

The Agiot

70th Edition

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THIS IS THE ONE

AUGUST 31ST AGIOS IOANNIS [TRIKLINO]

THE TROGGS

VINCE VORTEX AND THE CUCUMBERS

X-LOVERS

OMEGA5

HEATHER SKINNER

LOOK OUT FOR SURPRISE APPEARANCES

GATES OPEN 7.30 UNTIL 1.00A.M.

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CHILDREN WELCOME AND THEY LOVE IT

DON'T MISS THIS ONE AND DON'T SAY YOU WEREN'T WARNED!

Agiotfest 2013– August 31st

The Troggs

Spyros Hytiris, our Greek mentor, recently posted this;

Like today in 1966 climbed No.1 on British charts the Troggs ' Wild Thing. Having a look at what else was on top then you will be amazed by the diversity. Each track almost anything to do with the other. Compare them with the current chart-tachyfageio where all have the same taste. Yesterday I was listening to the top of the Billboard and was trying with great trouble to find something different to do you one click to listen to the whole. Get a taste of songs that climbed the British No.1 in the same year: These Boots Are Made For Walking – Nancy Sinatra, The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore-the Walker Brothers, Pretty Flamingo-Manfred Mann, Paint It Black-Rolling Stones, Strangers In The Night-Frank Sinatra, Paperback Writer-The Beatles, The Kinks-Sunny Afternoon, With A Girl Like You-The Troggs, Yellow Submarine-The Beatles, Eleanor Rigby-The Beatles, All Or Nothing-the Small Faces, Reach Out I'll Be There -Four Tops, Good Vibrations-The Beach Boys, Green Green Grass Of Home-Tom Jones, You Don't Have To Say You Love Me-Dusty Springfield The Troggs will be headliners at this year's Agiotfest in Ai-Yannis in Corfu on August 31.

Heather Skinner

Heather Skinner sings in the sun for us this Agiotfest. This lady is from Barry in South Wales and will open our show with her own brand of folk music, backed by Keith Mitchell. Heather is newly immigrated onto our green patch, so in her first month of permanent settlement here. Look what she is up to:

Heather has been singing for almost as long as she could talk. She has a background in performing musical theatre, folk, opera, blues and jazz. Heather has played Roxie Hart in Chicago, has performed with the Welsh National Opera, performed at Open Air Theatre festivals, and recently sang a selection of Gershwin classics with a group of marketing academics for a performance at last year's Academy of Marketing Conference. Heather also runs an Open Mic acoustic night in her home town.

Vince Vortex and The Cucumbers

Why is the Agiotfest magical?

What does it have often missing elsewhere?

It has heart.

It cannot better be summed up by the second appearance in Corfu by this Kent band. They came to us two years ago and opened the show, causing quite a stir. This year they are back to support the world-famous Troggs. They wanted to share with us this unique atmosphere under the mystical groves so muchly, they financed themselves to appear here. Their accommodation has been generously sponsored by villa owners Mel and Jo.

They deserve our attention and love for this noble gift.

Watch these lads go!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzQxJUZ9NOg>

X-Lovers

George Chemarios is a local legend among many of the Greek Corfiots. We have nearly had him at Agiotfest for the last couple of years; this time he arrives with his reformed and dynamic X-Lovers.

Omega5

Omega5 are playing here for the fourth time, our most regular band. Barry Packman always comes up trumps with a string of accomplished musicians; last year they virtually stole the show with a rocking performance. This year they are re-joined by Steve Dell.

Steve Dell

Steve has been our compere every year since 2009. His Liverpool wit and brisk delivery have endeared him to all Agiotfest fans. He has become another heart in our midst. Steve flies over from his professional work in the UK specifically for the Agiotfest, and he will join his old mates Omega5 on stage for another punchy performance.

Check him out and book him in the UK, you won't be disappointed.

