

The Agiot

14th Edition

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HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

The Yuletide is almost upon us and it brings a warm feeling to us Agiots in Agios, despite the indifferent weather and the tales of world economic gloom; notwithstanding the Riots in Greece. There is a pall across the planet, but it will not settle well here, at least not for these few days of merriment.

We kick off this weekend when the office crawls into automatic pilot mode and the holiday season takes over. Carol singing seems to have gained a toehold at Villa Theodora, and from 7.00p.m on Sunday the 21st Lionel bashes out the big organ for an hour or three, wailed at by the Carol singers. Auntie Lula's amazing kitchen will spew out mince pies and the like, washed down with copious amounts of mulled wine. Song sheets are available for the sighted and the serious. There is no charge, everybody is welcome though we can't guarantee how long the stocks will last.

Christmas Eve in town; more Carols and the start of eating. As many of you

know, Corfu Town is magical at Christmas, with the trees a-festooned with white. A pop into Church this time the Roman one. I was told at Mount Athos that there is only one true church and it isn't Roman, so I am bound to investigate.

Christmas here is for eating and eating and eating. The author is abstaining for several stints of 40 hours prior to the festivities, to make room to become pleasantly rounded once more later. Boxing Day-more food, maybe at Anna's or maybe at the taverna.

Sport on the 28th. Mmmmmmm. Remember to take the medicine chest.

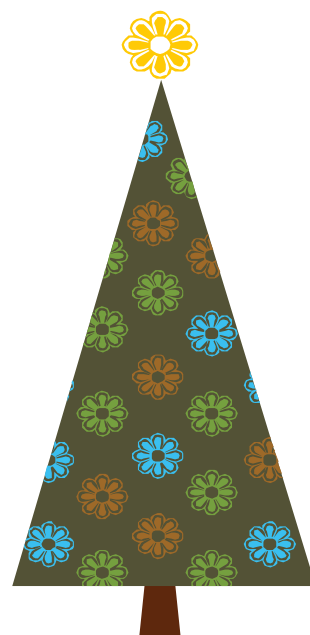
A brief reprieve until the 31st, then it can last all night and into the dawn; emphasis on drink and watching our natives at cards. Shotguns. Fireworks. By New Year's Lunch things can seem quite surreal, yet it is a wonder the power of stamina in pursuit of pleasure.

People hereabouts are incapable of joined-up work after all this so have invented skilfully further holi-

days on the 6th and 7th as a sort of warm down.

The skein throughout this revelry is the closeness of family and friends, a time to be at peace without worry. For surely your worries will come again in due course. But not now.

By popular demand we are starting a new section each month; 'Lula's Love-bites' Recipes that bubble from her kitchen onto your screen are worth trying. Today I see she starts with a non-fattening cake — if you don't eat any of it.



Music Week 2009

By Paul McGovern
Editor

It may seem like a long way off 'til September 2009, but for those of us the wrong side of 40, or 50, the year that has almost passed has swished by. In fact, each successive year seems quicker than the previous. All I remember clearly through the blur of 2008 are Auld Lang Syne, Happy Birthday to You and any minute now I am about to remember Jingle Bells.

So, based on this logic it does not seem soon enough to talk about next year's Music Week, which will be its fifth edition.

The fourth one, held in September of this year, was the best to date. The audience numbers were about the same as in previous years, yet the satisfaction levels were the highest yet. To thank for this were the performers, who without exception went down well, and, just as importantly, the slaves.



Lionel and Elke played organ and flute to a modest but appreciative gathering. The weather held. Lula's curry was scrummy; she'd slaved in her kitchen alone to produce this one which had them coming back for more. The new 'dreamteam' of Rich and

Barry and Stella made light work of serving and Pete and Kostakis were in the wings to assist. Karen was an excellent ticket lady through the three days of music despite the leg.

On the Thursday Richie was as emphatic as always; some of the audience shortly before had engaged the Popmaster for a celebration gig in Gillingham. He'll be back in 09.



As usual the Saturday had a party atmosphere and Russ never disappoints, neither does Frank. They bashed it out to a full house. Some twit fell in the pool!

A massive thank you to the aforementioned and particular thanks to Paul and Jan, who were major 'shareholders' in the sales of tickets.

So what to do next time? Richie and I discussed this over a beer or six. We both dreamed of extending the event, on the road to a festival we can rightly claim for Agiots. There is space near Theodora for larger numbers. But could we attract more famous international stars, even more famous than Lionel?

