Page

Agiot

WITH THE MONKS AT MOUNT ATHOS

(Part 1) By Paul Mc Govern Editor



This last November 2008 intrepid explorers Dickinson and McGovern entered the holiest of holy places, the Autonomous Province of Greece, situated on the of eastern 'finger' the Halkidiki Peninsula; known to the English as Mount Athos, to the Greeks as Agios Oros.

We reported to the Pilgrims' office at Ouranoupili 13th Novemat 7.00A.M. ber, to collect the visas we require (30 Euros) for entry to the mysterious realm. Armed with these we walked a short distance along the quayside to buy our ferry tickets which cost 7 Euros one-way. The boat is full as it chug chugs slowly along the western shore towards Dafni, our dropping off point. It is full of men only, women being strictly banned from entry. On this to Dodge City 130 years land even dogs and cats can be male only, though hens are an exception; they come in useful. A motley crew the men are too. Some appear to be brigands and cutthroats, others workmen and of course several monkpriests. Not many obviouslooking Pilgrims on show. We pull in to a couple of settlement jetties en-route, where a few travellers alight, then we are quickly off again under the shadow of high forested mountains. interspersed with patches of brown earth. This country is not like Corfu. No olive trees and the only cypresses cling to the company of a lone building. Two hours brings us to the port of Dafni. Here two coaches wait to take us along the motorway (narrow track) to the Capital Karyes. There is a definite scrum to get on

and I find myself in the priests' section, where a sign tells me I'm not supposed to be. Nobody objects so I stay put. The drive is slow, up, and winding into the interior. A 'frontier town' Dave describes Karyes; he is not wrong. A main street akin

ago, shops comprising one selling icons, a greengrocer, a rough taverna of sorts, a hardware store; incongruously, a little police station with a patrol car parked outside.

Our organization has been matchless; apparently you are supposed to prebook your accommodation ten days before landing. We haven't. Oops. Luckily, we can raise Lula by cell phone and she gets in touch with cousin Tasos, a regular visitor to these parts. He says go to the 'skeet' called Agios Andreas, it is only 500 metres out of town up the hill. 'They will give you a bed'.



A big place this 'skeet', a collection of several churches with ancillary buildings, set in large grounds. A 'skeet' is a dependency of a full-blown Monastery.

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WITH THE MONKS AT MOUNT ATHOS Continued from Page 1

This one is indebted to the vast religious palace of Vatopethio, the one that has been national news over Greece for several weeks, all for the wrong reasons, tales of dodgy land deals between a priest and a Government Minister.

A young monk sweeping harsh steps directs us to the Reception hall. A friendly enough monk takes our particulars and enters them into a ledger. My visa clearly shows my name as Govern and I am an Irish national. How that happened is all Greek to me.

'Oh' says the monk, 'you are Irish?' 'Yes'. I've only just got here and I'm lying already.

'You must be Catholic', says he, with a whiff of disapproval. 'No, I'm... at this point I nearly say Church Of England-which is true but is only going to dig me a deeper holeso I say 'Protestant', lamely.

'Occupation?' 'Er, builder', I'm struggling now. He's probably getting bored so turns to David.

'You are English?' 'Yes'. 'Ah, you are Church of England?' 'No, I'm Catholic' the monk's eyes are beginning to cross. 'Your occupation?' 'Psychologist' He doesn't understand so turns to a colleague for translation. When he gets it he says, 'We are full' and closes the book.

We shuffle away, no idea what to do next, but he rapidly recalls us. It would seem an older, kindly monk has interceded on our behalf. 'They will not be turned away'.