<https://www.facebook.com/stevedelluk>

Sponsors

By
The Minstrel

We have been joined this month by family insurance firm Grammatikos. This friendly and English-speaking firm has been operating for many years from their office in Jacob Polila 24, Corfu. In difficult financial times it is heartening to gain new sponsorships from the Greek community especially. A big thank you to them.

Yiota Tsoliga the lawyer from town has also renewed her commitment to our ranks.

All our sponsors will be interested to know that our history is changing, evolving. The sponsorship packages now last year-round and are no longer confined to the month of the main night.

In association with 100+ Club, a monthly meeting point, a roadshow if you like, is happening every month in a different part of the island. So far it has been in Akharavi, Ipsos, Agios Ioannis and Benitses. Next port of call is Moraitika, on the 24th August, venue to be announced at www.facebook.com/agiotsfest by the 9th of August. These meetings of the 100+ Club provide funding for the 'lucky winner [s]' of the winning ticket-in July this was Chas and Brenda Clifton, a regular and increasing contribution towards well-deserving local charities, and much-needed extra funding to put on as a good a festival as we possibly can each year.

The Ark animal welfare group will have a table this year. Please visit. If others are interested in a pitch then please ring 6974932408. All charity

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- Steve Young**
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- Lionel Mann**
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- Michael Spiggos**
- Tavola Calda**
- Bill & June Williams**
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- Nikolas's Taverna, Agni**
- Vassilis Pandis**
- In Action gym**
- Star Bowl**
- Greg Zoxios**
- Forthnet**
- La Tabernita Mexicana**

organisations are freely admitted to get their messages across.

Michael Spiggos at: www.rockoverdose.gr is somebody you should be listening to. Great sounds.

Dimitris Krokidis is at <http://corfuwall.gr/festivals/agiotsfest-2013.html> Check him out!

HELLOCORFU at <https://www.facebook.com/hellocorfu?fref=ts> is an Athens-based group

The 100+ Club

The Fourth draw was carried out at Argo Bar Benitses on Saturday 27th July. Sofia the owners' Daughter drew out the number. The winner was Chas Clifton, winning 70€ Number of people present 13. The next draw will be in Moraitika on the 24th August at 8.00pm. Please follow the link after August 9th to find out where if you want to come along for the fun!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/the100plusclub/?fref=ts>

Agiotfest - 31st August

By
The Minstrel



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21290489990/?fref=ts>

SEE THE TROGGS LIVE AT THEIR VERY SUCCESSFUL RECENT GERMAN TOUR:

[00004 Back To the Sixties CC Leopoldsburg 22 juni 2013 - The troggs- Wild Thing](#)

SEE VINCE VORTEX AND THE CUCUMBERS - STUDIO EDITION;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7Yqa8XPkUA>

See This Great Website:

<http://corfuwall.gr/festivals/agiotfest-2013.html>

A NEW WEBSITE FOR AGIOTFEST

Check out our new website at:

www.agiotfest.com

This site replaces the outgoing .co.uk site.

Any criticisms or suggestions would be welcome to: letters@theagiot.net

We apologise to our Greek friends for interruption of the agiotfest.gr site, which we hope to resurrect shortly.

Find us on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Agiotfest-Music-Festival/129472247074639?ref=sgm>

Anybody who reads this far, without nodding off, can you please go on to Facebook if you can and register a 'like'? Better still ask your wife or husband or friend to do similar. Every piece of exposure we can get in this way is definitely driving us onwards and upwards. Thank you!

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER
<https://twitter.com/agiotfest1>

Interact with Agiotfest at:
<http://pinterest.com/agiotfest/>

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Village News

By
Dr Lionel Mann

We have been enjoying something of a heatwave with daily temperatures in the thirties, sometimes thirty-six or thirty-seven. Twice the sky has become shrouded with thick black clouds, broken by streaks of lightning and accompanied by rumbles of thunder, but hardly a drop of rain has fallen, not enough to drive a cat to shelter.

Polimeris has died. For a long

time he had been confined to bed. It was he who donated the two noble plane trees that grace the plateia. What a fitting memorial.

