

The Corfiot

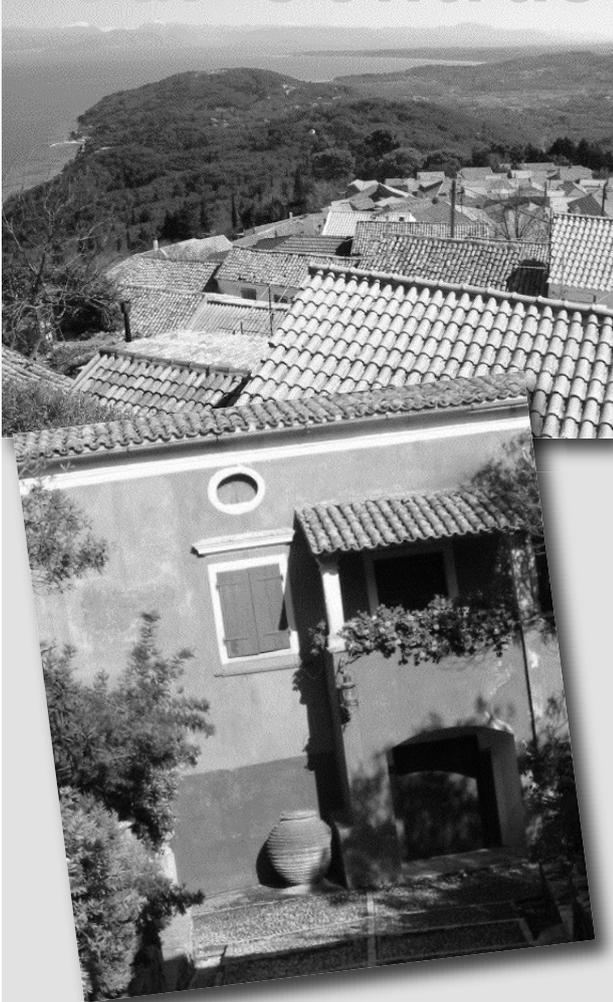
Corfu's English Language Monthly Magazine

January 2008

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No. 205

Four Contrasting Villages



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This Month...

Corfu's Contrasting Villages	12
<i>Hilary Paipeti takes a tour of four of Corfu's traditional villages and examines the factors that have dictated their layout and appearance</i>	
Is that a Bouzouki?	16
<i>Pete Button finds out about Greek music's most characteristic instrument</i>	
Regular Features	
Ear to the Ground - <i>Global Warming brings us... Autumn!</i>	4
Notice Board - <i>Post your events</i>	5
People in the News - <i>Success for 2007 Craft Fair</i>	6
Take that News - <i>Signs of the times</i>	8
Chaplain's Chat - <i>Catergorizing ex-pats!</i>	10
Food - <i>Comfort Food</i>	18
Letters - <i>More on Church Music, and Things that Matter</i>	19
Classified	21
Property	23



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ear to the ground

So... Global Warming has struck again. After several years when, sometime in late November, summer turned to winter in a day, the back end of 2007 treated us to a proper autumn. Temperatures in the upper teens and low twenties, lots of fairly gentle (not torrential) rain, and even the lowland trees decked out in seasonal colours. Then mid-December brought us the first frosts: just a hint at first, then one morning of sparkling rime on every leaf and branch (those of you who got up after 8am missed it - it melted soon after sun-up). Unexpectedly, December also brought us snow; unexpectedly since January and February are the months when snow comes, if at all. One memorable Saturday in the middle of the month, we walked on the west coast in a snow flurry, and drove home from lunch in a blizzard, in a rather sleety one.

Perhaps now we can look forward to a real spring, starting in March. If the price of Global Warming is the restoration of our four seasons in all the glory of their individual character, we welcome it.

We wish you all a very happy and successful 2008.

We hear that our Anglican Chaplain Clifford Owen is bravely planning a sponsored cycle ride - from Corfu to Athens! The ride will take place this month (weather permitting), and is in aid of Holy Trinity Church. It will take four days at 70 miles a day, staying at Lefkas, Patras, Corinth and Athens. Clifford says the ride is a 'celebratory - thanksgiving' ride for his 65 years on the planet! We urge you to sponsor the ride - the whole trip only costs 10 euros.

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The Corfiot Magazine is now available on line. The internet version is identical with the print one and will comprise a pdf file in a secure location, whose URL will be transferred by email following payment of two euros through the user-friendly and totally secure PayPal system. The current issue and the previous two month's issues (three in total) will be available for sale at any one time. On publication of a new issue, the oldest one will be archived and can then be accessed as a free pdf download.

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays 10.30 Holy Communion
19.00 (1st, 3rd & 5th of month) Songs of Praise

(Sunday School & Youth Group run same time as Services except Family Service)

REGULAR EVENTS

Tuesdays 10.00 Library & Coffee Morning
Wednesdays 10.00 Coffee & Kids
Wednesdays 12.00-14.30 Lunch Box
Wednesdays 19.00 Scrabble Club (last Wed. in the month)
Thursdays 10.30 Bible Study, the Old Testament (new series)
Fridays 10.30-12.00 Informal Prayer Meeting

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WINTER WALKS

SATURDAY, 5 JANUARY **Secret Path and the Nun's Trail ******. Meet Acharavi (Freddo Bar), 10.30 for onward car transfer. Lunch TBA

SATURDAY, 12 JANUARY **Karst Plateau ****. Meet at Stamatis, Strinilas, 10.30 for onward car transfer. Lunch at Stamatis, Strinilas

SATURDAY, 19 JANUARY **Benitses Waterworks and Agii Deka Village *****. Meet at Harbour, Benitses, 10.30. Lunch at Paxinos, Benitses

SATURDAY, 26 JANUARY **Konstanti Hill NEW! ****. Meet at Acharavi (Freddo Bar), 10.30. Lunch TBA

SATURDAY, 2 FEBRUARY **Corfu Trail to Lakones NEW! *****. Meet at Lakones junction, 10.30. Lunch at Doukades

SATURDAY, 9 FEBRUARY **Agios Onouphrios Monastery and Gavrolimni** (includes visit to Donkey Sanctuary) **NEW! ****. Meet at Kokini Roundabout for onward car transfer, 10.30. Lunch at Costas Taverna, Agios Ioannis

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This month's name days

01. Vasilis
06. Theofanis (Fanis), Fotis, Fotini, Iordanis
07. Yiannis, Prodomos
11. Theodosios
12. Tatiani
17. Adonis, Antipas
18. Thanasis, Kirillos
19. Makarios
20. Evthimios
21. Anthi, Maximos, Neofitos
22. Anastasios, Timotheos
24. Xeni
25. Grigorios
26. Xenofon
31. Evdoxia

Name-day tradition dictates that you visit the home of the celebrating person, who will be holding an 'at home' - no invitation required. Take along a gift (alcohol, flowers, cake) and you will be offered a drink, nuts, cake, and possibly a meze.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Success for 2007 Craft Fair

Genuine 'Made in Corfu' products were the feature of the 2007 Craft Fair, which was held at the start of December at Casa Lucia in Sgombou. Not only were the goodies on display crafted on the island by local artists and artisans, but many were fashioned from locally-sourced materials, such as driftwood and reused fabrics.