A young, chatty Russian monk then leads us along stone passageways, in search of a billet. He too grills us as to our origins. Lying is becoming easier in God's place. He knocks briefly on doors, and opens them to check for vacancies. At one room he recoils at the smell of tobacco. 'Do you smoke?' he demands. 'No we reply', truthfully this time. 'Goooood' he stares, 'if I find the person who is smoking I keeel heem', delivered with a deft motion across his jugular. Finally we are found a vacant room with three single beds, blankets, a sidetable with water jug, two bibles, some simple decoration. And a radiator. This is a surprise, as we had anticipated minimal heating. 'Be in the Refectory at four sharp', we are told, 'or you won't get fed'

doors, not wanting to miss out. We are soon approached by a fellow loiterer, who resembles a buccaneer and has 'been to Plymouth'. A pleasant young man nearby is a more believable pilgrim. He is a baptised Greek Orthodox from Vermont and was born Jewish. He is on a pilgrimage across Europe, staying in many Monasteries. He is seriously interested in entering the monk-priesthood, but wants to make sure it is for the right reasons. 'Some of them are just 'Rule Priests' or don't really know why they're here', he explains. 'And then you'll meet one who radiates a love that cannot be denied. That's what I want.'

A bell goes and we cram down some stone steps into a long, low building. Long wooden tables set side by side with wooden benches. It's like being back in the taverna, priests at one end, riff-raff at the other. There is not a seat to spare. Lentil soup, a tomato, an apple, bread, water served from jugs. Absolutely no alcohol, that will clean up the liver. 'Cutthroat the Buccaneer' eats like a pirate too. He is sitting opposite me, stabbing his apple like an enemy. A monk at the far end chants throughout, but no talking is allowed at the tables. 'Bullymonk' tells me off for breaking this silence, as I'm offering a plate to my neighbour. I also wrestle with this pesky monk over a confection, which is offered after the main meal.. The buccaneer finds this a jolly jape and is grinning and chuckling away. As

we file out Cook Monks bow and scrape at our feet, this is to crave for our forgiveness should the food have been not to our liking. This, with the silence of the diners and the hypnotic chanting, is magically humbling. There is also the realization that eating without conversation focuses the diner wonderfully on the food set before him. Simple but DE-LICIOUS.

are told, 'or you won't get fed' So, we loiter about the meal ors, not wanting to miss out. We soon approached by a fellow loier, who resembles a buccaneer and s 'been to Plymouth'. A pleasant ing man nearby is a more believe pilgrim. He is a baptised Greek thodox from Vermont and was cn Jewish. He is on a pilgrimage



"David with Ephraim"

When the last service finishes at about eight we are approached by a monk-priest who invites us into the inner sanctum. He allows us to see the Holy Relics of St Andrew; the forehead skin of the Saint stretched upon a gilt mask. He sits in a pew [the Monk] and talks to us for a long time, in a soft refined voice. He is from Birmingham. His name is Ephraim. He invites us tomorrow morning to see some of his restoration work. David asks if we can help with some work and he says yes, after the morning services.

PART 2 continues in February.

Village News

By Dr. Lionel Mann Contributing Editor

Normal service has been resumed. The extended Christmas holiday is ended. Giorgos has dismantled to crib and taken down the lights that graced the plateia. The display improves every year and was quite spectacular this time. Our bright young things have all flown off to their various universities and the schools have reopened. No longer are my slumbers disturbed by youngsters playing football outside my bedroom window at midnight.

The New Year was welcomed in traditional fashion, but this year Kosta did not discharge shattering salvos of his shotgun; rather he

However Giorgos performed inbed, and all my cats took to the hills.

Travel to Town has had its moments recently. It seems that teams from all over Greece come to Corfu to practice digging up roads. No sooner have the telephone people excavated trenches, laid cables and filled in, than the water people come along to perform similarly. Next it is the turn of the electricity company, to be followed by drainage works. Newly-laid footpaths and roads are torn up to be re-laid weeks later. Quite often passage is reduced to a single lane controlled

rested in preparation for the exer- by traffic signals, sometimes in as tions of his eighty-first anniversary. many as three locations, resulting in considerable delay. An already very stead. It nearly shook me out of uneven surface acquires deep corrugations. Now the road is being resurfaced in places, but it is very patchy and vehicles need to proceed slowly over the humps. Just recently a Blue Bus took fifty minutes, instead of the normal twenty, to reach Agios Ioannis from Town. Unfortunately the rumour that refreshments were to be served en route proved false.

