

# The Agiot

First Edition

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## Calling all Agiots!

By Paul McGovern  
Editor

Welcome to the first of what we hope will be many monthly newsletters pertaining to our wonderful village of Agios Ioannis, Corfu, its people, its visitors, its animals, its history past and present. Many of you reading this will know of this strange and beautiful place; the land that time forgot.

For the uninitiated let me explain where we are, approximately five miles west of Corfu airport on the road to Paleokastritsa, set on gently rolling hills amongst the groves of olives, lies this acupuncture point upon the earth's surface, a village of some five hundred or more souls, centred upon a plateau which hosts a taverna, a family hotel, a small bandstand and a children's play area. Plane and olive trees stand here, larger trees beyond.

Explaining who we are is a bit more difficult. This is a predictably unpredictable place, a

melting pot, a crucible; call it what you will. A place, in short, hard to describe when it comes to it, for it surely must mean so many things to the many different people who have sat around the plateia on balmy summer nights, sipping taverna-made wine, eating Greek food al fresco, conversing sometimes long into the night.

There is, of course, more to Agios Ioannis than its plateia as surely there is more to the human body than merely the heart, but there you have it. This centre, this small square with its various comings and goings, is the heart. A newer village has evolved less than a kilometer away, an area called Bay by the natives. It straddles the main road on both sides for several hundred metres, poking fingers of habitation off into the groves. It is newer, brasher, more dynamic. It has bars, etc. etc. It is the body, the

arms, the legs. Where is the brain, I'm wondering?

The people who live hereabouts lead their daily lives as people do. Some rarely venture into the heart; others come regularly. Most come in June to the Panegyri, the village festival, which nowadays covers the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June, and for some people longer.

The old church lies just off the plateia and so is the natural magnet. The plateia is also a natural venue for meetings political, or just meetings. And so, sooner or later, are all people sucked towards this plughole. It's a very nice plughole, mind.

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[www.propertycorfu.org](http://www.propertycorfu.org)

## The Agiot online

By Peter H.  
Contributing Editor

July 24<sup>th</sup> saw the AGIOT go live online at:

<http://www.theagiot.net>

We have created this online venue for all those interested in the village and its people; both past and present. Come and join in, upload some pho-

tos, have a chat or maybe share some gossip. We would love to see you there.

## Village news

By Dr.Lionel Mann  
Contributing Editor

Corfu basks in a heat-wave. Temperatures in July have been consistently in the 30s and reached the low 40s on some days.. Athens has peaked at 45. Brush fires are always a risk at this time of year, but so far we've been spared anything serious. In previous years we've not been so lucky; disastrous fires have been fought by plane, fire-engine, bulldozer, ditch, hose and flannel. This year our two little "fireplanes" have been augmented by a large amphibian to dump water on fires.

The holiday season is in full swing and in addition to visitors from every corner of the U.K. we have welcomed guests from Germany, Austria, Holland, Italy, Belgium and Denmark. The local taverna has been graced by new marble-topped tables and Kosta, mine host, who underwent an operation on his knee last year, has now fully recovered and was dancing at a recent birthday party.

Additional street lights have been provided around the village, but Nikki still complains of needing to set a candle in the window to guide her home at night. She bought a torch from Nick at a Sunday Table Sale; dropping it has not improved its efficiency.

The ageing denizens of the plateia, Mom and Sandy, have been joined by newcomers Alfie and Loulou. Every passing motor vehicle now runs the gauntlet.

Apart from the religious observances, the annual panegyrie was cancelled owing to the tragic death of the 21-year-old son of our plumber in a car accident.

Typically some main roads in Town are being dug up, adding to the usual traffic chaos. Every shopping trip is a new adventure! However water and electricity cuts have become more rare - fingers crossed!

## Hot property

By Paul McGovern  
Editor



Each month we shall feature a different property appearing on our property pages.

For August we start off with the magnificent home at Vernoukos owned by Mike and Anna. They have lived here since 1995. Unfortunately they have commitments in the U.K. and so reluctantly they must sell.

The house that they had built for them stands on a hilltop above the sea.

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## Upcoming

By Paul McGovern  
Editor

In September we shall have a stand at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, "A Place in the Sun" Exhibition from September 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> inclusive. We very much look forward to seeing old friends and new acquaintances during this period.

Everybody will be welcome at Stand Q96 where we hope to greet you with our usual hospitality. Refreshments may well be served, so be warned!

We hope that our exhibition will be a window into our Corfu world for you. Whether you are interested in living here for part of the year, all the

year, or eventually retiring here, you may well find opportunities to tempt you.

