

The Corfiot

Corfu's English Language Monthly Magazine

November 2008
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No. 215

Paradise Island Idyll... or Dump?

Tribute to Gerry

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The English Language Monthly Magazine
ISSN 1107-3640

Proprietor & Publisher

Pedestrian Publications

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Printed by TYPOEKTOKTIKI
POTAMOS
Tel. 26610 37755

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ear to the ground

WHEN YOU PULLED THIS MONTH'S MAGAZINE out of the plastic, you must have twigged that the Credit Crunch has hit here too.

We have had to drop to 24 pages for the winter, since printing costs are getting out of hand, and we can't justify them out of season. However, you will find that content is not greatly compromised - six of the eight removed pages were ones which didn't change substantially, like the 'Information' and 'Made in Corfu' pages which were for the benefit of summer visitors. So we've still got four main features, and all our usual regular columns (except Chaplain's Chat). Back to 32 pages next spring!

JUST AS WE WERE PREPARING THIS ISSUE, the Political Scandal of the Year broke in the UK media. The upshot is that Corfu's North East Coast is no longer known as Kensington-on-Sea, on account of the 'toffs' who holiday there. No. It's now officially 'Westminster-on-Sea'. You read it here first...

The Westminster-on-Sea scandal has uncovered alleged dirty dealings dating from late August, when several of the 'political class' were on vacation in the area. It seems that Tory Shadow Chancellor George Osbourne and just-made-Lord, back-in-the-cabinet Labour-King-of-Spin Peter Mandelson were free-loading on the back of Nathaniel Rothschild at his parent's pad at Kerasia. An unlikely combination, and one that proved volatile. Throw into the mix the Tory fundraiser Alan Feldman (also holidaying nearby), Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska and media baron Rupert Murdoch, and spice it up with a number of exotic locations such as a superyacht and an enigmatic estate - and out comes a juicy cocktail of gossip, cronyism and blame.

The first rumblings were felt in early October, when George Osbourne was reported to have blabbed to his mates about a meal he'd shared with Mandelson in Agni whilst on the August holiday, during the course of which Mandy slagged off Prime Minister Gordon Brown (sic). Since at the time the story broke Brown had just 'rehired' twice-sacked Mandelson, and they were now supposed to be joined-at-the-hip best buddies, it made headlines.

During the same period in August, Rothschild, Murdoch and Deripaska were hosting a series of social events, and naturally the visiting politicians were invited. That Osbourne met Deripaska there is no doubt; it's what they talked about that's disputed.

A couple of weeks after the Osbourne/Mandelson Agni story broke, Nat Rothschild wrote a letter to the Times, claiming that during a party on Deripaska's yacht Osbourne had solicited a Tory-party donation from the Russian to the tune of 50,000 pounds - a donation that would have been illegal under UK law. (Osbourne denies the claim.) Quite what prompted Rothschild to make such public accusations against the Shadow Chancellor - a pal from University days - is currently under speculation. A favoured theory is that Mandelson put him up to it to avenge Osbourne's alleged tattling.

Indeed, it provokes the question of what's in it for them. As the financial world heads for collapse, we're hearing increasingly about the proposed New World Order of the International Bankers (which the Rothschild dynasty allegedly leads). Connivance between the People's Representatives and the wannabe World Elite? Surely not...

PLEASE COULD ADVERTISERS IN THE CLASSIFIED SECTION refrain from USING CAPITAL LETTERS WHEN TYPING THEIR COPY. It is perfectly clear which bit of the email constitutes the copy without this. Capitals mean that I have to retype, which rather defeats the object of sending the copy by email. Please note that I have been requesting NO CAPS for several months on the Classified page. The request is now IN CAPS.

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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

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2008

This year Remembrance Sunday falls on November 9th.

There will be a wreath laying ceremony at the British Cemetery and those wishing to participate are requested to be present by 11.45 at the latest.

Civil and military decorations may be worn on this occasion.

Following the ceremony those present at the Cemetery are invited to the Holy Trinity Church for light refreshments

Sarah Ticherou ~ British Vice Consul

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2008 Craft Fair at Casa Lucia

(Paleokastritsa Road, turn left 2.3 kms after Tzavros Junction)

Friday, 28 November: 14.00 - 21.00
Saturday, 29 November: 10.00 - 21.00
Sunday, 30 November: 10.00 - 15.00

Come along and enjoy! We have beautiful handcrafted items for sale: greetings cards, paintings, jewellery, Xmas gifts and food goodies, hamper raffle for charity as well as cosy kitchen for tea, coffee and pre-xmas cheer.

This month's name days

01. Damianos, Kosmas
08. Angelos, Gavriel Mihail, Serafim
09. Nektarios
10. Orestes
11. Victor, Minas
14. Philipos
16. Mattheos
21. Maria
25. Ekaterina, Merkarios
26. Stilianos
30. Andreas

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

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- ~ Donate equipment
- ~ Volunteer to help with care or DIY

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Craft Fair at Casa Lucia

Last weekend in November

Genuine 'Made in Corfu' products will once again feature in the 2008 Craft Fair, which will be held on 28, 29 and 30 November at Casa Lucia. The goodies on display will be crafted on the island by local artists and artisans, with many 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!

Last year, visitors to the 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.

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 genuine 'Souvenir of Corfu'.

Goodbye Clifford and Avis



Hotelier Fried Aumann hosted a goodbye lunch party for departing Anglican Chaplain the Revd. Dr. Clifford Owen and his wife Avis on Sunday, 12 October at the Saint George Bay Country Club in Acharavi. The theme of the lunch was 'Colonial Curry', and it was enjoyed by a large cross-section of Corfu's foreign community. Pictured above are Clifford and Avis, with their host to the left.