Economy and Corfu

By Paul Mc Govern Editor

The world is all doom for the fragility of the Global economies, and so it might be. But the natural course of all events has been forever peaks and troughs, pluses and minuses, ving and vang. Now we are in a trough, we might yet be only just tumbling into it. There could be a long wait for the next climb up. Nobody knows. No two Economists ever agree anyway. There are probably a few very clever people who do know but they are a distinct minority. And they are not about to tell us.

For decades the 'West' has lived beyond its means, driven by the plastic world of credit. No real wealth below the edifice to prop it up. I'm thinking of a huge helium balloon tethered in a field, its status

quo maintained satisfactorily by terms of sales, but step back a momen attending to its inflation. ment and consider. The Pound may Well, the men have gone to lunch.

various packages across the world to alleviate the pain; an aspirin for many on Corfu forced to sell propcancer. Pumping taxpayers' money into the void is surely a stop-gap remedy. Now the British Government is considering something called easement- I think this means printing money.

How is this ocean of horror affecting our tiny island? I bumped into a Swedish lady at a local Supermarket. 'There will be a lot of people crying in Corfu this winter', she wisely predicted; it was several weeks ago before the proverbial hit have not been decimated. When the fan.

Corfu? How will the property market be affected? Initially, badly, in

have dropped 25% against the Euro Governments are introducing in a few short months, 35% if you go back a bit further. Yet, with erty in a much-changed island society, prices are beginning to tumble, and into the Spring it is easy to imagine reductions equal to the drop in the £/Euro Exchange rate. So for those Brits fortunate enough to be in secure employment, has much changed at all?

Keep the faith with the island would seem to be as good advice as any. Ironically, despite the doom and gloom, holiday bookings for 09 things are bleak, the thought of fun So, where are we going on in the sun is a mighty incentive.

Corfu Loser's Cup Goes To Foreigner

By Paul Mc Govern Editor

The dastardly swine, this was not meant to happen at all. For years the Famous Cup has been the preserve of the Brits and then... along comes Fonda Grammenos and ruins it all. AND he's good-looking, at least according to some of the English groupies who attended the event, held this year just past on the 28th December.

This was a splendid day out for all, as far as I can make out. A field of 15 highly-trained athletes assembled to tackle the six events. The weather was kind so there was no stopping the first two disciplines, held outdoors in Kontokali. First was Croquet, which has now established itself as a must, despite the vagaries of the rules amongst most of the contestants. The players were split into groups and tussled around twelve hoopy things. Fonda won his group easily, as Chrissy was too busy swooning and her son was threatened with a beating from Fonda. The other groups were keenly fought over.



"McGovern preparing to smash Scotter on the head before Croquet - note yob with hands in pocket"

POINTS: Fonda 20, Denis O 16, Paul McG 14, Kostas McG 12, Jan S 12, Alex Ferg. 12, Judith F 11, Lula McG 10, Rich Q 10, Linda O 10, Chrissy H 10, Alex Jnr. 10, Karen Q 9, John F 9, and Paul S 9.

Welly-Throwing, which is a fiendish sport from Bradford, introduced to the Games by Paul Scotter from Bradford, was next. This caught several people out, whose strenuous efforts were not rewarded with much distance. Height maybe, distance no. Some even managed to throw it backwards in the wrong direction.

POINTS: Denis O 20, Alex Ferg. 16, Rich Q 14, Kostas McG 12, Fonda 11, John F 10, Karen Q 9, Judith F 8, Paul S 7, Linda O 6, Lula McG 5, Jan S 5, Chrissy H 4, Alex Jnr 4, and Paul McG 4.

Starbowl for three events, starting with two rounds of ten-pin bowling, aggregated scores. Some people got aggravated sores. Lionelthe scorer-is on his third pencil. Paul McG is on his third pint but it's not helping. Chrissy has gone home sulking because Fonda wouldn't hold her hand. Scoring was moderate this year, competition fierce. Alex Ferguson came out on top with a combined tally of 253. It was very nice of Alex to fit us in considering the Man Utd. league match being played that weekend. Jan S had to pull out because she had drunk even more than Paul McG.