The Fair has become something of an institution in the build-up to Christmas, providing a source of unusual and affordable seasonal gifts which, unlike the majority of commercial merchandise, have not travelled halfway across the planet from a far-eastern sweat shop. Indeed, these are truly green, fair-trade products!

This year, the Fair returned to Casa Lucia, after experimenting last year with a larger venue. 'We've found that Casa Lucia suits our style better than any other place,' said one of the event organizers, Victoria Drew. 'I only wish it was twice the size!'

Despite the limited space, visitors to the three-day event were able to browse 17 stalls. Seasonal refreshments - Dutch waffles and English mulled wine - were provided by Toby, whilst Cheryl displayed her culinary talents with a variety of soups and sandwiches, as well as her by-now-famous lasagne and chilli con carne.

Amongst the talented craftspeople who participated were Theresa Nicholas with her idiosyncratic tapestry work and prints featuring scenes from a Corfu that is gone; Paul Wood with his magnificent sculptures which imaginatively exploit the beauty of driftwood and discarded timber; and Sally Peacock with her lovely hand-made cards, each a miniature work of art in watercolour. Joyce Kastamoniti's knitted mice proved popular, as did Julie Doran's delicate Swarovski jewellery, and Victoria Drew's necklaces, bracelets and other items tastefully put together from antique beads. The Gastouri 'Made in Corfu' shop took part with a variety of objects from local workshops unable to attend themselves.

It is unfortunate that there is no permanent fair or market where Corfu's craftspeople can put their goods on show, both for local shoppers and to provide summer visitors with a real 'Souvenir of Corfu'.

...a source of unusual and affordable seasonal gifts which, unlike the majority of commercial merchandise, have not travelled halfway across the planet from a far-eastern sweat shop.

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The Royal British Poppy Appeal

I am delighted to inform your readers the total amount collected for the 2007 Poppy Appeal came to 1,798.52 Euro (One thousand two hundred and seventy six pounds and ninety nine pence.

I would like to extend 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 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

P.S. You'll be pleased to know that, as usual, the only expense deducted from this splendid collection was 5euro (this represents the greatly reduced bank charge, thanks to the continuing generosity of Mr S Mathesis, Assistant Manager at First Business Bank, Corfu town) for the conversion from euro to a Sterling Bank Draft.



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Take That News

by Mr Axe

So many horrible things happen to us, usually because of the incompetence of the government officials at every level.

If only I could take an axe and start cutting heads off...

I mean axe all the incompetent members of a very incompetent government.

IT'S A SIGN...

How much does the Greek Government get from the Corfiots in taxes? Millions of euros. Last time I checked, Corfu was giving a massive 15% of the total revenue of the country to the Athenian Coffers. Forget about the promised hospital, the incredibly bad state of the island's roads and many other neglected facilities... but couldn't there at least have been, in November's World Travel Market in London, a display with the name 'Corfu' somewhere on the Greek stand? If I had known, I would have paid for one. A few hundred euros would have been enough. Give us a break or give us a sign.

Maybe this is another one of the many signs where change is looming...

THEIR NUMBERS ARE UP

I have not paid my road tax this year. Why should I? A colleague once commented that if all Corfiots refused to pay, what could the authorities do? Put us all in jail? Is a sharp shock like this what the powers-that-be need to force them to spend a small amount of what they collect from OUR road taxes on Corfu's patchwork roads?

At the same time, those foreigners who use the roads but prefer to pay their road tax in their home country by keeping their foreign number plates are not being fair to the rest of us. Maybe it's OK for the private citizens who are only here a few months a year, but business people who are making money out of Corfu have no excuse. Quite a few new estate agents have popped recently, and I think competition is good in any business field, but folk who have been running around for the last five years with huge advertising signs on their British and Dutch registered cars are not your ideal home finders in Corfu, even when they are promising some ideal places in the sun.

It only proves that are only here for a quick buck and don't give a hoot about the place.

ALLOY HERITAGE

Corfu is now a Unesco heritage-listed city. It can't get any better. If we were a bit smart we could take advantage of this great opportunity. But are we? Years of neglect of the Old Town, with no interest from any parties, have led this poor city on the road to no return. And forget the aircon units everywhere, the horrid shade awnings, the aluminum windows, the removal of the original flagstones from the little Venetian alleyways, (all the old



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stone which has been walked on for centuries, stolen by a few smarties to adorn their private villas and replaced with new stone everywhere. At least they should have kept the old stone to use in the main streets of the city) but the worst is to come... No less organization that the Chamber of Commerce - the one that is supposed to lead by setting a good example to local businesses - has done it. At their offices, right in the middle of one of the busiest streets, facing the Esplanade Square, they removed the beautiful facade and replaced it - wait for it - with a BROWN aluminum shop front.

Time is up, my fellow Corfiots. You just don't realize what hit you yet. Because Unesco means business - heritage business - and you will curse the day we were accepted. Can't wait...

LAUGHS BEST WHO LAUGHS FIRST AND LAST

The new Prefect of Corfu means business, and for the first time someone in authority has the guts to say NO! So the three bad wolves who believed that they can move the Troumpetta mountain have finally lost the battle. Their quarry equipment is now rotting away in the gravel pit and soon will be claimed by Hell. I think they have dug so deep that even the devil himself was on the side of the Heritage Association this time, because he just about could have seen sunshine down there in his hot hole. Lots of praises to the few who fought another unwinnable war, and of course to the Prefect Stefanos Poulimenos who proved that he can make changes.

And a good lesson has been learned by the devils who have surfaced on the face of the earth and think they own the world and that they can go on raping it forever. Time to return to your little holes, boys.

THE ACE WHO BECAME A JOKER

Did you know that most of the public works projects are normally put out to tender - and subsequently won by the very few who should be called the governors of Corfu? As a result, the mayhem in Solari [the area of 'workers' houses' on the south side of Town - Ed] is here to stay. Pockets are being lined every time a contractor is selected, and as a result the inspectors can't really press for results. One ace gentleman has won nearly every project in Corfu, and every time you see some works you can curse him. Holes with no protection for cars or pedestrians. Unfinished business everywhere. Warning signs and barricades from hell, and the list goes on and on. But it's the officials who are at fault, because they should be the ones who draw up a proper contract, with guidelines for the protection of the public and completion deadlines. Who did I say? The officials, who as the word suggests remain in an office playing cards and hoping for the Ace to win...