Your main host will be Trevor, who looks after things for us in the U.K., amply assisted by Pimpernel Pete, who is mostly on hand to make sure that Trevor doesn't blow himself-and many others-up. Lula will also be on hand to answer any of those questions pertaining to our old friends Greek Tax and Greek Law. Young Pete will be there too to charm the young ladies whilst old Paul will be present to charm the old ladies.

We are really looking forward to this venture and hoping to gain some

new customers into the bargain. There are lots of properties and some land to entice you. We say some land because we love this island and, although we realize that some development is necessary, at the same time we don't want the island to become a concrete jungle; it's nice as a green jungle.

If you want to prebook tickets for this extravaganza please go to: [www.aplaceinthesunlive.com/](http://www.aplaceinthesunlive.com/) and find Booking Info under the Visitors section of the menu, or telephone: 0870 3528888.

# The Big Bang

By Dr. Lionel Mann  
Contributing Editor

I wonder if today's schoolchildren realize of how much fun, adventure and learning they are being deprived by the current insistence upon over-regulation, feather-bedding, egalitarianism, "freedom" and litigation, "Perry Mason claims". Remembering how we used to race around the streets, the heath and woodland on our bicycles without any protective wear, at the expense of grazed knees, noses and elbows; climb trees or anything else that offered a challenge; play cricket and hockey with no padding; in the light of today's thinking it is amazing that any of us lived to become eighteen let alone nearly eighty. I have recently discovered that many of my school-fellows have also reached impressive ages.

At Grammar School even we Classics pupils worked in pairs in Science laboratories at benches equipped with sinks and Bunsen burners, taught to handle razor-sharp and needle-pointed instruments, toxic chemicals, highly corrosive acids, and a wide range of apparatus. In the woodwork and metalwork shops we used chisels, files, drills, lathes without any protective clothing save an apron and goggles and gloves when at a lathe or soldering and welding. True, we obeyed our teachers, for the cane, birch or expulsion were powerful deterrent of disobedience, but also we were desperate to gain university entrance in an age when such was an eagerly-sought, hard-earned privilege not a cheap "right". Moreover we respected our teachers for their erudition together with their obvious utter devotion to our welfare and learning. Learning under such conditions was fun and adventure.

On the Classics side we received eighty-minute lessons weekly each of

Biology, Physics and Chemistry. Our Science brethren received forty minutes extra weekly of each subject but were deprived of the delight of learning Latin for equivalent time.

One never-to-be-forgotten morning our Chemistry master set up an apparatus for producing hydrogen and another to produce oxygen. We watched as he filled an old sturdy elliptical fizzy-lemonade bottle with two-thirds of the first, one-third of the second. Then he banished all thirty of us to the far end of the laboratory while he donned protective clothing. Holding the bottle at arm's length out of the window, he removed the stopper and plunged a lighted taper inside, resulting in a very satisfactory explosion. "That's the oxygen-hydrogen explosion, almost certainly how the water, H-two-O, on the earth was formed in the Big Bang that started the universe."

That started me thinking: air contains oxygen and the coal gas then piped into most homes contained hydrogen; how to bring them together without reducing No.1 Heath Road to a pile of rubble?

Because mother had left us and father was away supervising building air-fields for the Ministry of Works I was living with my grandparents. One Saturday afternoon when both, as well as Aunt Louise and Uncle Lionel, were out I scavenged an empty cocoa tin from the dustbin and knocked a nail-hole in its base. With a finger over the hole I held it inverted over a ring of the gas-stove in the kitchen and turned on the gas for about five seconds to fill the tin by upward displacement, coal gas being lighter than air. Placing the tin, still inverted, upon the stone floor but slightly tilted with a matchstick under the rim, I withdrew my finger and applied a previously

lighted taper to the hole. Pop! The tin fell on its side. It worked!

Next time I tried ten seconds of gas, resulting in an even louder POP and the tin jumping about a foot into the air. Emboldened I went for the big time and tried thirty seconds of gas. To my surprise when I applied the taper a small tongue of flame ignited from the hole. As I watched the flame diminished until it was merely a flicker and I was about to pick up the tin when, with a very satisfying BANG, it shot up and made a circular indentation in the ceiling. Inspecting the tin I saw a few droplets of moisture inside it - water!

Again I filled for thirty seconds, slid a piece of card beneath the tin and took it outside the back door. Once more applying the taper produced a steadily reducing tongue of flame and I realized that it was simply excess gas burning away until the critical two-to-one proportion of gas to air was reached. The resulting explosion sent the tin up to the height of the bedroom windows.