After five years of ministry in Corfu, Clifford and Avis left on 31 October for a new job at the English Church in Oostende and Brugge, where Clifford will be Priest-in-Charge.

What you'll find at the Fair

Waffles
Mulled wine
Pottery
Keyrings
Quilted cushions
Model boats in driftwood
Embroideries
Art prints
Rag rugs and bags
Wood sculptures
Bead jewellery
Paintings
Photographs
Knitted mice
Hand-made cards
Jams and pickles
Decorations
Crystal jewellery
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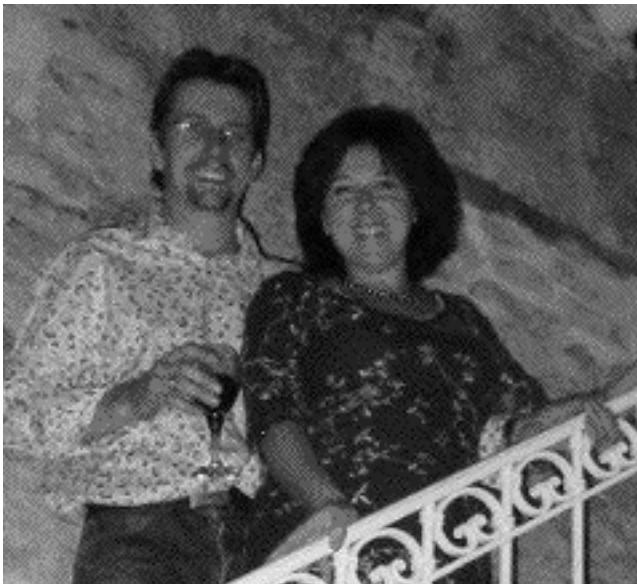
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Invisible Kitchen reopens for winter



Superchefs Ben and Claudia celebrated the winter reopening of the Invisible Kitchen Restaurant with a party which took place on Saturday, 11 October at their premises in Pithos near Acharavi.

During summer, the business specialises in outside catering, but in winter it opens for dinner on Saturday evenings and for Sunday lunch. Due to limited tables, booking is essential. Phone 26630 98051.

The restaurant is housed in a renovated stone barn, where London-trained Ben and Claudia produce exquisite food from many ethnic cuisines. You can expect dishes like Thai beef salad with chilli and lime dressing, smoked mozzarella and garlic bruschetta, coconut and coriander sea bream curry with basmati rice and poppadom, Moroccan chicken breast stuffed with olives and apricots on almond couscous, and chocolate and walnut cake.

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OBITUARY

GERALDINE ANNE ELLIOT (1946 - 2008)



Geraldine Elliot, wife of Bill, passed away peacefully at home early on Tuesday, 23 September 2008. Bill and Geraldine ran the Holy Trinity Chaplaincy from 1992 to 1998, and were immensely popular with the church congregation and in wider society, both foreign and local. During their time on Corfu, they succeeded in uniting a divided and turbulent church community, paving the way for the ministries of Stuart and Katherine, and subsequently of Clifford and Avis.

Gerry, as she was called by all, was one of those rare people whom absolutely everyone loved. Her contribution to *The Corfiot* was the column 'Gerry's Cakes', in which she shared with our readers the recipes for the scrumptious desserts she dished out to all who came to visit the church.

A memorial service was held at Holy Trinity on 6 October to coincide with a similar ceremony in Sutton.

Our condolences to Bill and to all the family.

HWP

Bill's Tribute to Geraldine

Lord, I have lived this day to lay to rest one I have loved.

My gratitude is as full as my grief, and my peace as deep as my pain - all because of you.

Shepherd of my soul, I need you now as never before through these dark and painful days.

You send us to this earth for a season, then you receive us again into thyself.

I understand the cycle, but I'm not quite as ready to let go as I thought I'd be.

All my life I've known that someday this would happen but the finality of it is hard to bear.

One thing I know, death cannot kill love and hands cannot bury it.

So, on this, my loved one's day of rest, I give you praise for a life well lived.

Gerry's Journey

By Anne Poulter

Gerry's life journey has come to an end. The journey she shared with each one of us has been one of adventure, happiness and excitement, mixed with pain and disappointment, but one full of love and faith.

Gerry started her journey in Barnstable, where she was born in 1946, followed soon after by her sister Yvonne. They lived with their mum, who later married a man in the Royal Air Force, and like many service families they then travelled around. Postings took them to Oldenburg and Cologne in Germany, back to England and a change of schools again, and then in 1961 to a posting to Malta.

One day Gerry met the organist of the Anglican Cathedral in Valletta, and she and Yvonne decided to join the Cathedral Choir; Bill, David and I were already members. After the Sunday morning services I used to cook lunch in the Crypt for about 25 young people, mostly a mix of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Wrens. When David and I returned to the UK, Gerry, together with a couple of the other girls, took over the reins and carried on with the lunches.

Although only a teenager, Gerry ran her own nursery in Malta, no mean feat for someone so young. She and Bill then started going out together, eventually became engaged, and in 1963 were married in the Cathedral. Gerry was just 17 ½, and she used to love to tell us that there were quite a few folk who said that the marriage would not last.

Gerry and Bill returned to the UK, and again moved around every two or three years. However, it was while Bill was stationed at RAF Chivenor in North Devon (where Nik was born in 1966) that they made a journey that was to change their lives forever. The journey was from Coombe Martin, where they lived, to Plymouth - they were off to attend a Billy Graham Crusade meeting. That evening they both committed their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, determining to serve and honour Him in all they did.