But the worst is to come. The Benitses Marina is not going to be finished, because one of these Aces has sued the government because they gave the contract to an outsider - one who until work was stopped has done a great job in record time, not just in Corfu but in Greece.

Where did I put that axe?

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Categorizing ex-pats!

by *Clifford Owen*

I have been warned by my wife that the quickest way to make enemies would be to write this article! But living dangerously, as vicars do, here goes! It is really a fairly innocent piece of research and it is intended to invite responses to clarify my impressions. The issue is: 'Can one categorise Corfu's ex-pats? Are there obvious categories we fit into?'

The origin of the article was a talk I had to give way back in 2003 to the Mastersun Holidays group which came out from England for Greek Easter. The brief I was given for the talk was rather obvious: What's it like living here? Who lives here? Are people happy? Is it expensive? Do you need to learn Greek? and so on.

Out of the exercise came the six categories of people I had met up with until Easter 2003. I have had no radical rethinks since, though some minor adjustments have been necessary over the last few years. So what are my six categories?: 1. The 'old colonials', 2. The 'boat-burners', 3. The 'wise-sagas', 4. The 'girls', 5. The 'yachties' and 6. The 'new entrepreneurs'.

THE 'OLD COLONIALS' There are not too many left now. These are people of inherited means whose roots lie deep in the days when a third of the world was coloured red! Many of them are not so rich as they used to be, but their style and attitude has carried through from the past. Generally, such people are proud of their British roots and would fit happily back in with any resurrected neo-raj. They have an instinctive capacity to flush out and identify those of a similar kind! They celebrate together at parties, and know when the concerts are on!

THE 'BOAT-BURNERS' I originally had in mind two groups here: a) those who courageously sold up everything in the 40s and 50s and effectively emigrated. They are the totally committed ones who are generally happy with their new life and country, and mostly have no regrets. Their children may have already grown up here and become inculturated; and b) those who have sold houses in England and moved here only to find it isn't Shangri-La, but the property boom back in UK has effectively marooned them. I would add now under 'boat burners': c) These would be the 'escapees.' For a variety of reasons numbers of ex-pats simply 'wanted out' from their original country and holed up here. Judging by the number of un-MOT'd English bangers hiding under olive trees, there are quite a lot about!

THE 'WISE-SAGAS' This could well be the largest category of all. The holiday-home-abroad culture of recent decades coupled to early retirement and the escalation of 'this country isn't what it used to be' has led to this mass migration (now estimated at 6.5 million worldwide) of Brits who live outside UK. The wisdom of this post 50s group lies in the fact that they keep an adequate investment base back home as an insurance policy. If their Mediterranean island life goes pear-shaped, then return is a financial possibility. Changing financial fortunes in UK, rising fuel prices and the collapse of cut price air travel, could push this option in the direction of 'boat-burners'.

THE 'GIRLS' This category was of immense significance for Holy Trinity Church, since for many years they made up the majority of the congregation. The 'girls' are those who married the Greek boys they met on the beach or in the taverna in the

1970s and 80s tourist boom. It is important to say that most of these marriages have turned out to be at least as happy as if they had married back home. The children have naturally become bilingual. The now middle-aged mums have succeeded in rearing their families in Greek culture and have become enriched as a result. Well done, girls. I salute you! Occasionally, I meet an Englishman who has married a Greek girl. Why aren't there more? The Greek girls are lovely!

THE 'YACHTIES' If I had a choice, this would be my chosen category. Strictly speaking, yachties are not true residents; they are peripatetics, which is what I am at heart. But if you talk to most of them, they may oscillate between Croatia, the Gulf of Corinth and all stops in between, yet Kontokali Marina is 'home' in a way (they pay rent!).

THE 'NEW ENTREPRENEURS' All the above categories imply that there is an income somewhere to sustain the chosen life. Many of the above have found employment one way or another over the years, particularly as their Greek language skills are acquired. But the new entrepreneurs are those who move here to do a particular task or job, or to found a new business. I am mentioning no names in this article, but restoration of deserted Greek villages, connecting islands with seaplanes, and running IT businesses from home are just some high profile examples, and there are many others. This category may be much larger than I guess. Apart from providing an income with 'new money', it means that residents in their 30s to 50s can carve out a life on the island in a more self-sustaining way. It may only be a matter of time before an English-speaking school grows up somewhere and that could radically change the possibilities for extended residence for middle aged families.

Well, those are my six categories. They are not intended to be separated by Berlin Walls. There is in reality much interchange between groups, and individuals may well have a foot in two or more categories; some of the new entrepreneurs may have once been boat-burners and so on. From the Diocese in Europe's point of view, what we don't have in Corfu are any large-scale international employers, such as are found in European capitals, for example in industry, in higher education, or in EU departments.

I would also be interested to know of how many ex-pats return to their mother countries. Someone said to me the other day that the number of British on the island was falling and had been for some years! This contrasts with the more usual story that we are increasing. Whom do we believe?

One of the Mastersun holiday-makers said: 'Vicar, which category do you belong to?' I had to reply, 'I don't know'! I suppose I am a kind of new entrepreneur in the sense of coming to do a job - if the church is about building up customers - but I have to relate to every group. So there it is folks. Comments please.

This is the first article I have written for the Corfiot without mentioning God. But He'll be back in February!

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Corfu's Contrasting Villages by Hilary Paipeti

'How old is the house?' is a question that is often asked by buyers prospecting for an old property in one of Corfu's villages, and - unless the house conveniently has a dated keystone or other feature - it's one that is almost impossible to answer. Sometimes you can pick up clues from nearby buildings which are dated (since neighbourhoods were usually settled at around the same time) and sometimes from architectural features that shriek of a Venetian origin (though that could put its construction date anywhere within a couple of hundred years!).

The trouble with vernacular architecture is that it is indigenous - that is, typical of the locality, and built of locally sourced materials. I remember a Greek family friend telling me about how her father built her house; she and her sisters carried rough stones from the fields around the village, and her father and brothers built it using the unworked stones, infilled with rubble and held together with mud-and-lime mortar. If dressed stones were used, it was only for the corners, like reinforced concrete columns in one of today's skeletons; good masonry lent prestige, just as real stone still does today.