That was enough for one session. I just hoped that nobody would notice the circle on the kitchen ceiling and was virtuously playing the piano when grandparents returned.

"Lionel, can you smell gas?" Grandmother's anxious query.

I sniffed. "No, I think it's grandfather's cigars." The old boy practically chain-smoked mini-cigars that permeated the entire house with a rather pleasant aroma.

Grandmother was apparently satisfied and nobody ever mentioned the circular mark on the kitchen ceiling.

*The Big Bang - Continued**from page 4*

Whenever opportunity presented itself over the following months I graduated from cocoa tins, through powdered-egg tins, dried-milk tins (wartime “delicacies”) and one-gallon paint-cans to two-gallon paint-cans. Until the war had conscripted his employees grandfather had run a building business; plenty of relics remained.

It was a two-gallon can that led to my downfall. Grandparents and uncle were out and aunt was thought to be engrossed in her tapestry-work in the lounge at the far end of the big house. I was sending that can soaring above the rooftops.

“Lionel, has the air-raid warning sounded?” Aunt Louise erupted from the back door.

“No. Why?” A picture of innocence.

“The windows rattled. What are you doing?”

I tried unsuccessfully to enthuse my aunt to the sight of a can flying around the chimneys. Further “experiments” were forbidden. The way of a pioneer is always hard.

A few weeks earlier our school music master had been rushed to hospital with peritonitis. He was also organist-choirmaster of a suburban church locally renowned for its music. As they were wheeling him out to the ambulance he gasped, “Phone Mann. He’ll play at St. Martin’s tomorrow.” Thus at the tender age of twelve I became an organist and choirmaster of a choir of twenty-four boys, some older than I and many bigger. They regarded me dubiously, but were determined to maintain their high standard and made sure that I learnt my job quickly. Certainly our standing-room-only congregations at choral services did not diminish.

It was a custom at St. Martin’s that after Evensong on the first Sunday of every month each church organization in turn would give an entertainment in the church hall. Before long it became

the turn of the choir. Naturally we should sing a song or two, but the boys also wanted to stage a play, rather prophetically about blowing up Hitler.

I declined an acting role; play-reading in school had shown that anything even remotely ludicrous reduced me to helpless giggles, unable to participate further. But they wanted an explosion; I undertook to provide that, citing long experience. It was right up my street!

Rather than to bring anything from home I prospected local resources. The door to the hall kitchen was right next to the stage and in the kitchen I discovered a gas-stove, a table and a five-gallon tea urn. It exceeded my greatest wishes; I fairly drooled at the thought of what I could do with such bounty. However I refused to provide an advance demonstration. “Just time your script and tell me when you are ten minutes from explosion time.”

The producer-prompter stuck his head through the doorway and hissed, “Ten minutes.” I already had the urn, lid removed, still damp from having produced more than two hundred cups of tea, inverted over a ring on the stove. For five minutes I left the gas tap on, filling the urn. It was all very rule-of-thumb business, but by now I was fairly confident that I could judge these matters with reasonable accuracy. However when I had carefully lifted the urn on to the table, pencil under the rim to tilt it slightly, affording entry to air, and turned on the tap, now near the top and facing upward, I was amazed at the size of the two-foot tongue of flame that resulted when I lit the escaping gas.

Anxiously watching the slowly diminishing flame I kept glancing at my watch. Had I guessed correctly? I heard the punch-line, cue for the explosion, and the prompter looked urgently through the door. The flame was now a mere flicker in the mouth of the tap and I nodded. The punch-line was repeated.

There was an almighty crash as the urn exploded. The bottom (now the top) peeled back as if by a massive can-opener; the tap shot off to imbed itself in the brick wall; two windows, protected against shattering by strips of transparent adhesive tape, vanished completely, frames and all; the entire audience, from experience of having been bombed, threw themselves face down on to the floor, hands covering backs of necks; the cast was paralytic with laughter.

When the boys had recovered they crammed into the kitchen. Their mouths moved but I could hear nothing, temporarily deafened. However it was obvious that they had revised their opinion of me. I would suit them down to the ground. Very few choirs had mentors who made Guy Fawkes look a rank amateur.

Entry to my form-room at school the next morning was met by a howl of merriment and then a flood of questions. News had travelled fast; some of my choristers attended the same school as I. Later in the morning, moving along a corridor between lessons, I came face-to-face with the Chemistry master. He just pointed at me and roared with laughter. Already my hearing was almost back to normal. A new urn was purchased, the kitchen repaired, but I was not even reproved for my expensive sound-effects. After all the choir was largely responsible for the overflow attendances at St. Martin’s and the resulting very sound parish finances. Moreover a couple of weeks later the churchwardens enjoyed a much wider reading than usual for their Annual Report by starting, “Our organist has demolished the church hall kitchen, using an explosive tea-urn.”