We have welcomed a steady stream of visitors, mainly Dutch, German and Belgian, walkers, cyclists, scooterists and motorists. Henk's donkey has also been pressed into providing transport, but only for children and over short distances. He Haw He Haw He Hawlways does that.

Letters to the Editor

Hi Paul and All

Always look forward to reading 'The Agiot'.

Good luck in the Losers Cup.

We will be away seeing Sally & Brad in the States. Wonder if we can start a Losers Cup over there. Perhaps set up a worldwide franchise ???

Love to All.

Cheers
Barry Chris & Sue [Allsworth]

ED: This one slipped the net a couple of months back. Thanks to my friend Mark Thompson for jogging me into consciousness. For the uninitiated Barry introduced the Losers' Cup to Corfu in the 17th Century.

We were very willing private sponsors for the Agiotfest 12 and would like to make a financial contribution again for Agiotfest 13 please can you give me details of how to make a donation.

Kind Regards
Barry and Stella Knight

ED: Thanks Barry and Stella for your loyal and kind support.

Dear Paul

I write to thank you for sending OCAY newsletters to us. They bring back memories of Agios Johannis and especially Lionel (Mann) playing his concerts by the pool at Villa 'whatitsname' I was in stitches reading about Lionel's Big Bang but I think he must have told me the story before once because it sounded rather familiar!

ED: Theodora Clifford

Clifford Owen

ED: Another one that slipped the net. I promise to try harder in future!

Andy Come Home



There is still no sight or sound of our friend Andy. If anybody knows or suspects anything please ring 6974932408.

Thank you.

Sabine



From Peter and Kostas, Lula and Paul, and Jan a big goodbye from Corfu and the very best of luck in your new life in Germany, to our friend Sabine Bussman.

Allein der gedanke zahlt.

Belated Announcement

The famous Losers' Cup held on the 17th May collected participants' fees of 100 Euros, of which 50 Euros went to the Agiotfest fund and The Red Cross Association in Corfu received 50 Euros donation.

Thanks to Paul Scotter for arranging this.

Changes In Our Street

By
Paul McGovern

Some things never seem to change, others do. Of course, they all change but some imperceptibly. You mostly notice changes when you have been away, from people, places. I took a few photos of the old street in our beloved village this week, in the sweltering heat of a July afternoon. Here they are.



Here is the taverna, asleep in the heat, waiting for a kinder evening.

Several of our old people have toppled these last couple of years.

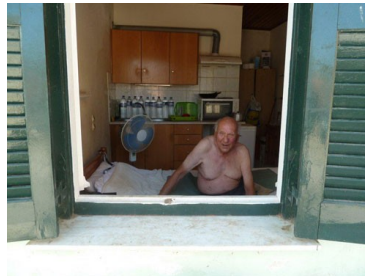


Here is George's sad jungle, where he and his late wife Eleni used to sit and watch the world go by from a neater world. George has gone to his family in Germany and is not expected back.... Lionel's cats love this new jungle play-ground.



Old Sandos used to pick at the rough dirt here, next to his bachelor abode, with a tsapi, asking passers-by the time, which always absorbed him.

Now George has leveled his departed Uncle's ground, which now suffices as a car park for a much larger home for George, Antigoni and their three sons.



And there is Lionel, roused from his nap.



Untroubled youth strides by, gradually pushing aside us older ones like new grass.



Zaira is asleep, and so is her garden.



Sofia's grand new villa shames its weathered neighbours, at least until time changes it too.



The once-small palm in our front yard is now threatening to cause havoc with the wires.



The lane to Panorama bakes in the sun.



Claudia and Kris keep their apartment spick and span. The Albanians have caught up with their neighbours, dare I say overtaken them.



Happy days for the Bougainvillea.



The Sky Bar still stands.

Fleshpots Of The North

By
Mark Thompson

I've just finished reading a book by Kathy Reichs; she is one few of the crime writing sisterhood whose books I can stomach. The books of some of her sisters-in-crime are too violent and the descriptive work simply too gory and too rich for my blood.