My friend's house, according to the time scale I worked out, must have been built sometime in the 1930s, yet there is nothing in its architecture or the materials it is built from that differentiate it from its neighbour, which may have been built 150 years before or 20 years later. It grew from local skills and elements of the local landscape - a product of the locality, and truly a house in the vernacular.



Rambling, semi-isolated farmhouses like the ones above are a feature of Old Perithia

Guidebook writers, working with limited space, tend towards sweeping statements when they describe Corfiot country architecture. 'In the country... the record of Venetian settlements can be seen in farmhouses and other buildings of the old Corfiot villages,' says Paul Watkins in *See Corfu and the Ionians* (Format, 1990). But more than a simple Venetian or post-Venetian style, vernacular architecture plays the major role in the characteristic appearance of any one village. As well as from the locally available materials, its style may have developed due to the geography of its setting, or have grown from the work of a particular builder, who at some stage in the past constructed a prototype house which was subsequently copied. Any number and combination of factors may have worked together to produce the settlements we admire today. The only factor Corfu's villages have in common is that they are all different.

FOUR CONTRASTING VILLAGES

Old Perithia (North). This famous village was probably first settled in the unsettled Byzantine era (pre-Venetian), when frequent pirate raids drove the population away from the comfortable coast to a harsher life in the mountains. Most of the houses currently standing (most in ruins) date from the 16th-18th centuries. The village is set in a great bowl under the shadow of Mount Pantokrator's cone-shaped summit, and within the confines of the surrounding hills, there was no geographical limitation on building space. Thus, while housing in the village centre (which was probably settled first) is fairly dense, the general morphology of the settlement comprises a number of scattered satellite hamlets or large farmsteads, linked originally by cobbled paths. In keeping with their wild setting, the buildings - away from the more sheltered centre - are built on no more than two levels and have small, widely spaced windows to protect the inhabitants from the extreme (for Corfu) weather. It snows most years in Old Perithia.

In its heyday, the settlement grew rich from sheep and goat farming, with the surplus produce - mainly meat and cheese - going to market over mountain footpaths which can still be traced, down to little harbours on the North East Coast and then on board caiques to Town. The wealth created by the trade is still evident in the substantial nature of many of the houses, and in the richness of details such as elegantly carved stonework and fluted columns. Prosperity also enabled every clan to found its own church, and the village has nine. The availability of the wonderful Sinies stone, the very hard limestone which forms the bones of the whole region, meant that all buildings were well constructed; Sinies stone is naturally stratified, and when quarried breaks easily into square easy-to-build blocks, so that little rubble and mortar were required.

Avliotes (North West). Like many villages of the far north west and north, Avliotes is built on one of the weathered sandstone ridges which cross the region. The ridges are mainly parallel, and are separated by deep-cut valleys where mist and damp collect; before good concrete foundations and central heating, no-one built in the bottoms, and thus the space available for construction was limited to the part of the ridge above the 'frost line' in winter and 'mist line' in other seasons (this, by the way, is very clearly defined in every settlement - you run into a wall of cold air at exactly the same spot when descending from a village). As a result, settlement is dense, with one house built closely up against the next. Ridge villages like Avliotes also tend to be linear, following the course of the highest contours, so that those built along the village road along the top are the most packed, while the less prestigious plots, further down the sides of the ridge, are slightly more dispersed and more likely to have a garden.

The sandstone dictates the form of the village, but it also moulds the character of the buildings. Between the pink, orange and coral plastic paint of the many restored housefronts, punctuations of gold identify the few buildings still in their original state. Like the one pictured below, each wall is eroded by rain and the centuries into smooth cavities filled with golden sand. The pulverulent rock is so soft that just the abrasion of your finger loosens another trickle. This ever-eroding stone gives the region its wonderful beaches of golden sand, beaches which attract the strong tourism industry which has been instrumental in keeping local villages like Avliotes prosperous and well populated, and most of their houses occupied.



Gardelades (Central West). Gardelades sits out one end of a low plateau, surrounded on almost three sides by cold, damp plains. Like in Avliotes, space above the frost-line is limited, but here the landscape dictates a cyclical village layout rather than a linear one. The main square, most substantial churches and the densest settlement is on the plateau's flat top, with a few houses spilling slightly down the side.

In Gardelades, the old houses are built of sandstone, harder than that of the north and north west, but not quarried into blocks as is the Sinies stone. Except to build the wealthiest houses, it was probably gathered loose from the ground and not quarried nor worked at all, and as a result unrendered walls are characterised by rubble and decaying mortar in amongst the larger masonry.



Typical rubble walls form one of the 'stone bodzos' houses in Gardelades, as described below

Several architectural styles are evident. The most common is a square or rectangular footprint and regularly spaced doors and windows. Prestigious buildings have arched colonnades along the front - an unusual feature in small outlying villages - and one which may derive from a very characteristic building style established in the area earlier by a single builder or 'school' of builders. The builders' 'signature' is a covered 'bodzos' (upstairs entrance balcony) which usually stretches right across the facade of the house, with several columns supporting the roof. There are at least four examples in Gardelades, and a striking one also stands in nearby Skripero, indicating that the builders worked elsewhere. From the date on a keystone, it seems they were active around the end of the 19th century.

Hlomos (South). Hlomos is another hill village, one which wraps itself around the eastern slopes of a conical mount (Kavalovouni, 330 metres at the summit). Though there is little to impede its spread, the houses are highly concentrated, and the settlement is a maze of tipsily zigzag streets which rise and plunge, seemingly at random. In the centre, the houses are built up against each other, and residents have confronted their need for expansion by building upwards (like the Romans and the Town Corfiots), so that many houses have either a third floor or at least a usable attic - as the photograph below shows. Lack of space between the buildings means few have even a yard; to provide some private outside space, in recent years some residents have sacrificed part of their upper storey for a roof terrace, to gain in many cases a sea view.

14>



FEATURE

> 13 The rock used in construction is mainly rough and rubbly, and little dressed stone is evident. The preferred colour for rendered walls is white, with (unusual for Corfu) some blue made with copper sulphate mixed with the limewash (as shown in the photograph). Red roof tiles are mercifully rare.

Immensely picturesque and full of splashes of colour, the village's location blesses it with the best view of any of Corfu's settlements. Many houses have a vista which takes in the whole southern portion of the island, with the sea on both sides visible. Houses on its northern fringes overlook the channel between Corfu and mainland Greece, and in the north-west corner, the view stretches up to Corfu Town with its background of the Pantokrator Massif.

Four villages, four very different settlements. This winter, take the opportunity to explore Corfu's varied villages. Look at them with a new eye, and try to understand why they are built the way they are.