In steps Phil Mawson, a new Agiot who we have taken an immediate shine too, with his splen-

did wife Rose-who beats him up. Phil has many friends-he never stops talking-and two of these friends are Dave Pegg and PJ [Wright]. They have a pedigree too long to list in this short piece but we will return to them in later writings. Suffice to say they are stalwarts from the Dylan Project and 'Peggy' is from Fairport Convention. He is a major force at the famous Cropredy festival. Phil put to his friends our 'dream' - it is Phil's dream too, and hey presto they have agreed to come to Agios next year to pathfind our festival into new and exciting realms. They seem as keen as we are, which is a great boost to us all. So, it is the Dylan Project for Agios!

Please make them feel at home by turning out in droves; we will restrict the audience to 1000, so please book your tickets as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. They go on sale from January 12th and the likely price per ticket is 20 Euros. Our regular musicians will be supporting throughout the week beginning September 7th, with the Dylan Project peaking on September 12th.

There will be food and drinks sold on site, toilet facilities, etc. etc. CHILDREN ARE WELCOME.

We are very lucky to have our old friend [she's not that old] Jacqui Dickinson in charge of the event, as she works as Events Manager for the RAC so knows stuff.

Bring on the bands.

The Folks Who Live on the Hill

Featured Property

By Paul McGovern
Editor



Well, they don't actually live there yet, not all the time that is. But Jo and Mel are on the way to making Villa Aphrodite their dream retirement home, and certainly a holiday home for them to escape from the madness for the next few years.

I first met them and two of their children Sophie and Nathan [the Bug Boy-cos he likes bugs] in Sidari. It was not the shining resort Jo had remembered from her holiday there as a young girl and she was disappointed. So I showed them around Agios and the surrounding countryside a few days later. They fortunately liked the village (willage to Germans) straight away and



when I took them 2 miles into the hills to a spot we called the Chapel Land, because of the neighbouring private chapel, Jo said 'this is it.' I wish everybody was that decisive.

Very quickly they decided to buy the four stremmas and allow us to build for them, but first they had to sell a house in England to fund the project. This meant an awful lot of

work for them to refurbish the property quickly, and to find a buyer. We shook hands on our deal when they left for England, and they were true to their word in every sense. House sorted, house sold and then the ball was in our court.

We needed to get it ready for their holiday use by August 08. It was a close call but it was JUST okay for them when they landed. Lula and I were nervous over their reaction to the build, as we had held back a few months of the usual e-mailed piccies, to give them-we hoped-a pleasant surprise. Phew! They liked it thank God, and the relief was palpable. Not a dry eye in the house.



We had already met sweet Sophie and irrepressible Nathan, on this holiday came along elder son John, a gentle giant and, Sophie's boyfriend Bradley. They had a great two weeks here and we were sad to see them all away.

Back in England they have been brave enough to spit in the eye of a poorly economy and proceed with the next stage of their dream; to build a lush pool next to their hilltop hide-away. This will be operational for the beginning of the summer 2009; a beautiful spot for your Corfu retreat. Please go to www.corfuvillas.org to see full details of this tardis, which can sleep eight. The price per person works out to be just about unbeatable hereabouts.

We wish Jo, Mel and their family continued success with Aphrodite; maybe the last word should come from them.



'We met Paul in the August of 2006 after making contact through the internet, whilst on our holiday Paul took us to some land and properties that were available but nothing felt right until he took us to a tranquil piece of land that was full of olive trees that over looked the Ropa Valley, It was at that moment that our dream started to become reality we had finally found our own little piece of Corfu.'

Paul then took us to meet his wife Lula and family whom have all since become very close friends of ours.

When we returned this year Paul and Lula took us up to our Villa, As we approached the land that we had previously purchased my eyes welled up, we were overwhelmed with what stood before us which Paul and Lula had created for us, It was our Villa Aphrodite, we were lost for words with the way it looked, but what we were about to view as we entered was even more beautiful than my husband and I could have ever imagined it even brought my husband to tears and this doesn't happen often. The villa to us had so much heart that it left us speechless.



All I can say is a huge thank you not only to Paul and Lula but also to the rest of the team at Oca Properties.'