The format for 'police procedurals' is well established, though sometimes I feel that details of all 'Byzantine' structures in place in say Montreal can get, well, a little wearisome. Rather like, from years ago, Ed McBain and his 87th precinct. By the time we'd been re-introduced to Cotton Hawes, Meyer Meyer and all other 'happy campers' at the precinct house the book was almost finished.

I suspect that many times such detail is put in as padding in the hope of providing a fig leaf for a transparent plot. I'm not such a pedant as to check all the police investigation procedures, pathological and forensic details or medical content in such books. I'm happy to believe that such information is, for the purposes of the plot, as accurate as necessary.

However what inevitably attracts my attention are simple factual errors. The kind of thing that could and should have been removed during the initial research or the editing process. In the Reichs book, and no I won't tell you which one, there were two errors I spotted immediately.

Firstly one character, to raise her spirits, is described as singing to herself the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' and in particular verse 4 when she refers to '4 Calling birds'. This I believe is a common error amongst

our North American cousins. Rather this should be colly, colley or even curley birds. These are all old English words for the blackbird, which I'm reliably informed is a true thrush.

The second error is perhaps even more esoteric ascribing to John Cleese words penned by Flanders and Swann for the song the 'Reluctant Cannibal' first published 1956/7 when Mr. Cleese was just 17. I've no doubt that Mr. Cleese uttered the words attributed to him by the author but he was not the originator.

Reference to John Cleese caused me to cast my mind back to 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' when he and his colleagues first came to general public attention and in my view altered the face of television, for good or ill, thereafter. Whilst I was immediately drawn into the 'Python' nonsense though for my parents and my younger siblings the comedy of the show was a complete mystery. I don't think that even the BBC knew what it had on its hands as the first programmes were shown late on a Sunday night.

Many of the sketches remain in my mind to this day. But I didn't go for the word perfect repetition of lines or whole sketches as many did in the pub over a few pints in the week following their broadcast. I won't bore you with all the details, but I do remember one item that featured the supposed prosecution of those responsible for misleading or deliberately inaccurate English/French phrase book. One line that does stick in my mind was in response to a perfectly sensible question the reply was 'My hovercraft is full of eels'.

I thought to take this as inspiration for my own phrase book. In doing so I freely acknowledge both the help of my old friend 'strong drink' and that ground breaking work 'Your eyes fourteen', the mad Greek dictionary, published by the admirable Athens News. If you haven't yet discovered this slim volume I urge you to seek it out.

With these helpful friends I'm working-up a gently teasing, slightly misleading Greek/English phrase book for tourists and beginners with the Greek language. I'll quote a few ideas of my own, but if any readers have examples of their own I'm sure our learned editor would only too pleased to include them in the Agiot.

Avrio kinito: we'll pick the hire car up tomorrow.

Nasty kala: naughty, but nice- like the cream cakes.

Kreo-sote: it's much too cold to paint the fence, love.

Tee ropati: New Zealand rugby league player.

Angha neekhta ekomi: we have the evening paper.

Hey malaka: I find shouting this, together with a clicking of the fingers, at the head waiter when entering a busy restaurant or taverna always guarantees friendly and attentive service throughout the evening.

Feta-ccine: a slice of life Italian style.

Kata leaver (katalaver): dog spanner.

Odhonteekeo neema beekeenee: dental floss bikini

As the *tsipouro* kicks-in I hope to bring you many more, unless otherwise instructed.

Continued on Page 8

Fleshpots On The North
Continued from Page 7

The next item appears courtesy of the Greek Pie Marketing Board (Savoury Division); Number 42 *Prasopitta*-Leak pie which is in my opinion is the 'king of pies'. This pie is not a speciality of Corfu, but you can find it at select, quality bakers. I strongly recommend that you do track one down, and your effort will be amply rewarded. In my experience this pie comes in two forms, the 'twin cylindrical' and 'paving-stone shaped slab', this to cut as required and dictated by finances and appetite.

