

The Agiot

4th Edition

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Merry Christmas

All of us here at the Agiot wish you a *Very Merry Christmas*. In the spirit of the village we urge you to imbibe to excess and to fully gorge yourselves on all the de-

lights that Christmas affords.

A special thanks to each and every one of you whom continues to support us in word and deed. Please note that we will be

maintaining a Skeleton staff during Yuletide; Dr Mann has already embarked on a severe diet.

Καλα Χριστουγεννα!

Corfu Revisited

By David Orkin
Contributing Editor

In 1974, at the age of 16, I bought a ticket for a two-week charter flight to Corfu and wrote to both of the island's youth hostels asking about availability for my chosen dates. Though I'd yet to receive a reply from the Kondokali hostel I did receive a friendly, positive letter from Vasili Combolitis, the manager at Agios Ioannis. The hostel was housed in a three-storey villa built by the British in the 1860s and surrounded by fields, gardens and olive groves. At the top of a hill in the centre of the island, both the building and the adjacent palm tree were visible for miles. The beaches were well over an hour's walk away.

I immediately fell in love with the place: the hostel, the village, Kosta's taverna where we ate every evening, the beaches (especially Pelekas and the unspoilt Myrriotissa), the sunny days and balmy evenings, the life, so much so that I found myself going back year after year. Sometimes I camped in the garden. You could

also pitch a tent below the village in Kosta's fields, known as Strawberry Fields and Cactus Hilton. There was no charge, the understanding being that you would eat your meals at his taverna.

Kosta's taverna was the centre of village life, especially in the evenings; the food was excellent and cheap, and he, wife Nitsa and daughters Lula and Anna were loved by everyone who passed through. There was a jukebox which, in addition to a few Greek dancing favourites, had the cream of late Sixties and early Seventies rock, including classics by Neil Young, Hendrix and the Doors. Outside wobbled a heavily used table-football game - in later years we'd buy souvlakis from Nikos the Kebab Man just so that we could use the greasy paper they were wrapped in to oil the table's metal rods and keep the wooden players spinning freely.

Brits, Germans and Swedes flocked to Agios Ioannis. Long-haul air travel was fearfully expensive in those days, and Greece was a much-used

hub on overland and sea routes.

Corfu was offered as a free stopover on all the ferries between Italy and Greece. Many travellers came to the island intending just to break their journey for a night or two and ended up staying at Agios Ioannis for the summer - and returning the following year!

In the evening, in the village, people would sit at the taverna's long tables and swap stories of their recent experiences in Goa, Malindi, Phuket, Bali, Katmandu or Cuzco over dinner. They'd pause occasionally to feed a few drachs into the jukebox, or to wander off for a discreet smoke. Local Greek guys would strut their funky stuff, dancing with a glass on their head or perhaps a table or chair clenched between their teeth. When they'd stopped eating the furniture, they would promise undying love to any passing female traveller.

Eventually, in the small hours, Kosta would turn off the jukebox and close the taverna. We'd ad-

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Village news

By Dr. Lionel Mann
Contributing Editor

We wish to thank sincerely all those who have sent letters of condolence upon Sandy's demise. Despite the lively antics of Alfie and his friends, the village seems rather empty without the old dowager to keep an eye on things.

Anna and Nikos have already erected the largest Christmas tree ever seen in the village. We are waiting to see who will climb to the top for decorating it!

At Villa Theodora on the evening of 22nd December we shall have a Christmas Singalong with songs, carols, mincepies and tonsil lubrication. Anyone who can sing more or less in tune, has an appetite and thirst, will be attending.

This year the Corfu Loser's Cup will be contested on a date within the Christmas and New Year holiday period. It will probably comprise Ten-pin Bowling, Table Tennis, Darts, Pool and Boules, the last being included especially for Robin Halford, who spends her summer holidays in France teaching the French how to play it.

NEC Photos

By Peter H.
Contributing Editor

Over the next few issues, we are going to share a few of our snaps from the exhibition that we attended at the Birmingham NEC...



Big Sale Underway...