Joanne

Village News

By Dr. Lionel Mann
Contributing Editor

When first I arrived here I went into Town on Christmas Eve, expecting to find some seasonal cheer. The place was dead with hardly a light in sight, nobody on the streets, shops and tavernas shut. The main observance in the Orthodox Church is the Feast of the Epiphany, 6th January.

The following fourteen years have witnessed a remarkable transformation; Town now makes Regent Street look shabby; every house and every village tries to outdo its neighbours in its display of lights; on each evening of the week immediately preceding Christmas Day there are concerts by choirs and bands in the theatre and in squares; bands march around playing seasonal music. In Agios Ioannis we are somewhat concerned that an aircraft might try landing on the main road, having mistaken it for the airport flare-path.

Around 18th or 19th December Giorgos will be decorating the plateia, adding to the lights already in place from Ochi Day. He festoons the trees with fairy-lights and sets up a Christmas Crib in the bandstand while we who live by the plateia decorate our premises. All local cats are particularly grateful for the crib; they sleep at nights in the straw next to the infant Jesus, warmed by the illuminations.

Until recently decorations were not in place nor did shops display Christmas goods until the beginning of December at the very earliest; Christmas did not start in August as in some countries. The only exception was that trucks came

round in September selling young turkeys, geese, ducks and chicks to be fattened in time for the feasting. The rot is setting in now, though; this year the commercial season has moved back into November. Encouragingly, however, the lights in Town and this village have not yet appeared by the second week in December.

On Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and the Eve of the Epiphany children go round from door to door - sometimes twice to make sure that they have not missed anyone - singing (usually rather tunelessly - few schools teach music!) the appropriate carol, to the accompaniment of tinkling triangles. Of course they are well rewarded. Most businesses here close on 24th December and re-open on 8th January (allowing a day for recovery from the celebrations). Accordingly on the latter date, when automobile showrooms open, children may be seen ordering their new Mercedes.

Peter McGovern has left for Australia and New Zealand where he expects to learn to catch kangaroos and to eat frozen mutton while basking on the beach on Christmas Day and watching the sharks queuing for dinner.

Brother Kosta, now officially Constandinos, you call him Kostaki at your peril, is returning to Corfu for Christmas via Cluj Napoca in Romania, where one of his Corfiot friends is at university. We shall not be at all surprised to see Constandinos arrive here on Christmas Eve driving a horse-drawn caravan with a pretty little gipsy girl on his arm.

The Royal British Legion

I am delighted to inform everyone that the total amount collected for the 2008 Poppy Appeal came to: 2,186.97 Euro (converted to: one thousand, eight hundred and seventy pounds and seven pence).

I would like to extend, once again, my sincere thanks and appreciation to each and every person around the island who gave so willingly to this very worthy cause.

It is comforting to know that, in this day and age, we still care about those less fortunate than ourselves.

On behalf of the Royal British Legion, I thank you all for your very generous and valuable contributions.

Lucy Steele, M.B.E.
Former British Vice consul
Corfu

Russian Interest

Canadian investment in ex-Club Med unit on Corfu STATHIS KOUSOUNIS.

At a difficult global juncture, the Canadian-interest hotel chain Fairmont has decided to invest in the Greek market for the first time.

Fairmont representatives signed a contract in Athens on Tuesday for the operation of the former Club Med hotel complex in Corfu. The complex was the first that the Club Med corporation opened outside France - in 1953 - as well as the first in Corfu and one of the first in Greece to open under an international brand name.

Its Russian owners had sought an international chain to operate the complex; its business plan provides for an investment of 60 million euros to enable the hotel to operate again in 2012-2013.

The aim of the owners and the operating company will be to make optimum use of Fairmont's international sales channels and attract Russian tourists.

LOSERS' CUP HITS TOWN

A Competitor
[contributor]

It's back by popular demand and just won't lie down — the FAMOUS LOSERS' CUP.

On the 28th December for one gruelling day, between 12 and 18 idiots, sorry, competitors will wrestle for the Holy Grail, though surprisingly little-known, of sport.

Last year's joint-winners were old bighead Paul McGovern and his son Kostas. "Fix! Fix!" I hear you say, yet they only pipped new boy Rich "The Rock" Quilter by a single point. Who will win this year? Come along and jeer. Entrants will be accepted on the spot unless they look good.

Meeting point will be the Plateia Agios on Sunday at 10.30 A.M.