More moves followed, and wherever they went they could be found serving in their local church, helping out in the Sunday School and doing whatever was needed. One such move was to Malvern, where they worshipped at the Priory. In Malvern Gerry and Bill took up Foster Parenting, loving and caring for the many children placed in their care, and also took on the care of a lovely elderly lady, Auntie Muriel. In 1968 Fiona came along, followed by Jo in 1971. David and I were there on each occasion to celebrate with them. We were also there when their fourth child, Deanne, was born, sadly with a severe physical disability. Deanne lived for just 16 days, and Gerry told me on a number of occasions that you never really get over the death of a child - it was a real challenge to her faith.

Gerry was never one to let the grass grow under her feet, and she was always looking for ways to enhance the family budget. She spent a happy couple of years serving fish and chips at the Golden Kitchen in Malvern - sadly no longer there. The children continued to do well at school and enjoying their life around the Malvern Hills. Then when Bill left the RAF they bought the local village shop in Colwall, just outside Malvern, and entered

OBITUARY

into village life with great gusto. Gerry particularly became famous for her Scotch Eggs (which she made by the dozen) and for her honey-roast ham. Again they became very involved in the local church, helping Carl Attwood, the Vicar at that time, in many varied ways - Gerry of course particularly in catering events. At about this time Bill felt the call to enter the Ministry, so the shop was sold, Bill took up his training while working as a painter and decorator, and Gerry took on a position at Evendine Court as a House Mistress. She really loved this job, and learnt so much that was to stand her in good stead in later years.

Bill's Ordination, in Hereford Cathedral in 1987, began a new sort of journey for Gerry, one that again meant moving house on a regular basis.

In 1988 the four of us returned to Malta to celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary, and together we joined the Cathedral Choir for one last time, dressing in the robes that we had possibly worn some 25 years earlier.

In 1989 the four of us were on holiday in Corfu, and on the Sunday travelled into Corfu Town from the north of the island to attend the service at the Anglican Church. Whilst there we heard that the Chaplaincy was vacant, and as we left the service David turned to Gerry and Bill and said, 'If it was me I'd have my bags packed.' 18 months later the bags were packed, and they were off to Corfu, where Bill would serve as Chaplain for the next six years. The move to the Mediterranean was not without a great deal of sadness, as it meant that Gerry and Bill had to sell their house, furniture, and many of the other things they had accumulated on their journey through life. So it was that they arrived in Corfu with all their worldly possessions in just a few suitcases.

Once again Gerry was thrown into parish life supporting Bill in his valuable roles, and also helping the many English girls who had married Greek husbands - she very quickly became 'Mum' to them all.

The six years in Corfu passed very quickly, and the move back from the Island meant leaving behind some wonderful friends. When considering the move back to England, Bill was looking for a 'House for Duty' somewhere, and it was our suggestion that he write to the Bishop of Chichester to see what was available. We felt that after all our years of friendship it would be really good if we could actually live near each other. The Bishop of Horsham offered Bill the living at Sutton, and so they arrived here, again with their suitcases and very little else.

A short time ago Gerry told me that the nine years that she lived in Sutton have been the happiest of her life. All the skills Gerry had learnt down through the years she was able to use to great effect in this parish. If it wasn't flowers for a wedding it was catering for a party or caring for someone in need. There were times when I said to her, 'You can say 'no' you know,' but 'no' was not a word Gerry used a great deal. Her fund-raising activities for the churches here and for Family Support Work made hundreds of pounds for the vital work of both organisations.

Gerry has indeed had an eventful journey through her life, having lived in four different countries, making many friends along the way, and always being someone willing to go the extra mile. What a support she has been to Bill and the family in their journeys together.

The last journey Gerry was to make was to Guildford. After looking at several available houses, and being disappointed, we

went up to 2, Lawn Road, let ourselves into the back garden, and there and then Gerry and Bill decided that this was a house with possibilities. So it was that in January of last year the final move was made.

Sadly this was not to be a move with a long future, as it was not long before Gerry's cancer was diagnosed. Two operations and radiotherapy treatment followed at St. Luke's Centre in Guildford, but after this Gerry and Bill were able to travel to Corfu to visit old friends, and also to have a holiday in America with Bill's brother and his wife. It was while they were in America that Gerry began to feel very unwell, and upon their return to the UK had to go straight to the hospital. The care and support that Gerry has received over these past weeks has been tremendous, and I know that the family are really grateful, as Gerry was.

Gerry was keen for me to tell you that her faith has been very important to her. She was amazed by the peace she felt even when medically things were very difficult. She continued to read her Bible and pray, and heard God talking to her about His love and His care. Did she feel that God had let her down by not giving her healing? No - that thought never crossed her mind. What she did feel was God's presence in everyday things, and she was immensely thankful for the people who cared for her and for those who made the journey to visit her, and she was also surprised at the number of cards that she received. She really did feel very loved.

The journey that Gerry has made will be remembered by us all, for we all have been part of that journey with her. Some of us have been travelling with Gerry for a long time, others for a shorter period. Whatever that time was, you being part of her journey has enriched Gerry's life, as she has enriched ours. She was always eager to learn new things, and to put that learning into practice. And the one thing that really stands out is that she learnt to praise God in every circumstance. On her journey she was able to hold the hand of God, and to lean on Him even when she did not fully understand His ways - and it was her wish that you too, as you continue your own journey, should also place your hand in God's hand, and to know His presence and His love.

This article is an edited version of Anne Poulter's tribute to Geraldine, which she read at the Memorial Service in the UK.