Corfu Revisited - Continued from page 1
jour to the hostel garden. Someone would produce a guitar and massacre the latest hit by Cat Stevens, James Taylor or Dylan.

Finally, a road down to Pelekas beach was started. The game was up.

On my last visit (in 1981) I turned up to find that the hostel had closed. I didn't have a tent with me, much to the delight of the mosquitoes and sandflies. The Corfu bubble had finally burst. For a few years afterwards I'd hear bits of Corfu news through the grapevine - the table-football game had fallen to bits, the jukebox had gone, the hostel had reopened as a hotel - but it eventually faded.

More than 20 years on, I decided to go back. I disembarked from the ferry to Corfu Town's harbourside. After two decades would there be any remnants of how things had been? I found the bus stop with ease, but was surprised to see that its sign said "Agios Ioannis - For Aqualand Water Fun Park". Though Corfu is a lush and verdant isle, the village had long been known for its chronic water shortages; coming back from the beach and going for a shower only to find the water off was a daily irritation.

On the bus ride I saw that the builders had not been idle. We passed Aqualand, an incongruous, multicoloured monstrosity that looked strangely like the Pompidou Centre. It had been built on the site of a marshy pond in a field about a mile from the village. At the Agios Ioannis bus terminus things were familiar; Dino's Taverna (our alternative to Kosta's in the evening) had become "Dino's Supermarket" and looked to have closed down relatively recently. More new buildings had risen on the ten-minute walk to the village proper. I paused before rounding the last corner. Amazingly it didn't look that different. The "hostel" was now the Hotel Marinda, freshly painted and with flags fluttering outside. The taverna had new white plastic tables and chairs, and there were a few more cars around - and there was

Kosta wiping down a table. He saw me as I drew nearer, shouted to the kitchen and his wife and two daughters appeared. Kosta was now well into his seventies. I asked about accommodation. Anna, his daughter, offered me a nice, simple room in her pension just behind the taverna, for £10 a night. Over the next few days she helped fill in the missing Corfu years. The discovery of underground water had put an end to the shortages, and helped to create Aqualand. The final nail was hammered into the coffin of the "old" Agios Ioannis nine years ago when Kosta stopped allowing camping in his fields.

Anna's sister Lula had brought her English husband back to live in the village. The two women and Anna's husband help in the taverna. Kosta still works from early morning until midnight every day. The taverna's inside walls are covered with hundreds of photos of past revellers.

A Dutch holiday company had "discovered" Agios Ioannis and block books the rooms in the hotel, now managed once again by Vasili and named after his daughter.

Pelekas beach has a big hotel and lots of apartment buildings. There still isn't a sealed road down to Myrriotissa, but a lot of cars and motorbikes bump down the dusty steep dirt track to the beach, where you can now hire sunbeds and umbrellas, virtually unknown when I'd last been there, Myrriotissa was already busy in the middle of June.

Anna said that quite a few "old-timers" still come back to visit, often bringing their partners and children to show them the mythical place associated with so many happy, faded memories. Before the jukebox had been taken away, a bunch of Irish regulars had taped all the records on it and left the tapes at the taverna for posterity.

On the last evening of my pilgrimage, I sat with my back to the taverna building, persuaded Kosta to play one of those tapes and looked around. The cicadas still buzzed and the evening air was full of remembered scents of jasmine and wild herbs.

Christmas 1940

By Dr. Lionel Mann
Contributing Editor

I cannot pretend that my wartime Christmases were in any way typical. Early in 1940, although aged only twelve, when my school music master had been taken seriously ill, I had been "conscripted" into becoming organist-choirmaster of a choir of twenty-four boys at a suburban church with a local reputation for the high quality of its music.

Until I went to St. Martin's my experience as a church chorister, from the age of six, and indeed the ethos of my home, had been somewhat austere and gloomily Protestant, but my new place was very much Anglo-Catholic. From my very first encounter I was totally enthralled by the glorious music, the dignified ceremonial, orderly observance of seasons and festivals, beautiful vestments and exquisite furnishings. All was akin to emerging from murky mist into sparkling sunlight. The impressive liturgies for Holy Week, Easter and Whitsun had been a stunning revelation, but whenever I remarked upon them I was told, "Wait till you see Christmas!"