This year the disorganization is being passed over from Paul McG to Paul Scotter, who thinks he can do better and probably can. Only people called Paul [or Pavlos] are allowed to be in charge. Unfortunately Paul Grove is in Austria for Christmas so will not be with us. He tells everyone Australia but it is Austria-Thermal stockings.

We kick off or whatever the term is with Croquet-if we can find the key. We hope Anna will come again as she plays an interesting giggling style from a semi-prone position.

Then to bowling which last year Paul Scotter won. Only people called Paul [or Pavlos] are allowed to win. Then table-tennis and killer-pool'. Killer-pool is the brainchild

of Mr Scotter so he must have been practising. Nibbles and seating is on hand here at Starbowl.

Off we zoom to the final venue; the Astragnome at Vatos. Here will be darts and maybe dominoes-another P.S. introduction.

Finally, the entourage will repair to Raffles in the Village for a victory feast, which will feature squabbling over the points tally and the presentation to the winner of the FAMOUS trophy.

Adjudicator will be Lionel the Strap Mann — only people called Lionel can be adjudicators.

A.R.S.E. Association of Retired Sporting Englishmen.

Aunty Lula's Love-bites

Caramel-Almond Torte

Ingredients

- 6 egg yolks
- 1+half cup of sugar
- Half cup apple cider or juice
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Half teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 6 egg whites
- 2 cups digestive biscuit crumbs
- 1 cup ground almonds
- 1 recipe Caramel Cream Filling
- 1 recipe Sweetened Whipped Cream

GO:

1. Wash hands
2. Generously grease and flour three 20cm round baking tins; set aside. In a medium mixing bowl combine egg yolks, 1 cup of the sugar, the apple cider or juice, baking powder, vanilla and cinnamon. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed about 3 minutes or until thickened and light.

3. Thoroughly wash the beaters. In an extra-large mixing bowl beat egg whites on medium speed until soft peaks form [tips curl]. Gradually add the remaining sugar, beating on high speed until stiff peaks form [tips stand straight].

4. Fold the egg yolk mixture into the egg white mixture. Fold biscuit crumbs and almonds into egg mixture, a quarter at a time. Divide batter evenly among the prepared tins.

5. Bake in a 160 C deg. Oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until top springs back when lightly touched near the centre. Cool on wire racks for 10 minutes. Loosen sides; remove cake layers from tins. Cool thoroughly on wire racks.

6. Place a cake layer on a cake plate; spread with half of the caramel cream filling. Top with second layer; spread with the remaining filling. Top with third layer. Frost the top and sides with

the sweetened whipped cream. Drizzle with the remaining caramel sauce.

CARAMEL CREAM FILLING

In a bowl beat one 200 gram packet cream cheese until fluffy. Gradually beat in a quarter cup of caramel syrup.

SWEETENED WHIPPED CREAM

- 1 Cup whipped cream
- 1 to 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla [OPTIONAL]

In a small chilled mixing bowl combine whipped cream, sugar, and vanilla. Beat with chilled beaters of an electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form. Do not over-beat.

HOT TIP

If you prefer your layers to be soggy then coat them with orange juice prior filling.

CHRISTMAS 1947

By Dr. Lionel Mann
Contributing Editor

For Christmas 1947 I was in the army but employed in a most un-military manner as Organist and Administration Sergeant (second-in-command and hotel manager!) at an army Church House, tucked away in the forests in the foothills of the Hartz Mountains in Germany, running religious instruction courses for all ranks.

Our last course before Christmas, forty young soldiers, left on Monday, giving us three days to prepare for the arrival of our guests and the festival. The kitchen, run by our Scottish lance-corporal cook and his two very competent German "hausfrauen", was working overtime; the Sacristan and Librarian, a couple of privates, were polishing and decorating, setting myriads of candles (and a surreptitious incense cone or two) around the chapel. Our four drivers also entered into the spirit and assisted with decorating the main rooms whilst our twenty German staff made sure that everything was done in accordance with the best local traditions – greenery sprouted from even the most unlikely places.

Our boss, "the Padre", had allowed every member of the British staff to invite a guest to stay for the week from Christmas Eve, but as all my friends in B.A.O.R. were either chaplains or organists and would therefore be on duty at Christmas I had passed my entitlement back to him. It left me free to oversee the running of the place, although that was something of a sinecure as my very efficient German secretary, Frau Schroeder, saw to most of

that.