POINTS: Alex Ferg. 20, Paul S 16, Rich Q 14, Fondle 12, Denis O 11, Karen Q 10, Paul McG 10, Kostas McG 8, John F 7, Judith F 6, Alex Jnr 5, Lula McG 4, Linda O 3, and Jan S 2.

Downstairs we go for tabletennis. This was a whitewash, as Richard Quilter was several divisions better than anybody in the field. It would have been a good



"Fonda thinks he's going to win"

match between him and former Champion, Barry Allsworth. Jan S was too drunk to partake. The ball kept landing on Linda's chest so put her off. However, her relatively high-ranking leads us to suppose that her opponents also lost concentration.

POINTS: Richard Q 20, Frodo 16, Judith F 14, Paul McG 14, Paul S 11, Linda O 11, Alex Jnr 11, Kostas McG 8, Lula McG 8, Karen Q 8, John F 8, Denis O 8, Alex Ferg. 8 and Jan S 2.

Final drama here at Starbowl was Killer-pool. John F showed his misspent youth to full potential by taking the honours, chased home by Fondu, who was starting to creep away from the field.

POINTS: John F. 20, Fondu 16, Denis O 14, Paul S 12, Karen Q 11, Kostas McG 10, Alex Ferg. 9, Paul McG 9, Lula McG 7, Linda O 7, Judith F 5, Jan S 5, Rich Q 3, and Alex Jnr. 3

It is dark by now as we move on to the final sport, held for the first time at the Astrodome Vatos, which had installed at its own expense; a dartboard. Karen Q appreciated this venue, largely for the quality of music pumped out by the DJ.

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Corfu Loser's Cup Goes To Foreigner Continued from Page 4

The darts was a cake walk for the pure quality of John F and Paul McG, as the event was 301 Doubles. There were times during their matches when they were seen to be throwing left-handed and with blindfolds. Many thanks are owing to Jenny, Vangelis, Katerina and Alex for their warm hospitality and lack of derision. It can be seen from the scores that darts favours the imbibers.

POINTS: John F. 20, P McG 20, Jan S 16, Denis O 16, Judith F 14, Fonzie 14, Linda O 14, Kostas McG 10, Lula McG 10, Rich Q 10, Karen Q 10, Paul S 10, Alex Ferg. 10 and Alex Jnr. 10



"Judith explaining to fans why she didn't win"

this year splendidly, and to cap the year's joint-winner, who could day the tired but happy Sportsmen barely stand by now and certainly and women went to Raffles, for a Victory Dinner and Presentation of all. Congratulations to brand new the Cup to Folio. Here, when not Grandad Denis O for bribing everyeating at a fine spread laid on by body to finish second. Congratula-Bryn and Chrissie, the contestants were expected to perform once more. A cunning 'YES NO INTER-LUDE' had been devised by Bryn. Anybody who fell into the traps set is here to stay. by the Question Master was instantly splattered with a platter of white goo in the face by the devilish torturers.

Even innocent bystanders were enmeshed in this farce, whether they wanted or no. Cheating was evident by the organisers, who seemed to think KNOW was a good enough answer to deserve the plate in the face. The Scorer thought the proceedings infantile, which of course they were, so left early. Otherwise, it was a great success. Kostas McG could be forgiven for a sub-standard showing, and falling asleep before the meal, as he had gone to bed at 7.00 A.M and therefore had but 3 hours sleep before the competition got underway.

Fonda Grammenos graciously

Paul S had disorganised events accepted the Cup from P. McG [last couldn't see- what with the goo and tions to Judith Forshaw for finishing top of the ladies. A big thankyou to ALL competitors for being such good sports. The Losers' Cup



"Bryn re-explaining the rules"

FINAL POINTS: Fonda Gramennos 89, Denis Oxlee 85, Alex Ferguson 75, John Forshaw 74, Richard Quilter 71, Paul McGovern 71, Paul Scotter 65, Kostas McGovern 60, Judith Forshaw 58, Karen Q 57, Linda O 45, Lula McG 44, Alex Jnr. 43, Jan S 42 and Chrissy H 14 (two events only).