Now Christmas had come. After Evensong the previous Sunday, walking down the darkened church to the choir vestry to dismiss the boys, I had been seized by a keen sense of anticipation. The solemn music and ceremonial of Advent was finished and our next appearance would be accompanied by all the brilliant music that we had been rehearsing for weeks. In those days Christmas did not start until midday on 24th December; it was "just not done" to perform Christmas carols in public before then, except at school where we should not attend at all during the festive season. However, the war had led to "Post early for Christmas" with shops displaying seasonal wares much earlier than usual so that parcels might be sent in good time to troops serving overseas.

Our last choir practice before the great day was on the Monday evening. Although it meant turning out during the

blackout, these practices always received full attendance. "In this choir voluntary means you must do it; compulsory means you'll be kicked out if you don't," the Head Chorister had unsmilingly imparted when apprising me of local customs. Seven- and eight-year-olds thought nothing of walking alone a mile or two in the dark, even in pouring rain; despite the constant threat of air-attack Britain was a much safer place for the elderly and the young in those days than it is today. Too, the infectious enthusiasm of those choristers and their pride in being members of St. Martin's Choir is now rarely encountered.

The next morning, early at the church in order to practice my organ music for the festival, I found the place already a hive of activity: severe Advent purple being replaced by festive white, silver and gold; holly and ivy being draped upon every projection; candles and incense cones being placed in every recess. Nobody objected to my playing. "It's just what we need to start Christmas." In mid-morning I went to join everyone in persuading a large tree through the door and erecting it in the front north corner of the nave.

Back at home, my grandparents' because mother had left us and father was away building airfields, I was dismissed from the bustle in the kitchen with a hot mince-pie until lunch was ready. In the meantime I donned my finery in preparation for a very busy twenty-four hours and then retired to the lounge where an aunt had just finished decorating the tree, real small coloured candles being part of the decorations, carefully placed to avoid fire hazard. After lunch, having satisfied grandfather's meticulous inspection, I caught a bus into the city.

I often wondered what other members of the congregation at the Cathedral thought at seeing a little squirt wearing the scarlet and gold blazer and tie, grey shirt and shorts, grey socks with scarlet and gold turn-down of the junior forms of the city grammar school, being solemnly virged into a place beside the choirstalls

by none other than the Head Verger. For months I had attended there at Saturday afternoon Evensongs in order to familiarise myself with the great music of the Anglican liturgy and had become known as a "regular". Moreover they always arranged that copies of the music should be provided for me to follow. The Head Verger was the uncle of one of my St. Martin's choristers. Was it the merest flicker of a wink that he bestowed upon me when we gravely bowed to each other as I took my place?

That Christmas Eve at the crowded Cathedral was my first acquaintance with the splendour of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and from the very first magical impact of a distant solo boy's voice singing the opening verse of "Of the Father's love begotten" to the concluding torrent of sound from the second-largest organ in Britain crashing out Bach's prelude on "In Dulci Jubilo" I was completely captivated. Afterwards, apart from pausing briefly in the nave to admire the massive Christmas tree decorated with coloured electric bulbs, a recent innovation, I hastened home for tea, impatient to reach St. Martin's in order to try out some ideas given me from having heard "The Doctor", as he was known all over the county, performing at the Cathedral.

Although it was midwinter, daylight was only just fading when I set out on my bicycle for St. Martin's at soon after five o'clock. Summer Time had been retained through winter during the war and Double Summer Time introduced during summer in order to give people daylight after work to "dig for victory" in their gardens and allotments. At home our tennis court and ornamental gardens had all been converted to vegetable plots. After the war it was years before I could again

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Christmas 1940 face a turnip, swede or
- *Continued from* parsnip!