I'm now trying to work-up a story linking the prize winning leeks grown by the miners of the North East of England with the bakers of Greece. I, of course, realise that leeks are now grown throughout Greece. However I don't believe

that they are indigenous to this land and perhaps there may have been a Geordie, tired of working underground, who decided to try his luck at sea. After a convoluted series of adventures he found himself press-ganged into the Greek navy just in time for the battle of Salamis in 480 BC. Needless to say he carried with him, as a reminder of home, some bulbils or pips of leeks, these are in fact 'mini leeks' that can be separated from the 'mother leek' and brought on in their own right. The rest is history.

Before this months' quiz a little background, attentive readers will have noted that prize remains the same for each competition. Unlike the national lottery in the UK I'm unable to maintain a 'growing' prize fund in the event of unclaimed prizes. This is because the local wine on offer is not for keeping; it contains

no additives, no preservatives, and no chemicals whatsoever. Therefore in the event of unclaimed prizes the wine in question is consumed, by guess who, at the end of the month following publication of the questions.

Now for this months' quiz: please tell me: 1. The name of the last Tsar of Russia to pay an official visit to Manchester (England) and 2. State the purpose of that visit. The usual competition rules apply. For those of a prurient disposition I can assure them that the words 'Canal Street' have no place in this quiz.

Yours in the fleshpots
Mark Thompson

Aunty Lula's Love-bites

Go:

Easy Lemon Mousse

Ingredients

200g Crushed Digestive Biscuits
Mini ready-made Meringues,
crushed
(keep a few back whole for decoration)

For the Mousse:

1 kg of Greek strained Yoghurt
1 x 410g can of Sweetened Con-
densed Milk
Rind of 2 Lemons
Juice of 4 Lemons

1. Put the yoghurt, condensed milk, lemon rind and juice into a bowl and whisk until all ingredients combine together.
2. Put the crushed digestives on to the bottom of a serving dish or preferably into individual glasses.
3. Spoon mousse filling on to the crushed biscuit base and chill until set.
4. Decorate with crushed meringues.
5. To serve, top mousse with one mini meringue.

Bon appetit!

Corfu Weather Statistics

July 2013

Min. Temp: 23°C
Max. Temp: 35°C
Avg. Temp: 29°C
Precipitation: 0.0mm
Max Wind Speed: 50km/h
Max Gust Speed: 40km/h

Nick the Clock's World

A few minutes before the church services started, the congregation were sitting in their pews and talking.

Suddenly, Satan appeared at the front of the church.

Everyone started screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in a frantic effort to get away from evil incarnate.

Soon the church was empty except for one elderly gentleman who sat calmly in his pew without moving, seemingly oblivious to the fact that God's ultimate enemy was in his presence..

So Satan walked up to the man and said,

'Do you know who I am?'

The man replied, 'Yep, sure do.'

'Aren't you afraid of me?' Satan asked.

'Nope, sure ain't.' said the man.

'Don't you realize I can kill you with one word?' asked Satan.

'Don't doubt it for a minute,' returned the old man, in an even tone.

'Did you know that I can cause you profound, horrifying AGONY for all eternity?' persisted Satan.

'Yep,' was the calm reply.

'And you are still not afraid?' asked Satan.

'Nope,' said the old man

More than a little perturbed, Satan asked, 'Why aren't you afraid of me?'

The man calmly replied, 'Been married to your sister for 48 years.'