**Man with Van
Removals
Rubbish
Removed**



Neil

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ANIMAL WELFARE

How I fell in love with Dassia

 Helen McKay Katz

Like many high school pupils in England, I was required to read Gerald Durrell's My Family and Other Animals. On many a cold, dreary afternoon in Liverpool I would day-dream about an exotic Greek island with its strange and unfamiliar animal-life and fauna - and of course quaint, white washed villages, blue skies and beaches. As a teenager in the 1970s, I promised myself I would one day tread in Mr. Durrell's footsteps and experience the Corfiot way of life. At the time I would never have thought that it would take 32 years for that day to arrive - but in July 2008 I finally set foot on the Island of Corfu.

I am sure Corfu in 2008 is very different from the Corfu of 1976. Indeed, the Corfu of Gerald Durrell's boyhood is probably vastly different from today. Yet Corfu has still maintained its quaintness, beauty, excellent cuisine and friendly locals - amidst the rise of package tourism and lively resorts. But you may ask, how did I fall so much in love with Dassia?

Well, Dassia was the name I gave to a small, brown stray dog that visited our hotel area every day during my holiday. Underweight, limping, with sorrowful eyes and a docile, friendly disposition, it was as close to love at first sight as you can get! After three days I knew I couldn't leave her to the life of a stray. We are all too familiar with the tragic and often inevitable death that such dogs

suffer. What does a tourist do? With just three days left on Corfu and home now being in Chicago, USA, I felt desperate and heartbroken. That's when the Ark saved both Dassia and me!

The Ark not only fostered Dassia for a few weeks, but arranged for her pet passport and transportation to Chicago, with a restful stopover in Amsterdam with another foster parent. Without The Ark's assistance - particularly that of our Guardian Angel Louisa - I would never have been able to adopt Dassia and give her a new life as Chicago's latest Greek immigrant. Dassia is now a delightful house dog that has brought great joy to our human lives and to the lives of our other two dogs.

So why do I feel it's so important to write to you about this from almost 5,000 miles away? It's because I know without the generous support of your readership, The Ark would be unable to save the lives of many animals just like my Dassia. Whether it's



cash, food, other donations, or providing a foster home for a few days, weeks, or months, your support is critical. Without the generosity of Ark supporters and fosterparents, Dassia's story may have ended tragically. My memories of Corfu will always be warm and happy, but I know that without the Ark my recollections would have been tinged with great sadness. Please join me in supporting the Ark in whatever way you can. It does save lives! As Dassia and I await the snow and bitter cold of the Midwest USA, best wishes to the people and dogs of Corfu! The Ark, Friends of the Animals, Corfu, www.corfuanimalwelfare.com; email: info@corfuanimalwelfare.com

Success for the Ark on World Animal Day

Saturday, 4 October 2008 was a very successful day!!

By kind permission of the Mayor of Corfu Sotiris Micalef, The Ark Animal Welfare Charity were able to mark this Important Day by organising a Car Boot Sale at a shop owned by the Municipality of Corfu in George Theotoki Street in Corfu Town.

We opened from 9am until 3pm and, although it rained very heavily during the morning, we were able to cope with the needs of so many of the good and generous residents of Corfu who came to look/buy and then leave feeling satisfied with their purchases.

We collected 1,500 euros - a wonderful amount which will go towards helping the stray and abandoned animals of Corfu.

It was also a wonderful opportunity to bring the plight of the stray and abandoned animals of Corfu to the attention of the general public; to be able to let people see the proof of how we help with their medical needs; finding good homes, both in Greece and abroad, and generally caring for them all.

The Ark Animal Welfare Charity would like to sincerely thank Mayor MICALEF for his understanding and also each and every person who came to support this wonderful cause on World Animal Day.

Mayor Micalef has promised to allow the Ark the use of a council-owned shop twice yearly to help our cause. Lucy Steele

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Food for free

 Hilary Paipeti

When the first rains of autumn fall, cyclamens and sternbergias appear on wooded banks, and sea squills sprout, bringing colour back to the hillsides. But best of all, wild greens grow.

In these worrying times, when we can't be sure of our financial future, it's great to know that out there in the fields there's a source of food for free. Dandelion and sowthistle, chicory and hartwort, and maybe some chard escaped from a garden, are awaiting harvest, and will continue until the heat of next summer sets in.

Greek cuisine isn't very imaginative with edible wild greens, collectively known as horta. Mostly, they just boil them and serve, drained of most of the cooking juices, with olive oil and lemon juice. Here in Corfu, we 'refry' them in oil with lots of paprika - the famous tigarelli. Plain boiled greens are also excellent with skordalia, tongue-tingling garlic sauce - best when the greens are still warm and the sauce cold. The young leaves of sowthistle make a good salad, just washed well and roughly cut up, then dressed with salt and oil. You could perk this up with some chopped bacon, fried crisp in its own fat. Sprinkle the bacon on the salad, then deglaze the pan with some red wine vinegar, pour it hot on the greens, toss and serve.

In a field near Roda, Effie, everyone's favourite market trader, introduced top chef Rick Stein to Corfu's wild greens when he was on the island filming 'Mediterranean Escapes'. But while the gathering and consumption of the greens looked great on film, instructions on how to cook a plate of boiled weeds was hardly a recipe to inspire readers of the book of the series, nor would such a dish be to many people's taste. So Rick drew together ingredients from the local larder and countryside to compose an innovative dish - baked omelette with wild greens, a great way to use the bounty of the local countryside.

Our regular contributors Pete and Sarah Button own a small olive grove below their house near Arillas. They harvest their olives, but otherwise the grove is just strimmed when the grass grows long in springtime. A quick glimpse during a recent visit was enough to satisfy my horta-trained eye that, even as early as mid-October, there was plenty for picking.