*Splendid archways like this one
are a feature of Sinarades
in Central Corfu*



For sale in Old Perithia

Old ruin of about 80 sq.m. with small garden. 100,000 euro

For sale in Hlomos

Part-renovated house of about 80 sq.m. with characteristic attic floor. Has new roof - mainly internal work required. 40,000 euro



For sale in Gardelades

Two adjoining houses, both with 'stone bodzos' feature (the one on the left was later re-exposed during renovation).
Left, fully renovated: 80,000 euro
Right, part renovated: 50,000 euro

Is that a Bouzouki?

by *Pete Button*



A LITTLE HISTORY

To be able to clearly recognise a bouzouki, you need to know a little history. The bouzouki was developed in Ancient Greece and was known as a pandouris. Then in Byzantine days it became known as a tambouras and was also found in Turkey. The modern Turkish tambour is supposed to be very similar to the old pandouris. In this early period the instrument developed into a saz, which is often wrongly call a bouzouki. 16>

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Coming to Corfu and watching Captain Correlli's Mandolin rekindled my interest in playing music. The war-time drama romantically portrayed the instrument I had tried to learn in my schooldays. Now in my 40s, I was inspired to have another go.

I found a good selection of mandolins in Corfu Town, bought a nice little instrument and started to teach myself again. I've got a long way to go but I have really enjoyed it and found everyone supportive and encouraging, so different from competitive school days!

While practicing one day I was asked by a tourist if my mandolin was a bouzouki. Clearly there is some confusion about the bouzouki, the most Greek of instruments that we all associate with Zorba and the Greek Islands. This attracted my attention - I wanted to know more about the bouzouki. I knew I wanted to play one, but what type of bouzouki?

Did you know there is an Irish bouzouki, and in the States and Canada the bouzouki is used extensively in blue grass music?

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In Turkish, 'bouzouk' means broken, and was the name given to a smaller medium sized saz. This is the instrument that moved back to Greece as recently as 1922 at the end of the war between Greece and Turkey.

I discovered that the Irish Bouzouki is not nearly as old as I had expected. Being interested in Celtic music, I presumed it would have evolved from the lyre or lute of olden days. I was quite wrong; it was Johnny Moynihan, an Irish singer/songwriter, who introduced the bouzouki to Ireland in 1966 after discovering it whilst on holiday in Greece. The legendary folk band Planxty took up the bouzouki, and it exploded in popularity. Unlike the Greek bouzouki, Irish bouzoukis have flat backs rather like a guitar. So well established is the bouzouki in Irish music now, that when I turned up in an Irish bar with my round backed Greek bouzouki people asked with astonishment 'Is that a bouzouki?'. It was the Irish bouzouki that crossed to the States to be known as an octave mandolin or mandela.

MY BOUZOUKI

My own bouzouki has followed something of a similar history. I wanted a good professional instrument but couldn't afford 700 euros for a new one. So I looked for a second hand one. Not being able to find a used instrument in Corfu, I shopped on the internet and on ebay found an excellent 20 year old round-back bouzouki with beautiful inlay and a great tone. It originated in Crete where it had been bought by a Scottish mandolinist, who played it for many years until the long stretches got too much for his old fingers. I brought it back to Greece, where it definitely prefers the climate.

THE BOUZOUKI SOUND

The strings and tuning of a bouzouki is interesting. All bouzoukis have strings in pairs, with each one of the pair having exactly the same note. The old six-string bouzoukis were tuned D A D, which suits the Turkish sound. The eight-string version is normally tuned C F A D, the same as a guitarists (at the second fret). This makes comfortable chord patterns. It was this similarity that explains the uptake by musicians in Ireland. However, the fiddlers in Ireland had a greater influence and the Irish bouzouki is tuned G D A E, the same as a mandolin or fiddle but an octave lower. Having started with a mandolin, it is this stringing I now use here in Greece - but to the dismay of traditional players, who have told me it isn't a bouzouki any more.

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The tone an individual instrument makes is governed by its quality. A good instrument will have a lot of wood strips making up the round back, with 31 considered the norm. The smooth grain of the wood on the neck has an effect on the tone, as does a rod in the neck which gives extra resonance. Fine inlay on the finger board and the veneer patterns on the belly do not help the tone but indicate a quality instrument. These patterns should be real, not painted on as on souvenir instruments, made only to be hung on a wall. Of course the most important aspect of the sound is the skill of the player. I once watched an English blues guitarist challenge my bouzouki-playing Greek friend to follow him in 12 bar blues. The bouzouki player then moved on to a Mark Knopfler style riff, then a sitar sound - where the guitarist got lost!

A LITTLE ON BOUZOUKI MUSIC

Zorbas, and much of the music you may hear at the 'Greek Nights' in the tourist bars (this is something that gets to me, we are in Greece, surely all nights are 'Greek Nights'?), is what my bouzouki-playing friend dismissively calls 'Hollywood Greek' and has very little in common with the traditional music of the Greek Islands.

So the term bouzouki seems hard to define. The instrument can be in many styles, tones and now come from almost anywhere in the world. In my case my bouzouki is Greek, twice as big as my Italian mandolin and with a very different sound.

Finally, as a newcomer to Corfu and an enthusiastic learner, I love the sound, the instrument's versatility and its history. If anyone wants to fuel my passion by telling me more I'd love to hear from you.

Happy playing and happy listening.

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Pomo D'Oro Restaurant

This is without question the best value restaurant in Corfu. Located just behind Serano Coffee Bar in the centre of Town, its chef/proprietor Aristotelis Mengoulas is a culinary artist who prepares dishes of a remarkable standard with extraordinary flair. His style can best be described as Mediterranean with an Italian flavour. You are advised to sample his creations now before prices rise to match the quality of ingredients and the manner in which they are fused with skill and imagination into works of art. In the summer, tables are laid out under trees on a terrace, providing rare tranquility and romantic charm.



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Comfort Food

Isn't it extraordinary how Heinz Tomato Soup and Heinz Baked Beans are two of the most comforting products in the history of food, and yet almost without exception (perhaps Tomato Ketchup is one), everything else the company makes is vile? Before I am subject to irate phone calls (there may possibly be people out there who adore Heinz Salad Cream), can you think of anything more foul than a sandwich made with Sunblest Bread, spread with Echo cooking margarine and filled with (I can hardly write this) Heinz Sandwich Spread? That's what my school would provide as part of a lunch-pack for fellwalking trips. Not a great comfort in freezing mist on the top of Penyghent. I would feed mine to the ravenous sheep, which in the middle of February would even snatch a disgusting sandwich from your hand if you didn't pay attention!

Did you know that Heinz Spaghetti Bolognese contains only 5% meat, and that is PORK! The case rests.