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The congregation at
First Evensong of

Christmas at St. Martin's was made up of even more children than usual, more than two-hundred. As on all big festivals the double doors at the west end of the nave affording access to the Church Hall were fixed open and rows of chairs arranged, thereby about doubling our seating to five-hundred, yet we had reached standing-room-only by the time the service started. Nevertheless I was able to play only softly beforehand because it was unthinkable that mindless chatter should disturb the sacred serenity.

Many persons had arrived quite early; entry, and exit after the service, was a rather elaborate exercise owing to black-out regulations. Supervised by the duty sidesman about twenty would cram into the porch, lighted only by a single blue bulb high up inside the outer door, which would then be bolted. Only then would the inner door be opened allowing entry to the nave, lighted dimly from chancel at the far end. When the porch was empty the inner door was locked and the sidesman would open the outer door for another group to enter. Punctual attendance was encouraged as entry was forbidden once a service had started and the nave lights were switched on. St. Martin's was one of the few churches in the city that had an efficient blackout system enabling us to hold services during hours of darkness; every window of church and hall had tightly fitting outside shutters that our Verger closed at appropriate times.

Six musical chimes of the sacristy clock broke the expectant silence, the nave was flooded with light and I played softly just three notes, D, F sharp, G. "Once in Royal David's city ..." sang the Head Chorister from the entrance to the choir vestry at the back of the nave. "He came down to earth ..." Everybody joined in the second verse, a veritable roar of sound, while the eight pairs of choirboys were led down the centre aisle by crucifer and two taperers, bearing

cross and candles. When they had taken their places in the chancel choirstalls a second procession emerged from the door beside the organ, a swarm of acolytes followed by two priests, our own Fr. Morgan being assisted at greater festivals by elderly Fr. Lucas who came out of retirement for such occasions.

Anglican Evensong, the envy of many other Christian churches (yet today ousted by muddle-headed illiterate "informal worship"), proceeded upon its orderly course, psalms, lessons, office hymn, canticles, Creed, responses, prayers, anthem, a little carol. Then, "Let us proceed in peace," was intoned by Fr. Morgan, to which all responded, "In the Name of the Lord. Amen." We burst into the first verse of "O Come All Ye Faithful" as crucifer and taperers led off in a ceremonial procession down the north aisle with the two churchwardens carrying their staves of office moving ahead to clear the way through the overflow congregation. Following the choristers came two more taperers, the thurifer swinging his censer, accompanied by his diminutive boat-boy with the boat of incense granules and spatula, another acolyte bearing a bowl of holy water and his partner with the sprinkling rod, the "bookboy", yet two more taperers and then Fr. Lucas, Fr. Morgan.

Though we were using the extended version of the hymn I yet needed to "improvise" between verses (prepared and written out in advance - I knew my youthful limitations!) in order to spin out the duration of the hymn. Halfway around the back of the nave the procession stopped and closed up for the Blessing of the Crib. A beautiful model of the stable with exquisitely-moulded figures of the participants in the Nativity was censed, sprinkled with holy water and blessed, and then the procession resumed. Before the last verse came another break while Fr. Morgan, surrounded by acolytes, chanted the Christmas gospel from the top of the chancel steps.

The sermon followed. Our priest never preached for more than five minutes; "If you can't strike oil in five min-

utes, stop boring!" People (even the choirboys, than which there is no higher accolade!) listened to his sermons and remembered them. The singing of "While Shepherds Watched" accompanied the Offertory and "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" provided a hearty conclusion after the Blessing.

Then I finished playing my voluntary at least half the congregation was waiting patiently to leave through the "light-lock", but I found the choristers waiting rather impatiently for me; we all had an important engagement to keep. With the assistance of the Sacristan we "pulled a fast one" using the sacristy as our private "light-lock" and avoiding delay.

Moving rapidly we made for our Head Chorister's home about a half-mile from the church. There Chris's mother with four or five other "choirmums" was waiting to feed the hungry hordes. How they managed at that and the following wartime Christmases to provide such plenty, despite stringent rationing, I cannot imagine. A large variety of sandwiches, sausage rolls, mince pies, cakes, jellies, tinned fruit, cream, custard, soft drinks was quickly depleted and yet some was left "for later". Throughout the evening groups chatted, played board games or went up to one of the four bedrooms to slip off shoes and lie down to snooze.