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The World of Simon

By
Simon Baddeley

Back to Birmingham



Last summer -
Mum, Lulu,
Oliver, Cookie,
Amy and Oscar

My mother's bedroom emptied of all but carpet and curtains; and every crevice, corner, surface, shelf and cranny of the rest of Brin Croft, dusted and scrubbed. Woe to spiders, and other small beasts caught in the nozzle of my searching vacuum nozzle. I'm much acquainted with the dust of my mother's house, knowing it in ways that would have been strange when I sojourned there with her, with family and dogs. Lin has been my stalwart companion. The weather has been lovely; high summer in the Highlands without the swelter of England; like warm air rising the wind blows from the south west under cloudy skies. It's timeless this sound of wind outside the city; the self same wind that impressed me in childhood, that I hear as the surge of trees and leaves, as surf impressing gravel. It gusts ebbs and flows banging doors left ajar, tipping over things carelessly lent, making startling crashes, turning the washing into rippling pennants "Make haste. England expects". Oscar has watched us puzzled and even dismayed, knowing 'something's going on' that makes all different; bereft of the joy of long walks through the woods,

riverbanks, moors and meadows of Strathnairn. There's been a hierarchy of disposal ending at the Highland Council Recycling Centre off Henderson Road. Before that we've laid out in the carport, for collection by the charity *Newstart Highlands* an incalculable miscellany, left after a two day garage sale that has seen people from up and down the Strath directed by leaflets and canvassing up driveways and through clusters of dwellings, including a word through the car window to people on the road "I'm clearing my mother's house at Brin Croft. Come and have a cup of tea. Lots of bargains!" I left the selling to Lin who's much better at it. Earlier in the week Guy and Amy helped take two hire-van loads over the Keswick Bridge to Dingwall & Highland Markets. Then they headed south to spend a night at the *Rowan Tree Hotel* to visit Alvie Church where they'd married three years ago. I auctioned those items that were not wanted by Roger Milton, *Auldearn Antiques*, including things valued higher for probate than Roger would pay. Our lawyer, who I saw last Monday, wanted me to have sent these to *Bonhams* in Edinburgh. "What? Send them six time further to raise hardly the price of getting them there?" Tired out but relieved, we turned off the electricity; read the meter; turned off the water and with a final load of rubbish to dump in the wheelie bins at the end of the lane,



we loaded our picnic and drove away. It was 5pm on Tuesday. We'd been clearing Brin Croft over most of nine days. We've no need for the gadget on this familiar journey south, but I set the satnav. It's almost fun to have this disembodied female voice counting off waypoints on our route, noting our speed and ETA and the miles we've covered. At the stores I kissed and hugged Isobel; shook hands with David and waved as we drove away down the B851 to the A9 - for good.



B851 - Google street view of Inverarnie Stores and the track to Brin Croft

The Highlands is becoming foreign - shift of connection with place. Mum made the places she lived. Going to the Highlands was going to stay with her. Now we've cleared a property with a familiar postcode. Not a tremor of sadness assailed me. Mum would have wanted little grief at her departure. I was born in her and knew her for 70 years in all the changes of my life and her good and adventurous life; her only unfinished business the momentum that was inseparable from her character;

Continued on Page 11

The World of Simon
Continued from page 10

that little spurt of energy that came with handing over a baton bejewelled with understanding and future joys. I need no souvenirs; her memorial is inside. Lucid until the final days of laboured slumber, she'd slowed in her last two years and had to lean on more people than suited her style; almost - and of course unjustly for those involved - resenting the attentions she needed. Death was, as for Epicurus, a natural irritant to be faced with courage and irritation and frustration as a tedious unavoidable interruption of her journey. She said goodbye in so many words to everyone who mattered, without being literal. It was mysterious.

I'm almost glad of the work involved in handling her estate. I'd dreaded 'going through her things', but I've not been on my own in the business of fetching, carrying, sorting, phoning, emailing and making journeys to the Highlands. Lin is my strength; also my accountant, lawyer, driver and adviser. I've grown closer to my stepsister, Fiona, through regular conversations in the last seven months. I've been discreetly tended by my children, my attention caught by the new life that began the year mum died - Oliver born in April 2012, in time to be dandled on her knee and crawl on her bed.

My sister's reaction to mum's death is as different and as bewil-

dering as she is from me, and perhaps our mother. Dutiful in caring for mum in the long weeks that preceded her death, Bay hurried away after the formal ceremonies, uninterested - so far as I could see - in the longer procedures of so great a bereavement, preferring to license the clearance men.