The reason for the rant is that chilly evenings are definitely here, and you need your comfort food at times like this. While it's tempting to take the easy option and open a tin of Heinz, it tends to be an expensive option, especially if you have a family to feed. But you can make your own quite satisfactory Tomato Soup and Baked Beans (next month) which can be just as comforting as the named brand - and at hugely reduced cost!

As well as my own takes on those two dishes, I suggest a chicken soup from the Middle East, and the best chill-beater of all, onion soup. More comfort food recipes next month, including home-made baked beans.

Tomato Soup

Olive oil, 1 medium onion, 500 gr (1 box) tomato passata, 1 tablespoon tomato paste, salt, pepper, sugar, cornflour, milk

In a medium pan, pour olive oil to coat the base. Chop the onion and fry gently until transparent. Do not allow to brown. Add the tomato passata, the tomato paste and about a mug of half milk, half water. Season with salt and pepper and sugar, adding the last little by little and tasting frequently until you get the right balance - you are aiming for the intense Heinz flavour. Bring to the boil and simmer slowly, covered, for 20-30 minutes, then process until very smooth. At this point it should gain the orange colour that the tinned version has. Return to the pan. Mix about a level tablespoon of cornflour with a half teacup of milk and add to the soup. Bring to a simmer again and cook one minute more until it has thickened slightly. Serve immediately, with a swirl of cream in each plate if you like, and some parsley. Serves three generously for a cost of less than three euros.

Chicken Soup

2 chicken legs or the rear part of a chicken (use the breasts for another dish), 1 large potato, 2 stalks celery, 2 leeks, 2-3 courgettes (optional), 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, 2-4 cloves garlic, juice of 1-2 lemons to taste, salt and black pepper, 120 gr risotto rice

Rinse the chicken joints. Cut the potato in pieces, chop the celery with its leaves, and thinly slice the leeks and courgettes. Cut up the garlic if large.

Put all the ingredients except the rice in a large saucepan and cover with about a litre of water. Bring to the boil and skim well as the scum rises. Lower the heat and simmer gently for about

an hour, until the meat is falling off the bones and the potato has practically disintegrated. The vegetables should all be very soft and the stock rich and full of flavour. Remove the chicken pieces, discard the bones and tear the meat into small pieces or chop, then return to the pan. Make the liquid up to one litre.

While the stew is cooking, cook the rice according to packet instructions. Drain. Add to the soup just before serving. Dribble with some olive oil at the table if you like.

Onion Soup

This is a slightly simplified version of Jamie Oliver's recipe which appears in his highly recommended new book about growing your own vegetables. 'Jamie at Home: Cook Your Way to the Good Life' is published by Michael Joseph and costs £25.

A good knob of butter, olive oil, a good handful of fresh sage leaves, 6 cloves of crushed garlic, 5 red onions, 3 large white onions, 300 gr leeks, sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, 2 litres of good-quality hot stock (beef, chicken or vegetable), 8 x 2 cm slices of good-quality stale bread, 200 gr freshly grated cheddar cheese, Worcestershire sauce

Peel and slice the onions. Trim the leeks, wash well and slice.

Put the butter, two glugs of olive oil, the sage and garlic into a thick-bottomed, non-stick pan. Stir everything round and add the onions and leeks. Season with salt and pepper. Place a lid on the pan, leaving it slightly ajar, and cook very slowly for 50 minutes, without colouring the vegetables too much. Remove the lid for the last 20 minutes - your onions will become soft and golden. Stir occasionally so that nothing catches on the bottom. Having the patience to cook the onions this slowly gives you an incredible flavour, so don't be tempted to speed this bit up.

When your onions and leeks are almost a puree, add the stock. Bring to the boil, turn the heat down and simmer for 10-15 minutes.

Preheat the oven or grill to maximum. Toast your bread on both sides. Correct the seasoning of the soup. When it's perfect, ladle it into individual heatproof serving bowls and place them on a baking tray. Tear toasted bread over each bowl to fit it like a lid. Push and dunk the bread into the soup a bit. Sprinkle with some grated cheddar and drizzle over a little Worcestershire sauce. Put the baking tray into the preheated oven or under the grill to melt the cheese until bubbling and golden. Keep an eye on it and make sure it doesn't burn. When the cheese is bubbling, very carefully lift out the tray and carry it to the table.

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MORE ON CHURCH MUSIC

It was with great interest that I read Robert Sherratt's defence of contemporary trends in church worship, and admiration of his clearly deeply-held beliefs. I wonder, however, if he has read all the previous correspondence on this matter, which started when I expressed delight at Pope Benedict XVI's extensive authorisation of alternative use of the Tridentine Mass.

At no time have I expressed criticism of Sunday School and children's worship. Why Mr Sherratt should introduce such irrelevancy I cannot imagine, unless it were to induce sentimentality, which is never a sound basis for reasoning. Since the subject has arisen I shall express concern that the Church should associate itself with contemporary 'pop' which is nothing more than cynical ruthless rampant commercial exploitation and stultification of the young. Every generation has had its popular music, but never before has it been so completely hijacked and debased by Big Business as in the last half-century. However, it was rather the descent into infantile antics in adult worship that I have been deploring.

An inescapable fact is that church attendance has been slowly haemorrhaging over the past sixty years and I have yet to see the very large congregations in Corfu to which Robert refers, except in the Orthodox Church, whose worship and music are very well-ordered and formal. The Catholic Cathedral also enjoys quite good attendance; their worship is also quite formal. They have always used the Tridentine Mass in the summer because visiting Catholics from all over the world can follow it; a more-or-less straight translation into Greek is used at other times.

In the time of my childhood my home city had fifty-two Anglican churches, each serving an average of two thousand people. Today there are less than half that number of churches, each with 'responsibility' for ten thousand, and few are ever filled. My friend Clifford, who has obviously read 'Christmas 1940' asks what our congregations, packed at Christmas, were like at other times. On ordinary Sundays, as well as for 7am Sung Mass and 6pm Choral Evensong on weekday holy-days, we did not open the hall for overflow, but there were always persons standing around the baptistry at the rear and often in the side aisles too, augmenting the two-hundred-and-fifty in the seats. Such was also the case in my later appointments in Wembley, Hampton, Wellington and Napier up to 1970, when new liturgies and their attendant music took over, driving me and very many others from church. That is why I find so disappointing today the abysmal ignorance that has led to such a dramatic decline in church attendance.