Soon after eleven o'clock sleepers were wakened and the remainder of the bounty was consumed. Attendance of probationer choirboys at the midnight and early morning service was voluntary, but has anybody ever tried to keep a boy in bed at Christmas when excitement is offered? Making our way back to the church we joined a steady procession of pedestrians all going in the same direction, calling out the season's greetings to one another. Throughout the war we discovered that very few nights are so dark that "it is impossible to see your hand in front of your face". Too it was apparent that both the R.A.F. and the Luftwaffe had a holiday at Christmas; no drone, whether even of friendly or uneven of

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Christmas 1940 hostile aircraft, in-
- *Continued from* fringed upon the still-
page 4 ness. A long queue had
formed at the
"light-lock".

Extra buses ran across town to St. Martin's at festivals, crewed by volunteers who wanted to attend services. Again we used our privileged access through the sacristry.

The nave was already full when we arrived and the hall was filling. Acolytes were busy lighting the myriad of candles placed upon every convenient ledge and the incense cones in the window recesses. In 1940, as in every year for the following sixty-five, whenever playing for Midnight Mass I performed J.S. Bach's "Pastorale" (BWV590) beforehand, its delicate thirteen minutes perfectly suited to the occasion.

The sacristry clock tinkled midnight and I played two notes, C, F. At the far end of the church the boys, conducted by the Head Chorister, sang unaccompanied the first verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem". The nave lights flashed on, organ and everyone joined in the second verse while choir and then servers and priests processed to their places. The local army barracks was not much more than a stone's throw away so there was always a substantial male presence in our congregation, often adding the tenor and bass that the choir lacked. The resultant welter of sound was probably audible back at the barracks!

The hymn finished and immediately, while Fr. Morgan censed the altar, the choir chanted the glorious Christmas introit psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God, ..." For the Mass itself we used a three-part setting by an obscure Italian early classical composer, probably written originally for a convent. Its simple gaiety made it a great favourite with the boys, and we trotted it out on most great festivals. The text was in Latin, but in those days all educated people knew at least a modicum of that language, and anyway our congregation had the English translation in their prayer-books.

Our priest never preached at a mid-

night service. "They don't want to be kept from their beds while I exercise my tonsils." He merely imparted Christmas greetings, and then we launched into "O Come, All Ye Faithful" for the Offertory.

The chancel at St. Martin's might have been designed with the size of our choir in mind; with a bit of a squeeze all twenty-four choristers and I, kneeling side by side, fitted along the altar rail to receive communion. Then we performed most of the Christmas carols in our current repertoire while the congregation was communicated; even with two priests ministering it lasted nearly a half-hour. Conforming to the Book of Common Prayer we sang the "Gloria in excelsis" at the end of the service and again concluded with "Hark the Herald Angels Sing". All lights in the church were switched off, apart from a couple in the chancel and the organ console lights, providing a dim glow throughout the building, and both inner and outer porch doors were opened allowing the congregation to disperse without hindrance.

In those days I always played a transcription of the "Hear, King of Angels" chorus from Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" after Midnight Mass; it lasted not much more than three minutes. Even so only two choristers remained when I went into the vestry to remove cassock and surplice. (Nobody was allowed into the chancel unless wearing ecclesiastical robes.) The pair were my "escort" part of the way home and we usually met up on the way to church too. We always left our bicycles in the same place behind the church so that we could easily find them in the dark. Our front lamps were screened by cardboard discs with a narrow slit about an inch long across the centre, throwing a slender beam of light on to the road about four yards ahead. We had red reflectors on the rear mudguards and wore small fluorescent discs pinned fore and aft to our clothing.

