older Woman: Oh, I see.

Officer: Can I see your licence please?

Older Woman: I'd give it to you but I don't have one.

Officer: Don't have one?

Older Woman: Lost it four years ago for drunk driving.

Officer: I see... Can you show me your vehicle registration papers please.

Older Woman: I can't do that.

Officer: Why not?

Older Woman: I stole this car.

Officer: Stole it?

Older Woman: Yes, and I killed and hacked up the owner.

Officer: You what?

Older Woman: His body parts are in plastic bags in the trunk if you want to see.

The officer looks at the woman, and slowly and carefully moves to his car and calls for back-up. Within minutes five police cars circle. A senior officer slowly approaches, clasping his half-drawn gun.

Officer 2: Ma'am, could you step out of your vehicle, please!

The woman steps out of her vehicle.

Older woman: Is there a problem sir?

Officer 2: One of my officers told me that you stole this car and murdered the owner.

Older Woman: Murdered the owner?

Officer 2: Yes, could you please open the trunk of your car.

The woman opens it, revealing nothing but an empty space.

Officer 2: Is this your car, ma'am?

Older Woman: Yes, here are the registration papers.

The officer checks them and adds:

Officer 2: One of my officers claims that you do not have a driving licence.

The woman digs into her handbag, pulls out the license and hands it to the officer. The officer examines the document. He looks puzzled.

Officer 2: Thank you ma'am. My officer told me you don't have a license, that you stole this car, and that you murdered and hacked up the owner.

Older Woman: Bet the liar told you I was speeding, too!

Cute Photo of the Month



CLASSIFIED

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PERSONAL

HOMOSEXUAL HELP LINE CLUG (Corfu Lesbians and Gays). Information line: 6934 903726 or email us at corfulg@yahoo.gr We support any people in Corfu with Gay / Lesbian / Bi / Trans information

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR DRINKING and would like to talk to someone who understands, or if you are interested in helping to start an AA group here, please call 210 800 1073.

DOES SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU HAVE A DRINK PROBLEM? To help someone, you need to help yourself first. Al-Anon family groups give courage, comfort and support to the partners, families and friends of alcoholics. The Corfu group meets on Monday at 8.00 pm. Any Greek speaker welcome. Call 26610 38776 or 26610 23871 between 08.00 and 13.00 weekdays

ARE YOU FREE AND ACCEPTED BUT WITHOUT A MOTHER? Then contact WB on 6945 717223

HELP OUR ANIMALS For successful rehoming, the Ark local animal charity is in constant need of helping hands. Urgently needed are homes where the stray dog/pup can stay for a limited time - just a few weeks will give us the opportunity to find a permanent solution and the dog will be saved from being left on the street on his own. Phone 6979 798202 or 26610 80308.

WORK

ENGLISH SPEAKING CARER, NVQ3 qualified, 14 years experience, seeks employment. Tel. 26610 97674. Ask for Mel.

NEIL'S GARDEN MAINTENANCE Lawns mown or strimmed, trees pruned, beds weeded, trees lopped, logs cut, rubbish removed. Call 26630 92226 ~ 6977 161036

BRITISH REGISTERED NURSE with 20 years experience, now living in Kassiope, available for care work for young and old in North/North East Corfu. Please contact Debbie on 6945 669252 or 6948 867162

BABYSITTING Mature Englishwoman offers babysitting services. Evenings only. Corfu Town and surrounding villages. Susan Skoupoura 26610 48015.

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DOUKADES AREA Spacious studio apartment. Fully furnished including well equipped kitchen, SAT TV internet connection, heating, own entrance & parking. Tel. 6972 097407

10 Key Things to Look For in a Good Web Designer

When you are investing in a new or newly refurbished website you need to find a company to get that website up and running. This means more than simple design. You also need someone who can help you conceive and write copy; plan functional site structure; get a domain registered; upload files; set up email accounts; and deal with other technical details. Below are ten things to look for when choosing such a company.

EXPERIENCE You will need someone with all the techniques, tools and tricks that will help you prepare your web site and accomplish your online goals. Ask all prospects for a portfolio and find out how many years of experience each one has.

CUSTOMER SERVICE As important as experience is a mindset and attitude of making customer service a priority. If a designer/developer is too busy to answer e-mails or phone calls, will they be able to keep the production schedule? Ask for references, and make a point of actually calling them. Ask the prospect's previous clients if the web developer was responsive, on time and effective.

ORIGINAL COPY AND DESIGN Creating professional and 100% original web graphics separates the men from the boys every time. Anyone can do some quick copy writing and slap it on a page with some pictures and hyperlinks. On the other hand, a talented and veteran designer will demonstrate knowledge of page layout, have a way with colour and know how to place elements on a page for best appearance and web site performance.

CREATIVITY You need to decide right away (before you even start talking to designers) just how much the designer you find will be involved in the conceptual process. Your designer may need to help you with some of the "big picture" questions, such as marketing, web copy writing (for search engines) and how to generate traffic. You want someone creative, but who can also work with your ideas to bring them to fruition.

MARKETING EXPERIENCE The easiest way to find out if your prospective web designers are good at marketing web sites is to view their website and their portfolio. You'll want to ensure that you can find what you're looking for on their site quickly and easily and that you can do the same on some of the sites in their portfolio.

COST For a full picture of all the costs involved in the project, ask for all the costs to be broken out individually - domain name and hosting, graphic design work, marketing fees and web development matters. You may need to place a deposit if the job is large enough, and you should have all payment terms worked out before work starts. Get every detail in writing, including deadlines and how many revisions are included.

JOB TIMELINE After you ask the developers how long the process will take, make a point of asking references if their project was, in fact, completed on time.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS Don't hire anyone who insists on speaking to you in "computer-ese" or won't explain unknown terminology. You have to communicate with this person about things that are important to your business, so you need to be clear at all times.

FULL SERVICE There may be one or two things that your designer/developer cannot do and will have to buy in from a third-party, but for the most part you should be able to find a reasonably-priced professional who can handle just about everything.

AVAILABILITY Are these prospects full-time web professionals? Or are they moonlighting from some other job, even a completely unrelated one?

Having asked all those questions you should end up with a website design and management company like Truetype web Solutions. Our speciality is designing and optimising cheap, but highly efficient and visible websites. Our websites enjoy high rankings on the search engines and we are proud of our close personal relationship with all our clients.

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