Aunty Lula's Love-bites

Lentil soup

This is a stock-in-trade hereabouts for those cold winterrainy days round the sober [stove]. This stuff is good for you, filling and perfect for trimming away those Christmas tummy flaps or even huge bulges. And this recipe is straight from the horse's mouth, otherwise known as M.I.L. Nitsa. None of your pseudo Rick Stein copies here.

Ingredients 250 gr lentils 1.5 litres water 1 onion chopped to chunks 2 carrots chopped to chunks 2 potatoes chopped to chunks A pinch of paprika A pinch of oregano A pinch of black pepper A pinch of sugar Half a teaspoon of salt 2 cloves of garlic 2 tablespoons of olive oil 1 cube vegetable or chicken stock 1 tablespoon of tomato puree 1 skinned tomato chopped 1 bay leaf

Go:

Fill a bowl with hot water and pour the lentils in. Leave to soak for 30mins minimum.

Meanwhile, pour into a saucepan the other ingredients and bring to the boil. Then add the soaked lentils after draining to the mix. Simmer for a minimum of one hour but making sure the lentils are tender.

Bon appetite!

UN FAUX PAS

By Dr. Lionel Mann Contributing Editor

For the five years that I was Director of Music at Hampton Parish Church I lived as the guest of Colonel Angus Muller and his wife at the Old Grange, across the road from the church. The beautiful house dated from around 1530 and had not been subjected to a great deal of "improvement". I needed to duck to pass through the doorway into my bedroom, but could stand upright in the fire place. The floor tilted down to one corner and the large window leaned in the opposite direction. Rough-hewn beams supported the ceiling, the floor of the room above.

When central heating was being installed, during my time there, the technician enquired where Mrs. Muller wanted the pipes from the boiler in the kitchen to pass to the rest of the house. There was really only one way, through the central store-room. Two days of guessing and a considerable amount of profanity later connection was made. The walls there were about six feet Old Grange I was helping Colonel thick, the workman's drills were only three feet long and there was not a right-angle in the entire building!

The Colonel had gained his rank as an artillery officer in World War One, subsequently joined the Colonial Police in Ceylon, and in turn became Chief-of-Police in Tanganyika, then in Trinidad and Tobago, promoted eventually to Inspector-General. He was very erudite, a fascinating conversationalist and had a wonderfully impish sense of humour. Unfortunately his wartime experiences had left him with slightly impaired hearing and he could not always judge accurately how loudly he was speaking.

Church Street, Hampton, comprised a very friendly community of gifted individuals: someone "big in the City"; an operatic tenor become music festival impresario; a High Court judge; a well-known actress; a successful commercial artist; the librarian of a national daily, amongst others. Regularly there would be parties at which these would in turn entertain each other.

Upon one such occasion at the Muller to serve the drinks when a lady entered wearing a hat surrounded by a veritable cornucopia of artificial flowers. In what was supposed to be a whispered aside the Colonel leaned towards me. "She looks like a well-tended grave, doesn't she, Lionel?"

Regrettably his "whisper" was a very audible observation. For a moment there was a stunned silence and then the room erupted in prolonged unrestrained laughter.

Afterwards, when we were being scathingly rebuked by Mrs. Muller, we could still not help chuckling.

At that time the choirboys of the church were preparing for a summer concert tour of Sweden. Our hotel expenses would be covered by our fees, but we needed to raise funds for the journey and amongst other means we were holding monthly jumble sales. I was not surprised but very amused when that hat appeared amongst articles donated for the next sale. Somebody bought it too!