About a mile from the church my companions turned right into a new housing estate and I veered left beside the old, disused aerodrome, across the

heath, through woodland, downhill and home. More than half the walls of my bedroom over the front porch were windows and it had been deemed impossible to blackout. The gas light (grandfather thought electricity dangerous) had been fixed off and I learnt to dress and undress in the dark, always placing clothes meticulously in the same order and position. Actually it was often so bright with moonlight that I could surreptitiously rise when everybody else was asleep in order to copy out, seated at my dressing-table, instrumental parts of music that I had written for the school orchestra but had lacked time to prepare during a busy day. On this night I crept quietly to my room and was asleep before two o'clock.

My alarm woke me at seven. I was far too excited to feel tired. Grandmother was already up preparing Christmas dinner and she always insisted that I should never "go out on an empty stomach". A round of toast and meat-dripping, washed down with a cup of tea, satisfied her requirements. The route to church was marginally more uphill than the return, taking me about twenty minutes. I needed to wait only briefly for my "escort" at our rendezvous.

It was still dark when we reached church, daylight saving in reverse, yet already people were streaming in through the "light-lock." Although probationer choirboys were excused attendance at the eight o'clock Mass, three or four turned up and were rewarded with being given surplices to wear over their cassocks and allocated places in the full turn-out of singing-boys and choristers on this occasion. The music was slightly more simple than at midnight, but communion took just as long because our congregation at this early hour was equally as large as it had been earlier. All our carols had another outing!

To save going home for breakfast I accompanied Chris to his house where we were treated to a great feast. His father was away commanding a North Sea M.T.B.; his mother and sister ministered to our needs. Soon after ten we left for the "final fling".

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Christmas 1940

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page 5

High Mass on Christmas Day was always the absolute highlight of the festival. Well over

six hundred crammed into St. Martin's. Three or four double-decker buses were parked in the streets near the church. As well as all the music we had used at midnight there was a ceremonial procession to the Crib. I found it all immensely inspiring, enjoyed every minute, thrilled to produce such exhilarating sounds from the beautiful instrument at my disposal. Afterwards in the choir vestry I found all twenty-four boys lined up and being given their Christmas present, a little pocket-torch, by Fr. Morgan. The elderly Colonel and his family from the nearby barracks was also there; he pressed a half-crown into every hot sticky little hand, a custom he observed every one of those wartime Christmases. Needless to say that he was great favourite of the boys! I must admit that I liked him too; he always took me aside and graced my hand with a crisp pound-note.

Back at home everyone was awaiting my return before gathering in the lounge to hand out the presents piled around the base of the tree. Then at about two o'clock we sat down to Christmas dinner: grandfather, grandmother, my father and sister, two uncles, four aunts, myself. It was always turkey with all the trimmings, followed by Christmas pudding with white sauce. Home was a strictly "alcohol-free zone"; I cannot remember what we drank, probably water or maybe fruit-juice.

Grandmother always prepared at least a dozen Christmas puddings but we never ate one of them; they were grandfather's presents to his most valued employees who had been with him since he first set up "on his own account". Instead a friend of the family who had been "in service" as a cook and now lived in London always sent us one. On one of those wartime Christmases we needed mine-detector when eating the pudding; almost every bite yielded a little silver sixpence. Before we had finished the telephone rang. It was the

cook. Please would we save all the coins? She also prepared a pudding for their local orphanage and had sent us the wrong one. I had never before seen grandfather laugh so much!

At three-o'clock we always listened to the broadcast of the King's Christmas Message, delivered in a rather hesitant but attractively intimate style, and then we all left grandfather alone for his "quiet snooze". Punctually at four, as also on Sundays, he would come looking for me. "Are you coming, Lionel?" We would set out on his "constitutional", walking at a brisk pace round the "four-mile-square" of roads around the village. He would regale me with anecdotes from his past, and impart his business ethics and his philosophy of life. I was his oldest grandchild in Britain and, although he encouraged my ambition for a musical career, I think that he never ceased to hope that I might succeed to his business. Brought up in the country, he had a keen eye for nature and would point out animal and bird tracks, showing what they revealed of whatever had made them, or any other phenomena.

Evensong on Christmas Day was said and not sung unless the day was a Sunday, which never happened during my time at St. Martin's. I had no need to turn out again that day.