Sowthistle - *zegounas* or *zohios* in Greek - is most common at this time of year since it prefers not to be smothered with other growth. We set off with the mightily sophisticated equipment you need for the job - a small knife and a plastic bag.

There were tender plants around Pete and Sarah's veranda (they like a 'natural' garden), but when we worked our way down to the bottom of their little valley, we found that their state-of-the-art biological sewage disposal system had had a drastic effect on the growth of sowthistle; it seemed that the run-off 'clean' water certainly contained something nourishing, for there was a veritable forest of plants with leaves the length of my arm. In addition, we found a small amount of chicory, and some dandelion and hartwort, as well as a clump of chard.

Straight to the kitchen, and we washed the leaves and cut them up. Ten minutes sautee of leeks and the greens, half an hour in the oven, and - hey presto - food for free in less than an hour!

Here is Rick's recipe for Baked Wild Green Omelette.

3 tablespoons olive oil, 250 gr leeks, 250 gr mixed tender wild 'horta' greens, 8 large eggs, 3 tablespoons chopped dill, 3 tablespoons chopped mint (if available), 175 gr crumbled mild feta, 25 gr grated kefalotiri or Parmesan, salt and black pepper

Trim, clean and thinly slice the leeks. Pick over, wash, dry and shred the greens. Lightly beat the eggs.

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a deep pan, add the leeks and cook gently for 10 minutes until soft. Add the remaining oil and the leaves to the pan and cook for 3-4 minutes until they have wilted down and are just tender.

Tip the greens into a bowl and add the eggs, herbs, cheeses, 1/2 teaspoon salt and some pepper. Oil a 20 cm round non-stick cake tin, pour in the mixture and bake for about 35-45 minutes until just set. Serve with a tomato and onion salad.



**Sarah with
Rick's
omelette,
just baked**

HOW TO PREPARE HORTA Cut the plants at ground level with a little root attached to hold the leaves together - this makes washing easier. At this stage, you save time if you remove any outside leaves that are yellow or wilted, and pick out pieces of grass and other extraneous objects. A full supermarket bag will feed 4-6 depending on what you serve it with. Back in the kitchen, trim the ends of the roots (which are full of flavour - don't cut them off). Dunk all the greens on a large basin or sink of water, swishing them about. Remove and drain the water; repeat at least twice until there is no trace of grit. They are now ready to cook according to the recipe.

An excellent new book will help you identify edible 'weeds'. It's called 'Healthy Greek Food' and is available at the Tourmouzoglou Bookshop at Pinia (Nikiforou Theotoki Street). It contains excellent photographs of the plants and interesting recipes featuring Greece's meat-free cooking.

Corfu: An idyll... or a dump?

 Paul Whyles

The track from Rou to Katavolos provides one of the most breathtaking walks in Corfu. On a fine day, like last week, when I took a stroll with my fiancée Deborah Crompton from our home in Rou, the sun sparkles on the bays of Kalami and Agni cradled by headlands far below, while the surrounding maquis is a scented patchwork of vivid greens. Snakes, lizards and tortoises have graced our path. Buzzards wheel effortlessly overhead. Once, memorably, we were preceded down the road by a hoopoe which kept waiting for us to catch up before flying on and then alighting again. Little wonder, then, that this stretch of road is part of the Corfu Trail for walkers.

But all is not as it seems in this blessed place. If you step to the edge of the road to peer down, as we did last week, to view the green-cloaked hillsides or perhaps to trace the path of a track, a far uglier sight is revealed.

For just a metre from the roadside and hidden from view only by the slope, is a rubbish dump. Rotting soiled mattresses. The carcasses of discarded fridges, their harmful CFC gases long since leaked into the blue skies above. Old car tyres and batteries. Building rubble. An ancient oven. Rusting metal sunbeds and their cushions. Discarded hosepipes. Paint tins, a giant metal drum, corroding tins... and assorted plastic that will take 1,000 years to biodegrade. All dumped without compunction; a stain upon paradise.

And I do not mean a one-off dumping; an aberration for which the perpetrator should feel an eternal weight of lonely guilt. No, as you walk along the road and peer again and again over the edge, it quickly becomes apparent that this is systematic dumping. A befouling of nature on an organised scale. Once one senseless tipping takes place and is left unremoved, it seems, others see it as an invitation to follow suit. A mutually convenient avoidance of conscience takes hold. Sometimes a squalid attempt has been made to hide the evidence with broken-off foliage, now brown and dead. More often, the ugly piles of rotting detritus are a blatant offence against nature, the affronted herbs and shrubs of the hillside left to accommodate the filth at their feet as best they can.

We returned home from our walk no longer exultant at the glory of nature but deeply depressed by the baseness of mankind.

And perplexed. What is it in a man's soul - men's souls - that makes them want to befoul such beauty? And if beauty holds no sway with the perpetrators, then surely economic reality does. For is not Corfu's most precious asset - its only unique asset, some might argue - its wondrous natural beauty?

Is that not what first brought the holidaymakers in the 1960s and thus heralded a period of prosperity for the island? And now, at a time when - after 40 years of easy living for many - the tourists seem to be retreating en masse from Corfu, can it be something



to do with the fact that some on the island care so little for their precious homeland that they besmear it with such guiltless abandon?

Because, sadly, the rubbish dumping high on the mountainside between Katavalos and Rou is not an isolated incident. And to say so is to state nothing new to those who live on this island, or to those who have visited it and wept.

We have long since ceased to wonder at the huge volumes of litter - water bottles, plastic frappe cups and packets, etc, that blight even the remotest of locations. Instead, we sometimes take bags and gloves with us on our walks and retrieve at least a tiny fraction of the sea of litter that surrounds us.