Some weeks ago a local churchman assured me that regular church attendance in Britain was 13 per cent of the population. That figure, disturbingly low as it is, seemed so incredibly high that I spent many hours researching the published statistics of every sect from Pentecostals and Quakers to Anglicans and Romans. Some were rather coy and recorded only their 'approximate total membership' and, unlikely though it reflects regular attendance, I included those figures in order to reach an absolute maximum total. My result was 7 per cent - and then I discovered that the BBC has recently conducted a similar survey that resulted in 6.3 per cent! That is very worrying and hardly supports Robert's claims of 'success'. Numbers are against him. However, the most melancholy feature of my investigation was that every church publishing statistics going back over the years

records a steady decline in allegiance. People have 'voted with their feet'. The only figures that oppose the trend are those of Anglican Cathedrals, with their professional musicians, choir schools and formal worship; they show a steady increase in attendance, but unfortunately not enough to offset the steady drain from the parishes.

I am well aware that it is not only 'trendy' music and practices that have driven so many from regular church attendance, but that bears some of the blame. (Recent historical and scientific enlightenment should also give the Church cause for rethinking.) To cite Stone, Bronze or Iron Age observances as 'authority' is another irrelevancy, although much of today's 'pop' also has its origins in such primitive cultures. We do not like our churches turned into dance-halls and discothèques. Pope Benedict's reforms have sparked considerable correspondence in the British press, and it has been very encouraging to see how much they have been acclaimed, with very little opposition. The Catholics are revolting from the pews. How about the 99 per cent of British on this island who never set foot in the only British church?

Why Robert should assume that I am opposed to amateur organists, guitarists or any other instrumentalists at large I cannot understand. My father and three of my uncles were church organists, three amateur, one professional, and I know how assiduously they practised. I have met some first-rate amateur musicians. No, it is the many who through their indolence, incompetence and heedless ignorance give church musicians a bad name amongst the musical fraternity, and also empty the pews, that I deprecate.

Too, I have never said that I oppose congregational participation. We always included at least five hymns in every service so that the nave might not feel neglected, but even those hymns need informed selection so as to obtain the greatest impact. At NZBC we had a long list of 'forbidden' hymns that would kill stone-dead a broadcast. The same applies to any church service if it is to prove truly efficacious.

It has been said that if a committee were asked to design a horse they would end up with a camel. Whilst appreciating Robert's devotion to 'democracy' - though he would allow a single individual in the person of the cleric the power of veto which he otherwise deprecates, despite that individual being probably totally ignorant musically - I will still assert that there is no reason for anyone to gain expertise in any activity if such expertise is not to be usefully employed. My own experience filled, indeed packed, churches where I controlled the music, and I shall always affirm that such control should be in the hands of those trained to exercise it.

Certainly some clergy may have 'God-given authority', but it would definitely help were they also to use such God-given intellect as they may possess and perceive the damage that they are inflicting upon His Church by trying to be 'with it'. It is just not working. Pope Benedict has seen that. Does nobody recognise what an amazing about-turn he is imposing upon that most rigid of churches? He is in fact admitting, "We got it wrong those years ago. Now we must try to put it right." I hope that he succeeds. Bravo, Benedict XVI. I also hope that other churches will discover leaders with enough intelligence and courage to follow his example.

Dr Lionel Mann, Agios Ioannis

LETTERS

THE THINGS THAT MATTER IN CORFU - OR DO THEY?

At last I am settled as a resident and working taxpayer in Corfu. After four years of being a holidaymaker I now enjoying living here all year round ...almost. But I am disappointed and ashamed that so little is done to protect the animals, wildlife and the habitat of Corfu. Things that elsewhere in Europe are common practice do not happen here. Please permit me through the pages of 'The Corfiot' to make five specific observations, and invite members of the local government and other readers to respond?

a) The climate in Corfu in April is fantastic for tourism. It is the most beautiful time of the year in Corfu. The Easter celebrations are world class. Yet very few tourists come to Corfu in April for the Easter holidays, so the island misses out on at least 15% possible annual tourism revenues. Why are there no direct flights to Corfu in April? Why is there no advertising produced for the Easter period? When was the last time there was any exhibition promoting Corfu anywhere in Europe?

b) The Island of Corfu is a sanctuary and temple to nature. We are blessed with more natural beauty here than almost anywhere else in the world. It is why the Durrell brothers loved it so much. And I love it too. So beautiful are the trees, the wild flowers, the lakes, the coastline, the mountains, the beaches, and the abundance of wild birds. They sing the song of Glory of God's creation. Then, starting in October - every morning at the crack of dawn - the hunters kill everything in sight. Little red breasted robins come crashing down, sparrows, finches, swifts, skylarks - everything that has breath becomes the target of the evil shooters. Bang, bang, bang... lead pellets and tiny dead birds rain down on our rooftops and car bonnets, and then all is calm... all is dead! How can such people meet God with a clear conscience? What did these beautiful little birds do to deserve the hatred of the hunters in this way? Why is this not a criminal offence? Why are guns allowed in Corfu? Why is Corfu not protected as a wildlife sanctuary?

c) It is so upsetting for most Europeans when they see any animal in the throes of death. And yet a minority of residents in Corfu think nothing about spreading poison in public places to kill stray dogs and cats, and often other wildlife and domestic animals as well. Elsewhere in the civilised world this is illegal, and people caught causing cruelty to animals either deliberately or through carelessness are sent to prison. There are currently no laws about cruelty to animals that are enforced. So cruelty prevails. Simple humane measures to reduce the population of stray animals are boycotted by the government so the stray population increases. Why aren't public services provided to make sure all stray animals are neutered? Why is there no legislation forcing dog owners to have a dog license, and requiring that their pet wears identification? Why is it not an offence for any dog to be allowed by its owner to cause a hazard to traffic and a danger to other people? In civilised European countries, dogs have to be kept on a lead along roads and in public places. Owners have to clear up after their animals, carrying the infamous "poop scoops".

d) Among the population of Corfu, at least 20% of electors consider themselves 'Europeans' and speak English as either their first or second language. Also 90% of visitors to Corfu are Europeans who speak English as either their first or second language, and these are the people who provide the island with over 75% of its annual income. In the summer months, English speaking people outnumber those who speak Greek. With so large an English speaking population, why do we not ensure that road signs, web sites, information leaflets, and so on, are provided both in Greek and English? Why is it not a requirement for civil servants in Corfu to be able to speak and write both Greek and English? Why do public service companies and utilities in Corfu not write to European customers in both Greek and English?

e) The standard of refuse collection in Corfu has been disgraceful in the last three months, and threatens public health. Rubbish piled several metres high greets visitors to Corfu Town. The stink is unbearable. Tourists experiencing this will never come to Corfu again. What is the excuse? Yes, there have been strikes, but when strikes happen in other European countries, the police and armed forces are mobilised to maintain public services and clear the rubbish so there is no threat of disease to the population. Members of the public are also asked to take their rubbish directly to a refuse disposal center in these circumstances. But where is there a refuse disposal center in Corfu that is accessible to the public? Where are the high temperature incinerators to burn the rubbish safely? What measures are taken to avoid polluting the island with our waste? I think the rubbish mountains in the streets tell the answer.