Carols' Night

By Paul Scotter Contributing Editor



"Lionel gently dozing" The 21st of December saw the eagerly awaited carol singing evening at Ye Olde Villa Theodora, Merriment abounded as, fuelled by a very acceptable vintage mulled wine 18 or so hardy souls, fought through the cold street/s of Agios Ioannis to sing wide selection of Christmas а songs including everyone's favourite Carols. As always Lionel (the man) Mann gave a virtuoso performance on the organ, and young and old raised their voices and glasses to the occasion. Sustenance was supplied by the critically acclaimed pair of chefs, Lula and Anna, with especially tasty mince pies, mini pizza's and scrummy sandwiches (a W.I. calendar may be planned for next year to mirror the success of the Yorkshire version, bigger buns may be required).

Following a brief interlude the singing continued to be rounded off by that all time drunken party favourite, Merry Christmas Everybody!!

Tapes and C.D.'s of the concert will be available shortly and a much reduced price.....A great time was had by everyone, and many thanks go to Paul and Lula for opening their doors and providing such handsome entertainment to put everyone into a festive mood.



[&]quot;Choral Angels"

Christmas In *OZ*

By Paul Mc Govern Editor

A brief note to say that four Agiots were Down Under during the Yuletide festivities. Paul and Sally Grove were there to shop and sail, Peter McGovern is on a gapyear and Micky Clark was kangaroo hunting following the release of his latest album 'I Am A Seagull 4'.



"Cover from Micky Clark's album"

Our thoughts were with all of them during this splendid time in the heart of Corfu.

Featured Property

By Paul Mc Govern Editor

There is no featured property as such this month because so many bargains are hitting the market place.

Please keep checking our property sites:

> www.propertycorfu.org and www.corfuretreat.co.uk

News From the North

By Uncle Bulgaria Contributing Editor

Well what a winter so far, what a draft coming up the Khyber pass with this economy problem, whilst accepting the weather as normal for this time of the year, it is amazing to see all the bars this North end of the island are mainly empty and it cannot be down to the weather. So, it has to be that every body is skint. Even the expat (yuk) bars are not doing business.

It is just dead, yesterday I saw 3 hearses go by and there was nobody in them !!! can't even afford to get buried.

But , let's look on the bright side, up here the local council is digging up all the roads and laying mains drainage, that has to be good, no doubt it will continue throughout the summer when we are hopefully busy with tourists and it will cause the usual chaos.

The view across the sea to Albania is great with snow on the mountains and is very pretty. The beaches are empty and make a really terrific walk when the sun is out. The beach fishing is lousy, but it is always a pleasure to sit in one's chair with the line out and a bottle in the hand, my type of fishing. Who wants to be bothered with getting messy fingers baiting up.; Just to sit and enjoy the ambience is proper fishing!!!!

Property prices up here are taking a dive so I suppose now is a good time to buy a house in Corfu if your funds happen to be in Euro. One nice cottage has been dropped from 82000 to just above 70000 and it is a modern move-in job, if this trend is reflected all over, then there are bargains around to be

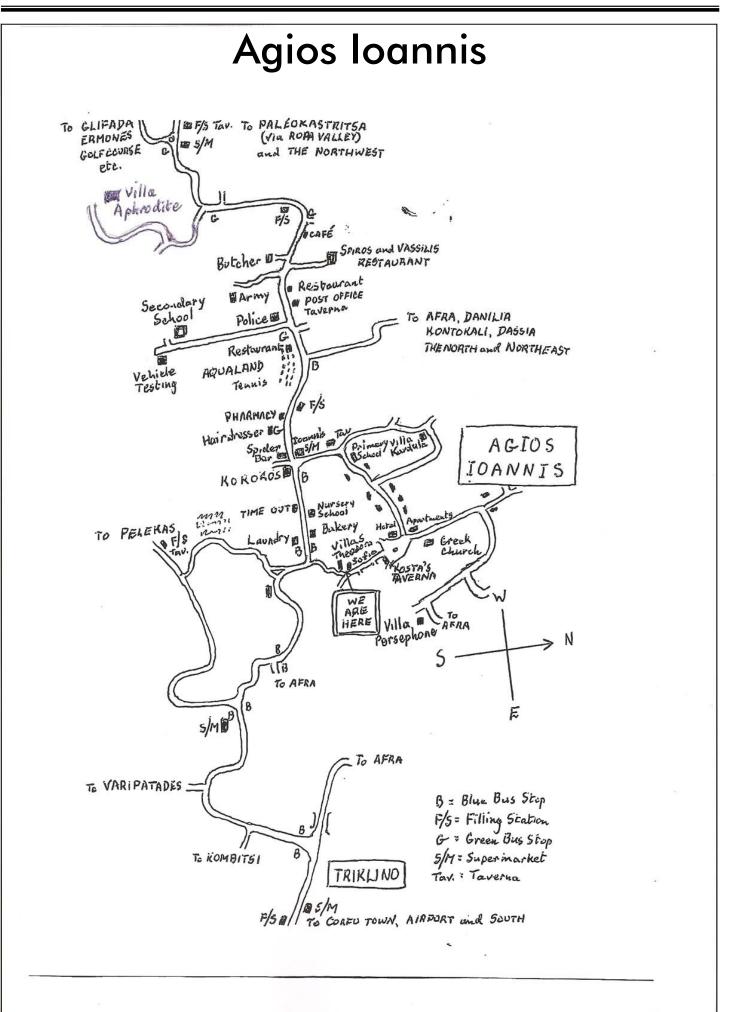
found up here.