Bay and I at Coignafearn

On Saturday Colin had again cut and raked the grass along the drive and around Brin Croft. The key was with the estate agent; the house as ready as we could get it for prospective buyers; almost a *property* again; certainly no longer an inkling of mum's home. She's long away.

Above Blair Atholl, south of Drumochter Pass, we joined a stationary queue before easing by a score of urgently blinking blue lights and the grisly remnants of a road collision that had occurred 6 hours earlier - a shiny black amputated car roof alone on the grass; two people dead in one vehicle, one in the other - the injured and dead long removed. I read of familiar calls to lay down dual carriageway for the whole length of the road rather than alter the fatal impatience of impulsive drivers.

We were back in England by 2.00pm on Wednesday morning. I unloaded Lin's car in the light of the street lamp outside our house, unknottng a cat's cradle of spider hooks and string from the roof, carrying things gently up the sloping drive to lay them in the hall and sitting room, before heading for bed in the light of dawn.



- See more at: <http://democracystreet.blogspot.gr/#sthash.d9kjUdxU.dpuf>

Summer 1976

By
Dr. Lionel Mann

Part Two:

I Having passed eight weeks travelling around France in order to brush up my use of the language after twelve years absence 'down under', I now decided that it was time to try my newly-learnt German. For the last years of my time in New Zealand I had been Record Librarian at the National Film Library. Films had been on loan to educational institutions for many years and now they wanted to offer similar availability of music and spoken word gramophone records; I had been entrusted with building such a library, a job that fitted very well to my performance schedules. I had been asked to recommend a German language course for use in schools; I had four in the library and tried them on myself, completing that which presented the greatest variety and topical interest. The time had come to see whether my recommendation had been well founded.

So far I had used only one of the three months of my railcard. Often I would travel at night, choosing a journey that lasted seven or eight hours, sleeping on the train and thereby saving a hotel bill. I usually had a first class compartment to myself and was awakened only for border checks. Following a fortnightly visit to Poste Restante Ostend to collect my mail I set out for German-speaking Vienna, one of the longest journeys available.

I was just dozing off after the border check at Aachen when there

was a horrible grinding sound and the train shuddered to a halt. We were in a deep cutting and it was night so there was nothing to be seen. I went along to the door, opened its window and leaned out. A member of the train crew was trudging along beside the track carrying a large light.

"Was ist los?" my fist purposeful German words.

"Maschinen kaput," a disgruntled grunt while he kept on plodding. He was not a happy bunny.

We were stranded for nearly two hours while the disabled locomotive was removed and replaced, but from then we travelled like a bat out of hell and stops were about a minute of frenzied activity as dismounting passengers were almost dragged off and boarders thrown on. "Schnell, schnell, bitte, schnell."

We reached Vienna less than a half-hour late.

That language course worked! They understood me; I understood them. But what was wrong with Vienna? Everywhere that I had visited had been basking under bright or even scorching sunshine, but Vienna was shrouded in persistent soggy rain. Unknowingly I had arrived in the time of the Vienna Festival and all accommodation was fully booked. For more than two hours I squelched around from hotel to hotel, pension to pension. I was on my way back to the station to take a train elsewhere when the manager of a hotel who had earlier turned me away called me in as I

waded past for the third time. He told me to leave my dripping anorak, suitcase and holdall at reception while I had a meal in their restaurant; they would find a room for me. They cleared and cleaned a storeroom on the top floor and put in a bed, chair, dressing table and small wardrobe, charging me half their standard tariff for full board. What Kindness!

All concerts and operas were sold out, but I once chanced upon a first-rate fringe performance of Haydn and Mozart quartets by four talented young students. Otherwise I kept dry or dried out in the many beautiful museum and churches.

The Danube was anything but blue, a dirty grey speared by a constant fusillade of raindrops. I have subsequently seen it rolling sedately under bright sunshine - and once frozen solid. My first visit to Vienna was something of a disappointment and at the end of a week I boarded a west-bound train, resolved not to get off until the sun shone.