I had another interest, having "adopted" a couple of musical little orphaned boys living with their widowed grandmother in the nearby small town. Every day that week, when I went with the ration truck on its way to Hannover for our supplies, the driver left me in town to practise on the beautiful old organ in the church but also to deliver packets of the season's delicacies sent from our kitchen to "Sarge's skinny little brats" in their house almost opposite the church. "Fraternisation" with the locals was still illegal, but we were very many miles from officialdom and everyone approved my attempt to "build bridges".

On that Monday evening the Padre handed me the key to the wine cellar. "Take the chaps down and let them each choose a bottle of something." Officially only he and I were entitled to wines and spirits, but we never knew how many occasional visitors might descend upon us so I always ordered rations for six officers and six senior N.C.O.s; Church House therefore had the best-stocked cellar in B.A.O.R. For weeks before Christmas chaplains from all over the region had paid "liaison visits" and departed with clinking sounds ringing from the boots of their cars.

When our staff had made their selections I checked to see what each had taken. Nobody had chosen Jamaican Rum so I took a bottle of that and then invited all to a "bottle-party" in my palatial quarters. We started on my rum, but nobody except the Transport Corporal liked it so I left the bottle on my table with the invitation to help himself whenever he felt the

need! We had a very pleasant evening and slept well that night. I suppose that I played the organ for Compline without misadventure – anyway no-one complained!

On Christmas Eve the ration truck left me at my friends' house opposite the church and I delivered the last of the supplies that our cooks had provided. Little Johann, aged eleven, and even smaller Erich, nine, were in a state of excited anticipation; the local custom was that presents were to be distributed at midday. I listened to their babble of conversation, part German and part English for my benefit. (Both boys had some English; Johann's was quite good.) The truck returned to collect me before the critical hour, but I knew something of what each would receive. Church House had at one time been a Hitler Youth sports centre and in the cellar a treasury of skiing equipment had been discovered. Some of it was far too small for any visitors that we were likely to have. We had obliterated the insignia on two complete sets which I had delivered when the boys were at school; grandmother had hidden all away.

Crisis! When the rations were unloaded the cook discovered that no turkeys had been sent. "What was the traditional Christmas fare in olden days?" The Padre posed the pertinent question. "The Boar's head in hand bear I," words of an old carol. We had wild boar almost upon our doorstep. We were supposed to consult the German forstmeister before hunting, but this was an emergency.

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Christmas 1947
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All our guests had arrived so we of the permanent staff lent them our rifles and I handed out seven rounds of ammunition to each, eight in all including our Transport Corporal who took charge of the expedition. He claimed to know a valley in the forest where boar came down in the middle of the day to drink at a stream. There was some merriment when the soldier to whom I lent my rifle chased an indignant spider from the barrel upon first application of the pull-through; the weapon had rested in my wardrobe through the eleven months that I had been in residence. The intrepid hunters trudged off into the forest and we waited in keen anticipation.

About a half-hour later it sounded as though World War Three had erupted; a prolonged burst of distant small-arms fire broke the sylvan silence. Some minutes passed before our corporal returned running, dashed upstairs to pick up the rotor arm of his 15-cwt truck, performed the necessary rituals and drove off into the forest at high speed without having said a word to anyone. The waiting became almost intolerable before the truck returned slowly with hunters clinging on at all angles. The business part of the vehicle was completely filled with a huge boar that overhung the back. It took the combined efforts of all eight to carry the beast into the kitchen. All fifty-six rounds of ammunition had been expended, yet the animal had just one bullet hole – through the brain. Claims to the tusks were many. Apparently six or seven other boar had escaped unscathed!

The corporal left again to bring the forstmeister, the only person

around able to skin and dismember the brute. He was not best pleased to be called out on Christmas Eve, but was considerably mollified with the large hunks of meat that he took home for his family and that of his assistant. As well as joints for every family of our German staff and of course a very ample supply for ourselves, there was still some meat left.