"High Tea" on Christmas Day also consisted of many delicacies. Grandmother, a little slip of a thing, smaller than thirteen-year-old I (and I was small for my age!), had been given six months to live at the age of eighteen. She actually lived to be ninety-six, having produced twelve children, surviving sturdy, robust grandfather by nearly thirty years! She was also a divine cook, which obviously weighed greatly with one of grandfather's physique! Her pork-brawn that always graced our festive tables melted in the mouth. Does anyone make it these days?

Throughout the war we frequently received food parcels from our numerous relatives in Canada. Despite rationing I seemed never to go short of anything much, except for bananas and oranges,

but now I realise that other members of the household must have stinted themselves in my interests. On Boxing Day we relaxed between meals while grandfather spent some hours striding around the locality, distributing largesse to his employees.

Choir practices at St. Martin's followed their usual routine except that during school holidays they took place at four in the afternoon instead of seven in the evening. Daily I went to the church for organ practice. The last of the great season's events was the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols that replaced Evensong on the Sunday after Christmas. That 1940 occasion was my introduction in that celebration. For very many years I could never eat a full meal before playing for any big occasion and I am certain that such must have been the case for that event. As Organist-Choirmaster I was required also to read the Third Lesson, a requirement that I found more daunting than playing all the music needed for the festival! Again the church and hall were crammed to capacity. One of the highlights was the old Colonel's dramatic declamation of the Eighth Lesson; one was almost impelled to applaud. Herod was certainly denounced as an utter rotter! Years later, when as headmaster I was required to read that lesson at my school's Carol Festivals, I attempted to reproduce the C.O.'s florid style. The pupils loved it!

Afterwards I went to Chris's place with some of the older choristers to celebrate the end of a very successful, and in my case excitingly revealing, few days. Its delights are still very fresh in my memory.

Letters to the Editor

We invite you to send letters for publication in next month's edition of the Agiot. The writer of the best letter will receive £25. Send to:

letters@theagiot.net

LEFKADA (there's more to Greece than Corfu!)

By Paul McGovern & Dr. Lionel Mann
Contributing Editors

LEFKADA, the smallest Prefecture in Greece, is an island with a number of small islets in the Ionian Sea having an area of 290 square kilometres and a population of about 24,000. The capital and administrative centre is Lefkada Town. The highest mountain is Mount Elati, 1,158m. Although genuinely an island, since 1980 it has been connected to the mainland by a long causeway and floating bridge, making for easy access to Aktion Airport, a mere 20 minutes away.

The poetess Sappho resided and committed suicide here [Ed: Please don't try this at home] and the island has been considered as having been Homer's Ithaca with a possible site of Odysseus' palace. A popular tourist resort with many white beaches, Lefkada is world famous for the windsurfing in Vassiliki Bay.

We have 6,000 square metres of gentle sloping land for sale, ideal for building. There are a number of olive trees on the plot, which overlooks the fair-sized village of Morandochori. Bordering the back of the property is a beautiful, ancient monastery. A road encircles half of the property and connects to a main road. Because of the accessibility and the very gentle slope, building upon this land will be very easy.

WATER AND ELECTRICITY are available. The land faces south and is approximately 112 metres by 54 metres. It is only 5 minutes to the sea and tavernas and 10 minutes from forementioned Vasiliki Bay.

Price € 80,000



Vasiliki Bay



Six Stremmata



Walkers' Paradise



Neighbouring Monastery

For Sale



Vernoukos

The two-storey three-bedroom centrally heated home stands high above the sea, an infinity pool lies between it and the forested terraces which tumble away to the shore.

The often overused accolade 'Location, Location, Location' is richly deserved here.

Price: € 1,200,000

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



Panorama Development

Stunning, innovative, moulded to the terraces villas, enjoying unspoilable views across the valley. Both three-bedroom villas are one hundred square metres basic with extra covered area in the linkage. The villas are centrally heated and feature spiral oak stairwells.

(See WWW site for details)

Price: € P.O.A.

For Sale



Hoek / 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