But, more sinisterly, we have seen those same ugly scenes of wholesale dumping near Katavolos reproduced in gullies and ravines on walks in all the island's leading alleged beauty spots.

We are not the type of expats who would seek to impose foreign values on a local way of life. We would not presume. Nor do we wish to involve ourselves in the machinations of local politics, of which we have no real knowledge. But we do value the beauty of nature and we deplore its defilement. And such a view need bow to no barriers of culture or country of origin.

No doubt the opinions expressed here will be dismissed as idealistic or naive. Both cynical arguments for the continuation of the status quo, however unacceptable. There will also be sound arguments for why this appalling situation has evolved: EU iniquities, lack of political will, inadequate legislation and scarcity of funds all spring to mind.

On the other hand, I have seen it eloquently argued by much greater authorities than myself that the people of Corfu are so wrapped up in earning the money that tourism brings, they have no interest in the preservation of the island's natural beauty and fragile ecology. Judging from those islanders we have come to know, we very much hope that this cannot be true of the majority.

If the laws that prohibit dumping cannot be adequately policed, if the perpetrators cannot be persuaded by whatever means to desist, then at least Corfu as a community, as a fabled place of beauty now apparently losing its treasured status in the minds of many, should act rapidly and decisively to eradicate this widespread affront to nature and sensibility. It is time to clean the island up.

Paul Whyles is a journalist at the Mail on Sunday.

Winter Walks

For information, call 6948 889174

SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER **Konstanti Hill and the Dandalo Tower** (2 - 2½ hours **). Meet at Freddo Bar, Acharavi, 10.00 for a 10.30 start. Lunch at Skondros Taverna, Acharavi Beach.

SATURDAY, 8 NOVEMBER **Giannades, Marmaro and the Ropa Valley** (2 - 2½ hours ***). Meet at Marmaro Bridge, 10.30. Lunch TBA.

SATURDAY, 15 NOVEMBER **Stavros Hill** (1½ - 2 hours ***). Meet at Koyevinas Junction on Agii Deka Road, 10.30 for onward car transfer. Lunch TBA.

RATINGS

* very easy

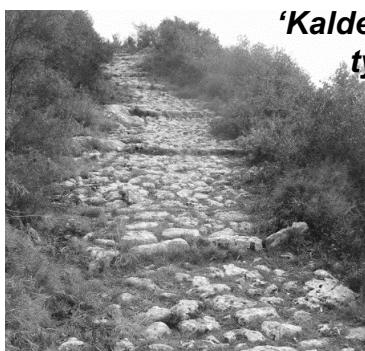
** easy with some climbing

*** moderate, some steep climb

**** difficult with rough terrain

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*'Kalderimi':
typical
stone
path*

SATURDAY, 22 NOVEMBER **St George Beach and Hinterland NEW!** (2½ - 3 hours ***). Meet at Night Owl, Afionas, 10.00 for 10.30 start. Lunch at the Night Owl.

SATURDAY, 29 NOVEMBER **Loutses Caves** (2 hours ***). Meet at Anapaftiria Junction, 10.30. Lunch at Foros Taverna, Old Perithia.

SATURDAY, 6 DECEMBER **Lakones Footpaths** (2 hours ***). Meet at Alipa Junction, 10.30. Lunch at Doukades.

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FEATURE

The Invasion of Captain Smugposh and his Crew of Toffs *More Badly Behaved Brits*

✉ Sarah Button

I got a bit of stick for my last article when I had a whinge about badly behaved holidaymakers and was accused of being rather ‘stuck up’. Yes, I agree I did sound snobbish, but I want to defend myself. You see, I’m not that kind of ‘snob’ - for me it is not a class issue, I’m only snobbish when it comes to offensive behaviour. All sorts of folk are capable of displaying odious manners and being loud and leery, so let me tell you about this rabble of what John Cleese would have labelled ‘Upper Class Twits’.

My husband Pete and I had moored Tighmara, our sailing boat, against the quayside at Petriti. We were enjoying a glass of wine whilst watching the comings and goings of the fishing boats, when a chartered yacht came motoring in to the harbour. At the helm, a middle-aged man wearing a blue T-shirt with ‘Skipper’ emblazoned on the back. Always ready to take a line and help other sailors moor up, we leapt ashore to catch their lines. But the Skipper wasn’t quite ready for us and yelled, ‘I say old chap, where am I?’

Pete and I looked at each other with a certain amount of incredulity. Was it some sort of existentialist joke or was this guy, in charge of a 42ft 150,000 euro yacht, seriously unable to identify his surroundings?

Pete plumped for the latter; ‘Petriti!’ he shouted.

‘Oh am I? Oh, how super!’ chortled the Skipper.

At this point the rest of the crew emerged on deck: five of them, and all wearing matching blue T-shirts. The guys’ read; ‘Admiral’ and ‘First Mate’ and the women’s; ‘Cabin boy’, ‘Chief Cook and Bottle Washer’ and ‘Deck Hand’. Flying from the mast, the flag of a rightwing organisation (I won’t go into detail here for fear of being sunk in reprisal, but this kind of flag waving is far more offensive to me than Union Jack shorts, never mind the swastika tattoos and slogans that say ‘Kill’.)

Anyway, as good seamen do we helped them tie up, but they hadn’t got a clue - the boat was all over the place. There was shouting and confusion from the ‘chaps’ and guffaws and hysterical squeals from the ‘girls’, who thought the whole drama ‘Terribly Exciting’. I was glad it wasn’t my property that was being treated with all the frivolity of a cheap toy.