That afternoon the Padre lent me his driver to return to the town. When we pulled up in front of my friends' house we heard some very tuneful singing. I waited until it finished before knocking on the door; my driver was compelled by regulations to stay with his vehicle. There was hardly time to hand my big bundle of boar to grandmother before two little boys, screeching with delight, had carefully put down their violins and thrown themselves upon me. The room, decorated with greenery and heated by a blazing log fire, was full of neighbours who had been invited to share in the bounty that my formerly destitute friends were now enjoying. (The previous summer Johann and I had given a concert to a packed church and the Burgermeister was now also keeping an eye on the family.) Grinning at me from a corner were Herr and Frau Shroeder with Fraulein Krantz, our Padre's secretary, while I was introduced to everybody else, males clicking heels and nodding, females bobbing while shaking hands, and all smiling warmly. There were also two older boys, one playing viola and the other the cello, making a full string quartet to accompany the singing. I could not keep my driver waiting long, but a plate of delicacies was taken out to him to keep him occupied while all sang "Es ist ein' Ros entsprungen" for my entertainment.

"Sarge, we didn't really want to

fight people like that, did we?" My driver echoed my thoughts on the return journey.

Some unannounced visitors had arrived in our absence. That was always happening at Church House. Officers and senior N.C.O.s from units as far as fifty miles away, as well as members, men and women, of the civilian Control Commission for Germany, would appear to attend services and then to share our meals. Our kitchen always provided for "surplus to establishment" and anything left over went to augment the rations of our German staff. First Evensong of Christmas after tea was well attended and following dinner, together with the rest of the British staff, I spent the evening circulating amongst the arrivals and departures exchanging season's greetings and general conversation. Rank meant nothing at Church House and Staff Officers with red tabs would be seen chatting convivially with privates.

The chapel was about full to its sixty capacity for Midnight Mass, to which some of our German staff came. The Padre, arrayed in his splendid vestments, had Sacristan and Librarian, both clad in spotless albs, as his acolytes; his rendering of the liturgy was always dramatic, the more so for festivals. The congregation fairly shook the timbers with their singing of familiar carols and I rather regretted that the little organ was hardly adequate to accompany such efforts.

Afterwards, having seen off our "occasional" visitors and being still wakeful with excitement, I returned to my elegant quarters and turned on the radio. At many places Mass had taken longer than ours and I settled for a very well sung one from somewhere in Europe.

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Christmas 1947
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Their organist, later announced as none other than the illustrious Helmut Walcha, concluded proceedings by playing the J.S. Bach "Great" Prelude and Fugue in C Major. That seemed to me to be so appropriate that I learnt it in time for the following Christmas and have ever since played it at the end whenever I have accompanied Christmas Midnight Mass. It often means that I am the last to leave!

Despite having been late to bed I was up early in the morning. There was no Communion service but, conforming to military custom, the Padre, our Commanding Officer, went around delivering tea and biscuits in bed to all British staff and visitors. I accompanied him on his rounds, carrying an extra tray of cups and saucers. First, of course, we had to "brew up" and afterwards enjoyed our own "cuppas" together in the kitchen. I always relished conversing with Fr. Cole. He had a never-ending fund of anecdotes, mostly hilarious, was quite down-to-earth and had no time for the smug and unctuous of so many of his calling.

Breakfast was at nine and Matins, attracting many visitors, was sung at eleven. Afterwards the padre celebrated Communion for the benefit of those visitors who had not been able to receive it elsewhere. It was my turn to assist as server, a duty I shared in rotation with the Sacristan and Librarian when not required to play the organ.

The boar was voted a great success as an alternative Christmas dinner. Perhaps it should have been hung for some days before being cooked, but nobody had previous experience and accordingly could

not notice any inadequacy. After dinner our German cooks and waiters were sent home and our other meals were buffet style. I helped our Lance-Corporal cook to set them out. My only other duty, apart from seeing that our guests were being entertained, was to play for Evensong and Compline. Even for those there were a number of occasional visitors.

On Boxing Day our guests went for a walk through the forest accompanied by most of the staff. We held the daily four services but otherwise routine was very relaxed. The next day our Christmas guests departed and normal duties were resumed. I went to town with the ration truck and was greeted very enthusiastically by "my kids", who were rather disappointed that we had not yet had any real snowfall so that they could try out their presents. Then came Sunday with its usual influx of visitors for our services.

The Monday saw a bustle of activity. We were giving a Christmas party for the children from the nearest small village. After lunch all our transport was busy collecting our guests - together with their parents! When all had arrived they set about the main business - eating. Food was not that plentiful in Germany and not a crumb of the very ample provisions remained after about sixty children and parents had wolfed down everything in sight. The highlight of proceedings was to be a visit from Santa Claus and we adjourned to the lounge to wait for him.