At the first stoop, Linz, we returned to summer and I left the train. Within ten minutes the tourist bureau had boomed be into a very comfortable pension, provided me with tickets to three concerts and details of other attractions. Outside the station the driver of the tram took my bags and lifted them on board. He stopped outside the pension and carried my bags inside. What service!

I enjoyed six days there, using it as a centre for visits to Innsbruck, Salzburg and Bregenz, before returning to Ostend to collect my mail.

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Now for Germany, specifically Regensburg, its attraction the Regensburger Domspatzen, the Cathedral Sparrows, by far the oldest boys' choir in the world. Under their current Director, Georg Ratzinger, older brother of Josef, they had recently celebrated their thousandth anniversary. Unfortunately they were away touring so I have only ever heard them from their magnificent recordings.

The weather continued hot and one afternoon, sheltering on a bench in a shady square, I enjoyed a fascinating three-hour chat with a ninety-year-old who had been an officer in the German Army in both World Wars and a teacher in times of peace. That was a very valuable history lesson.

On my way back north I visited beautifully-restored Munich and then stopped off in Cologne after nine o'clock one evening. The manager of the hotel near the station was surprisingly stand-offish when I produced my British passport; there was a cheap room on the top floor, the restaurant has closed so no food was available and would I pay in advance. When I produced a book of American Express travellers cheques that had been wisely recommended by my bank his manner immediately changed; should I prefer a room on the second floor and would I like a meal to be sent up to my room? He explained his earlier caution. Harold Wilson had that day devalued the British pound, just one in a series of death of the thousand cuts inflicted upon our international reputation by moronic politicians over the twentieth century.

I stayed there for two days and one afternoon when sitting on a park bench watching the busy traffic on the Rhine I was approached by a couple of ten-year-olds who were arguing over the nationality of the flag on a passing barge.

"Are you English?" I was betrayed by not knowing the German for Norwegian.

Quickly the pair parked their bicycles against a nearby tree and settled beside me. For the better part of an hour they tried out the English that they were learning at school and plied me with questions about places and customs. Such enthusiasm for learning thrilled me. Would any British child rake such advantage of chance meeting with a foreigner? They left thanking me with a polite handshake and a clicking of sandaled heels.

My next destination was Hamburg, previously visited in the bitter winter of 1946 when I was clerk to the prosecuting officer at a War Crimes trial held there. In those days much of the city had been a sea of ruins with the surviving inhabitants living in holes in the ground and trucks going round daily to collect the bodies of men, women and children who had died of hypothermia, starvation or disease. Now I discovered a thriving metropolis with just a single tower and spire of a destroyed church left as a poignant memorial to the brutality, bestiality, barbarism and futility of war, the ultimate rejection of civilisation.

South to Luneburg where teenage Bach has been a chorister and student. I chanced upon their annual festival and stayed for the week.

One morning I was strolling over the same cobbles as had JSB when I was amazed and delighted to meet the Director of Religious Broadcasting of N.Z.B.C. with whom I had cooperated for most of my time down there. He was on no more than a flying visit but we lunched together in the main square while listening to a concert given by a very good military band.

By now I was satisfied with my command of German and still had three weeks remaining on my rail pass so I thought that I might visit Italy, but everywhere in Germany I had been told, "You must go to Freiburg," so to Freiburg I went – and chanced upon their Weinfest, accordingly staying for the week!

Every morning I would take a packed lunch up to one of the grassy hills overlooking the beautiful old town and spend the day reading and sunbathing, to go down in the evening to join in the feast of wine and sausage.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay there and also found time to explore the place, but my dissolute routine caught up with me. I boarded a train for Italy but had reached no further than Constance before I felt very frail. I left the train and asked the tourist bureau on the station to book me quickly into a hotel. I went straight to bed and slept for nearly twenty-four hours. Still rather brittle I spent the next week travelling in easy stages through Switzerland to Basel and then set off south.

(Part Three follows in September.)