Overwhelmed by the assistance we gave this haughty crew we were presented with gin and tonics; very large ones. Pete sipped his and was clearly impressed with the gin to tonic ratio, but just as I was about to sip mine we noticed four other boats heading into the harbour; all were displaying the same provocative flag. We had been invaded by an army of Hooray Henrys and Henriettes of the worst kind.

The trouble with being tied up on a harbour wall is that your neighbours are within earshot of a mere whisper, and talking quietly when ‘parked’ next to one another is plain good manners. Well, to most civilised yachties is it. Not so this mob. We were treated to loud opinions on how the government should deal with miscreant youth (which would have embarrassed Oswald Mosley), and on how the Credit Crunch was seriously hindering the purchase of cashmere sweaters.

Then we had to watch a cringingly patronising photo session. The Cabin Boy set out to find the ‘craggiest faced fisherman with the fewest number of teeth’. She wasted no time in reeling in a local chap forcing him to pose next to her in a rather awkward pose. The Cabin Boy’s neat coiffure and manicure had the

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desired effect, contrasting starkly with the sun creased skin and diesel spattered dungarees of her catch. The Admiral, holding the camera, persuaded her to place an arm around the diminutive septuagenarian whose rheumy eyes conveyed some confusion at the attention he was receiving. I thought he looked rather scared. The Cabin Boy broke the ice, smiled sweetly and asked his name; 'Spiro!' he shouted proudly.

'They're all called Spiro here darling, they have no imagination,' whispered the Chief Cook and Bottle Washer to the First Mate as they both burst into fit of giggles. Poor old Spiro who having done his duty was not offered a gin and tonic; instead he was thrown a can of beer in a manner that one might throw coins into a beggars bowl.

Later, as the Blue T-Shirts loudly quaffed their way through yet another bottle of gin, we heard them planning their invasion of Paxos. 'Do you think we'll get a decent bottle of Chablis there, or will we have to slum it with ouzo?' the Cabin Boy asked the Skipper. Poor Paxos.

I am more irritated and offended by these so called 'Posh' people than any of the bare bellied larger louts I was having a moan about last month. Decent behaviour is all down to respect. Something it seems, many holidaying Brits just don't have.

POST SCRIPT ON PETRITI

If you arrive at Petriti harbour early in the morning you can watch the fishermen land their catch; it's a spectacular scene as fish are sorted in trays of ice and hurriedly dispatched to waiting traders. Once the loaded vans have left, the fisherman display a few crates of mixed sea food and you can pick up a bargain. We bought half kilo of the best for five euros, and the fisherman threw in a squid for free. On our way back to the boat we proudly showed our catch to the Cabin Boy who squealed, 'Golly, I paid 20 euro for one like that in a restaurant the other night!'

Later, we cooked our fish in stock with potatoes, lemon juice and oregano, 'Bianco' style - a simple dish that with the right ingredients (and some good local wine) is always restaurant quality.

Petriti is without doubt one of our favourite Corfiot stopovers and a place where we can indulge in some of the best sea food on the island. Not only can you trough out on recently landed sea bream, but many of the tavernas offer marinated anchovies. These are freshly prepared and melt in your mouth. My favourite.

Petriti is a place worth visiting soon as I don't think it will be long before the recently surfaced road from Messongi opens up the hitherto relatively isolated village to development.

Eating out in Winter

Rouvas Restaurant - 13, Stamatios Desyllas Street, Corfu Town Phone: 26610 31182

'Lunches don't get much better,' commented Rick Stein of a feast at Rouvas. Choose direct from pots on the range - try boiled greens, fish with garlic sauce, or Rick's favourite, Rabbit Stifado. Lunch only.

The Night Owl - Afionas

Phone: 26630 51314

Housed in an old coffee bar retaining its original atmosphere, the Night Owl serves delicious charcoal grills. Enjoy souvlaki and salad with retsina. Open Thursday to Sunday for food.

Chryssi Taverna - 44, Sevastianou Street, Corfu Town

Phone: 26610 46175

One of Corfu's oldest, Chryssi Taverna cooks the local way. There's no menu - you choose from a selection of yummy casserole dishes.

Corfu Sailing Club - Mandraki, Old Fortress, Corfu Town

Phone: 26610 38763

Not exclusively for members, this restaurant occupies the sea wall amongst yacht moorings. The French-trained chef presents local and international

Boileau Bistro - Kontokali Village Road, near the church

Phone: 26610 90069

A 'surf and turf' venue with superb mussels, and steaks done just as you order. Alex's original menu includes pork fillet stuffed with prunes and raisins, and chicken fillet stuffed with walnuts and figs, both in cream sauce. Open all year.

Stamatis Taverna - Strinilas

Phone: 26630 72384

The best egg and chips on the island (from Stamatis' mum's own hens and potato patch), accompanied by feta cheese from local mountain-grazed sheep, make a meal at this simple taverna a real treat.

Paxinos Restaurant - Old Village, Benitses

Phone: 26610 72339

Locals' favourite for fresh-caught fish, but also famous for tsigarelli - sauteed wild greens with curry-hot paprika. Try tongue-tinging skordalia (garlic sauce) with still-warm boiled beetroot and chard, melting lamb fricassee with lemon sauce, or spicy bourdetto (fish stew).

Spiros Grill Room - Tzavros Crossroads, Paleokastritsa Highway

Phone: 26610 91410

Locals' favourite for eat-in charcoal-grills or takeaways. A generous mixed-meat platter for four will cost around 20 euros.

Rex Restaurant - 66, Ioannis Kapodistrias Street, Corfu Town

Phone: 26610 39649

Behind the famous Liston, Rex is a favourite with Corfu Town's bourgeoisie. An extensive menu presents local and Greek classics, plus 'nouveau' dishes like Chicken with Kumquat Sauce, enjoyed amid retro decor in a fine Venetian building.