I want to make a proposal to all members of the local government in Corfu. If you care about these things, then please respond to this letter. This is so that we can count on your support in these things that matter to us, and so that we can continue to vote for you in the next elections.

I want to ask a favour of all readers of The Corfiot. You have a vote. You have a pen. You pay taxes. Do not accept the cruelty to animals that we see around us. Find out who is poisoning the animals around you. Find out who the men with guns are. Write to the Mayor and to Government Officers with your concerns. Do not accept apathetic responses. Publish and shame the worst offenders through the pages of The Corfiot, and we will not vote for them in future. And also let us know who our allies and friends are. Let's make our voices, votes and taxes count against apathy!

Robert Sherratt, Temploni

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PERSONAL

ARTIST SEEKS EXHIBITION SPACE in offices, restaurants, bars to display work. Bright, colourful designs and semi abstract work. Please visit www.liammachellart.co.uk to see example of my work or contact Liam Machell. Tel: 6947 496231 or email liammachell@yahoo.co.uk

HOMOSEXUAL HELP LINE CLUG (Corfu Lesbians and Gays). Information line: 6934 903726 or email us at corfulg@yahoo.gr

We support any people in Corfu with Gay / Lesbian / Bi / Trans information
IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR DRINKING and would like to talk to someone who understands, or if you are interested in helping to start an AA group here, please call 210 800 1073.

DOES SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU HAVE A DRINK PROBLEM? To help someone, you need to help yourself first. Al-Anon family groups give courage, comfort and support to the partners, families and friends of alcoholics. The Corfu group meets on Monday at 8.00 pm. Any Greek speaker welcome. Call 26610 38776 or 26610 23871 between 08.00 and 13.00 weekdays.

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Small ads (for sale and offers categories) are only accepted if paid for in advance. Copy BY EMAIL ONLY. You can leave your payment (5 euro up to 50 words) at the 'Made in Corfu' shop in Gastouri, the Petra office near Arillas, and the Luvcorfu Properties offices at Barbati and Saint Spiridon. Phone 6948 889174 for information.

Need a reliable weather forecast?

A detailed five-day forecast is at: www.corfunet.com/weather/index.php

The Corfu Photographic Club

welcomes new members for its activities on Mondays and Wednesdays, 7-9 pm. Slide show of work by Greek and foreign photographers every Monday. Phone 6072 886467 or 6936 647100.

Signs It's Time To Redesign Your Website

Eventually you'll have to make some changes to your website. Some of these changes can be accomplished with simple maintenance and by making updates to your site. But there's only so far that patching and revising your current site can go. If your site is particularly outdated, or if it's not working well for you, it's probably time to consider a full-scale site redesign. Here are some signs that it's time to redesign your site:

YOUR BUSINESS HAS CHANGED OR GROWN If your business is no longer the same as it was when you designed your site, chances are that you should redesign your website to reflect that. If you've only had a few small changes, you might be able to just update your current website. But, if you've changed your business direction, decided to provide new products or services, or if your company has grown significantly, it will pay off to redesign your site.

Reconsider how the changes to your business should be reflected or addressed in the structure, design and strategy behind your website.

YOUR SITE LOOKS AS IF IT WAS DESIGNED IN 1995 Some signs of an outdated web site include: chunky, slow-loading graphics; old-style "framed" coding, where the site is divided up into panes that load separately; animated cartoon clip-art throughout the site; text created as images instead of in HTML. Having any of these on your site could reflect poorly on your business, making you look behind the times. It can also make you look like you don't care enough about your business or about technological advances to keep abreast of them. Keeping your company's website looking modern will improve its credibility.

THE INFORMATION ON YOUR SITE ISN'T USER FRIENDLY If you cringe when you read your site text, or if you regularly get questions on your site text from visitors, restructuring your copy or rewriting it can help to fix these problems. If you've been adding to your site over time and the navigation has become unwieldy or confusing, restructuring your navigation could be another pressing reason to redesign your site. You want visitors to be able to easily find their way around your site and to be able to access all the information you have within a few clicks. Laying out your site to make that possible can make your visitor's experience on your site a lot easier.

YOU APOLOGISE FOR THE SITE WHEN REFERRING TO IT OR HANDING OUT YOUR BUSINESS CARDS Your site should be a source of pride. It should provide your clients and prospects an easy way to get a lot of information about your business. And, if you have to apologise for out-of-date information, broken images, poor design, difficult navigation or anything else on your site, it makes you look unprepared and unprofessional. Make sure your site is in top shape and looks impressive, so your clients believe your business is in good shape too.

YOU'RE NOT GETTING GOOD RESULTS ON THE SEARCH ENGINES Poor rankings in the Search Engines can be a result of not optimising your site well. Poor search engine ranking can also be a result of bad design choices or coding on your site. Make sure that your site isn't designed using frames and that the text is coded in HTML. Flash sites are also more difficult to optimise for Search Engines.

IT'S NOT BRINGING IN ENQUIRIES AND HELPING YOU TO MAKE SALES If your site was designed long ago, then there's a good chance that it was designed just to act as an online brochure. This was very common a few years ago, when websites were new. But recently businesses have realised that a website can do a lot more than just impersonate your brochure - it can help you close sales, bring in new prospects and make your business easier to run. By redesigning your site to include the latest e-commerce applications, you can bring in more enquiries and make more sales.

YOUR SITE IS DIFFICULT TO UPDATE If your site is difficult to keep updated it might be time to consider a whole site redesign. Make a list of everything that you want to do on your site and consult a web designer about redesigning your site with those changes in mind. Often, if you have extensive changes to make to your site, it can be less expensive to just start again. If your site is designed in Flash, redesigning and recoding your site could improve its functionality.

If your website suffers from these problems and needs a new look, then maybe it's time you spoke to Truetype Web Solutions. Our speciality is designing and optimising cheap, but highly efficient websites. Our websites are consistently in the Google's top ten results for their chosen keyword or phrase. We are proud of our close personal relationship with all our clients and we are always happy to update your web pages to reflect any changes in your business. At Truetype Web Solutions we offer free website analysis and consultation. Why not contact us today to discuss refreshing your website? For more information about the other services we offer and a portfolio of some of our latest work, visit our recently redesigned corporate website at www.truetype2000.com.

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