I have also noticed several Brits have left Corfu this winter. This really is a time for tightening the belt, the Brits that have come here with little funds and are suddenly "builders" or "estate agents" or so called "property security firms" etc. appear to be in the most difficulty, whilst it is always nice to fulfill a dream, I guess one should research it a little bit first to make sure a reasonable standard of living is attainable. I spoke to one guy, actually he was stupid, he spoke to me, he complained he came last year and could not claim Greek dole money, this on top of what he is claiming from England. Thank god! You have to work here first and contribute to the Greek system before claiming EKA, can you imagine all the problem people that would flood here as they do to England if you could get unearned handouts here?????? Wow the mind boggles.

Well I feel much better having done this missive, mind you I have also got through half a bottle of Malt as well, which no doubt has helped this feeling of wellbeing.

Enjoy this winter wherever you are in Corfu, North or South each has its charm and its Dickheads, I am and always will be, Obnoxious Al.

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PROPERTY PAGES



Special Giannades

This is an unusually but beautifully restored house in the old part of Giannades village. This house features an open-plan kitchen dining and lounge area. A completely new indoor shower room/W.C. and an upstairs bedroom with a possibility of a second one on the lower floor. Artistically renovated this house is well worth a look.

Price: € 99,500



Villa Felice

This magnificent 4 bedroomed villa is four hundred and fifty square metres and stands atop a hill on the outskirts of Almiros on the north coast of Corfu, within a mile or so of the lively small town of Acharavi. Featuring ensuite bathrooms and under floor heating, viewing is encouraged to see all the benefits of this property.

Price € 2,000,000



Land near Messaria

This plot of land measures approx. 970 square metres and is situated near the picturesque old village of Messaria in the north of the island of Corfu, on the route to Sidari. A building of about 124 square metres would be allowable on this piece of land. Utilities are within immediate reach and a topography is available.

Price € 50,000



Sfakera Retreat

This charming, ready to move in to villa, nestles beside the old Sfakera road in the North of the island. This 3 bedroomed property is 145 square metres with oil fired central heating, one air conditioning unit, insulated walls, tiled floors and a large integral garage on the ground floor. This is a well kept property with splendid sunset views.

Price € 225.000



Villa Maria

Set in the village of Agios Ioannis this property is set in four thousand square metres and consists of two 'sister' villas, the larger of the two being 100 square metres and the second villa only slightly smaller. Both the two bedroom villas are beautifully laid out and there is the opportunity to purchase the furnishings of the larger villa.

Price: € 510.000



Bulgarian Property

The villa is 52 square metres in size with 2 rooms up and 2 rooms down and balconies featured. It is situated in 600 square metres of land which includes a well in the garden for water supply, electricity is also connected. Located only 10 to 15 minutes from the fabulous beach of Kraymorie on the Black Sea.

Price: € 49.000