The very large lounge had three sets of double-glazed French windows that faced towards a steep track leading down from the forest. There was an excited exclamation as Santa, one of our German waiters suitably padded and disguised, appeared on the skyline. It

had snowed and then thawed and the track must have been treacherous for his progress was very unsteady.

Sets of steps were set at intervals into the descent and Santa's sack was clearly quite heavy because he staggered very uncertainly down the first flight. At the bottom he lost his footing and slid a few metres downhill on his back. Somewhat dishevelled he picked himself up, took the next flight of steps at a run and crashed down again. The younger children were tearful, the older ones rocking with laughter. Again Santa came to his feet, stumbled to the top of the last steps and came down those in a magnificent glissando on his back. Had he not been so well padded and obviously very relaxed he must have broken every bone in his body.

He came slowly to his feet, stood swaying for some seconds and then mounted the few steps to the verandah outside the lounge. The place was filled with children, some weeping loudly, others helpless with laughter. Their parents were surveying everything with severe Lutheran disapproval. It was clear that Santa had been nobbled. As I stood, fighting my own inclination to laugh, waiting to open doors to admit Santa, there was a boy of about ten at my feet, writhing on the floor in ecstatic merriment. I opened the door.

"Ho, ho!"

It was a wonder that I was not immediately intoxicated by Santa's breath. He was caked thickly with mud, his red clothing disarranged, showing the cushions strapped beneath, and his "beard" was under one ear. He was certainly the merriest Father Christmas that I am ever likely to meet. I closed the doors and fled.

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Christmas 1947
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In the foyer outside I heard roars of laughter from upstairs and went to join the rest of the staff in the drivers' room from which they had been able to see everything. For some moments they were unable to speak. Then, "Hello, Sarge. Merry Christmas!" More laughter, in which I joined. When they could explain I learnt that Father Christmas had been given a tumblerful of my rum "to keep out the cold" - a whole tumblerful of rum!

"I should have you shot for desertion in the face of the enemy." Later the Padre and I were having a cup of tea in his study and reviewing the afternoon's proceedings. I learnt that Santa had made a mess of handing out the children's presents, completely incapable of sorting out names.

"Still we gave them a good meal. I bet poor old Hans is getting hell from his wife - if he managed to make it home." The Padre chuckled.

The next day we gave a party for our German staff and their families followed by a bi-lingual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in the chapel. Everybody attended and I had chosen well-known carols common to both languages. The result was very hearty singing. That was very definitely "building bridges"!

It was two days before Hans re-

turned to his waiter's duties. We greeted his return with a roar of applause!

In the meantime the snow came in a big way. In addition to their regular duties our drivers operated three-hour shifts, day and night, driving up and down the kilometre-long track to the main road to save us from being cut off. Whenever we had a chance we were out skiing on a ski-run that started almost outside the front door. Irma Krantz had represented Germany at skiing in the last Winter Olympics before the war; she was quite a martinet, but we came to enjoy our skiing under her tuition. Of course there were no such luxuries as ski-lifts and Irma would not allow us to remove skis to trudge back uphill. Herring-boning is a very exhausting business!

The morning four or five days after Christmas the driver of our ration truck noticed a big hump in the snow beside the main road not far from where our track met it. At that time either the Sacristan or the Librarian acted as driver's mate lest an emergency should arise. As a result I could not visit town as 15-cwt trucks had seats for two only. Both dismounted to investigate and then took the shovels with which the truck was equipped and started to dig. They quickly discovered the back of a car and somebody inside was knocking. The Sacristan stayed digging while the

driver sped back to the schloss for assistance. Everyone grabbed spades and jumped into transport leaving me to prepare to receive casualties.

With all digging frantically it was not long before enough snow had been cleared to permit opening a door. Two U.S. Army officers had been trapped for more than twelve hours since skidding off the icy road at a bend. Our Transport Corporal had thoughtfully taken along my bottle of rum; its remaining contents restored some colour to cheeks before our unexpected visitors were bundled into the Padre's car and brought back to Church House. They were given hot baths and a meal and then put to bed while their car was recovered and thoroughly checked by our drivers. Some six hours later we gave our guests, now fully recovered, another meal and sent them on their way. We never heard any more of them.

The next day another course, forty young soldiers, arrived, "business" resumed, and very memorable Christmas was over.

MERRY



CHRISTMAS

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