**Hot property - Continued**  
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It is 480 metres from the village of Gastouri on the east of the island, seven kilometres from Corfu town.

The villa has two storeys. The ground floor is 100 square metres, comprising a 33 sq.m. lounge with real fireplace, a kitchen/dining-room with quarter-inch Spanish tiles, a spacious hallway entered from a bougainvillea-laced arch through French doors, a twin bedroom and a utility room. Take the spiral cypress and brick stairway to the landing above. Off the landing is the master bedroom, a single bedroom and a bath/shower room toilet. A further eighty square metres on this level.

Throughout the house beautiful windows are skilfully placed to display the absolutely stunning views from the balconies giving off from above, patio doors opening below.

Near the house are formal gardens filled with palms, yuccas, oleanders, spruce; many olives, oranges, lemons, apricots, bananas, cherries, plums, figs, comprise an orchard. By the driveway stand fifty-year old cypresses. Flowers abound including geraniums, hiiscus, roses, ferns, jasmine etc etc

In this area there is ample parking space in the drive for several vehicles. Access is through large gates from a quiet country lane.

A lovely terrace stands before the house, gazing seaward. A few steps and you are in the infinity pool, believing that you are swimming at sea.. Below the pool lie lower terraces of olives. All around the villa stand many mature trees, cloaking the hillside, tumbling away to the sea. No other buildings are visible on this cliff of blue and green. No sound obtrudes save from cicadas and birds. If there is paradise you are there!

The land totals marginally under five stremmas – over an acre.

Expansion? It is allowable to extend this property up to three hundred square metres externally.

The property has the advantage of diesel-fired central-heating with convector radiators.

The fitted kitchen has ample work-space and there is a separate pantry.

All framework of doorways and windows are made from irocco timber, and the window-frames can accept double-glazing, if required.

A master-craftsman was employed for many of the outstanding features, including the floors, fireplace and tiling.

Conclusion: This is my favourite home in Corfu. If I could afford it myself it would no longer be for sale! For those who may be able to afford, why not visit it yourselves, fall under its spell!



**Beautiful main entrance**



**Stunning surroundings**

## For Sale



**Hoeck / Ropa Valley**

Are you adventurous? Would you like something slightly out of the ordinary?

Set in a paddock of 4000 square metres, surrounded by beautiful countryside and yet only seven miles from Corfu Town, is a timber-built house dating from only 2004 together with a separate holiday cottage.

Price: € 200,000

## For Sale



**Coastal near Giannades**

This is a quite magnificent development overlooking the sea from a raised position, a short distance from the old village of Giannades. The property is secluded. Set on a piece of land approximately four stremmas [1 acre] in area, there are two detached villas with landscaped terraces dropping down to an infinity pool.

Price € 1,300,000

## For Sale



### *Coastal village*

This charming traditional cottage nestles in the hillside village, overlooking the sea on the east side of the island, not far from the village of Ipsos. This property has a very large garden either for relaxation or cultivation, or possibly for future development.

Price € *Negotiable*

## For Sale



### *Ano Korakiana*

In an idyllic old world location, amongst the cottages of Ano Korakiana, not far from the National Paleokastritsa highway leading swiftly to town, is this splendid detached house, nestling on the mountain slopes with lovely views below. The spacious three storey house requires renovation but is very sound structurally.

Price € 85,000

## For Sale



### *Faery Cottage*

This is definitely the time that land forgot and this one small picture is to entice the romantic amongst you to seek out this idyllic spot amongst the northern, olive-clad mountains. Come and live in this stunning terrain, and yet only ten minutes by car to the northern beaches and shops.

Price € 120,000

## For Sale



### *Pikoulatika Development*

In the hamlet of Pikoulatika this new development is scheduled for completion in the Autumn of 2007. Set in 13,000 square metres of countryside, with extensive views overlooking Corfu and the sea, the properties consist of three detached villas, each with its own swimming pool.

Price € 430,000

## For Sale



### *Velonades Mountain Property*

This cottage is set in the mountain village of Velonades. It is small and in need of some TLC but has the unique advantage of having a separate plot of land a few metres away measuring 70 metres by 30 metres, which has outline permission to build a dwelling on it. A wonderful view across the valley is the reward here.

Price: € 42,000