FEATURE

Buddha teaches Great Compassion

 Maureen McNamara

Great compassion is a mind-state that truly wishes to free all living beings from their suffering.

Every living being, from the tiniest insect up, seeks happiness - food and water, shelter and freedom from fear - but doesn't know how or where to find it.

We humans think we can be happy by improving our external conditions, but as we acquire more, we desire more - and are rarely satisfied. When we think we are happy it is only temporary. Something always spoils it: the wonderful new partner becomes an enemy; the house - car - computer develops problems; the weather doesn't suit us. We blame the government, the doctor, our teachers, friends and family for our increasing problems, not realising that it is our deluded expectations that need to change, and that happiness and peace only come from within.

We try to change everything and everybody to suit ourselves. If we come across rough ground, do we cover the ground with leather, or wear shoes?

Realising how we constantly suffer, it follows that other beings suffer likewise, and as we contemplate their suffering and mental pain, their lack of freedom, we need to empathise with them and feel their pain as we do our own.

As Buddhists, we believe in re-incarnation; therefore, these beings must suffer not just in one lifetime but over and over again. So, we should feel equal compassion for all, including those who are creating the causes of suffering. This is difficult; our first reaction upon hearing about a murderer or paedophile is anger and disgust. But if we believe in Karma - the law of cause and effect - we understand that these people will experience immense suffering in a future life, and instead of judging their punishment in this life as 'Good! They deserve it!' we should develop compassion for them.

My first understanding of this happened many years ago in England. I had a beautiful Arab horse who was my best friend and almost constant companion. I had made plans to bring him here to Corfu, but one day he seemed a bit sluggish. I noticed a man throwing garden waste over the fence into the field. When I questioned him, he assured me that it contained nothing dangerous to horses; he said his daughter had been a horsewoman, and he knew all about their upkeep and welfare.

The next day, Chang was obviously very unwell. On calling the vet, I found out that he had a twisted gut caused by colic, and would have to be put down. We investigated the 'rubbish' and it contained honeysuckle - toxic to horses.

I was distraught, and cried almost non-stop for six months, hardly leaving the house. I hated that man so much that if someone had offered to kill him on my behalf I would have agreed.

Then, one day, I considered how he would suffer for this dreadful act, and this led me to think of all the other countless people who kill day after day - soldiers, slaughtermen, fishermen, even ordinary people swatting insects or poisoning rats - and how they will suffer for their actions. I now can feel compassion for them also.

We can develop these feelings for people who do not appear to suffer, too. The privileged, who have every material comfort but absolutely no belief in anything spiritual. They may enjoy a 'good life' now, but they will go out as they came in, without any progress towards higher status.

Contemplating all these points repeatedly, we can easily see how every living being, whatever its circumstance, is a suitable object for our compassion.

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DASSIA (Central) Studio and apartment complex in need of upgrading. 13 bedrooms. Very quiet rural location near resort. Large garden with room for pool. 260,000 euro

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See page 2 for contact details.

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British dishes for cool evenings

A UK survey has revealed that the British are rejecting traditional dishes in favour of foreign foods. Classic dishes such as toad in the hole, bubble and squeak and hot pots are disappearing from the family dinner table, since cooks say that British dishes take too long to prepare, whereas foreign foods are 'quick fixes'.

But now the evenings are chillier and the nights longer, British dishes provide warmth and comfort. Try them - they're not so hard!

Bubble & Squeak

Named for the bubble of the potatoes while they are boiling, and the squeak of the cabbage as it fries! At my boarding school, this was our evening meal every Sunday; it contained all the leftovers (and probably plate scrapings too) from breakfast (bacon) and lunch (roast lamb, roast potatoes and boiled cabbage), refried together in grease. Made from scratch, though, or from high quality leftovers, it can be very good.

450 gr unpeeled potatoes, salt and pepper, 70 gr butter, 250 gr shredded cabbage, 3 tablespoons water, 3 tablespoons oil, 1 chopped onion

Cook the potatoes for 25 minutes in a pan of lightly salted boiling water, then drain, peel and dice. Place them in a bowl with all but a knob of the butter and mash until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Meanwhile, place the cabbage, water and remaining butter in a large heavy based saucepan and cover. Cook gently for 10 minutes, or until tender. Mix the cabbage and mashed potato together and season with more salt and pepper.

Heat half the oil in a frying pan. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the potato and cabbage mixture and press down with the back of a wooden spoon to make a flat, even cake.

Cook over a medium heat for 15 minutes until golden brown on the underside and place on a large plate. Add the remaining oil and cook again on the other side for 10 minutes.

Transfer to a plate, cut into wedges and serve.

Instead of cooking from scratch, you can make this from leftovers. Use cold roast potatoes, cut into very small pieces. Leftover brussel sprouts can be used - chop finely and saute briefly in butter before mixing with the potatoes. Approximately half the weight of greens to the weight of potatoes is a good guide for quantity.

Liver and Onions

1 kilo sliced beef liver, 1-2 cups milk, butter, 2 large onions (sliced into rings), plain flour as needed, salt and pepper

Gently rinse the liver slices under cold water and place in a medium bowl. Pour in enough milk to cover. Let this stand while preparing the onions, up to an hour or two. This elimi-

nates the bitter taste of the liver.

Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Separate the onion rings, and saute them in butter until soft. Remove and melt the remaining butter in the pan. Season the flour with salt and pepper, and put it in a shallow dish or on a plate. Drain the milk from liver, and coat the slices in the flour mixture.

When the butter has melted, turn the heat up to medium-high, and place the floured liver slices in the pan. Cook until nice and brown on one side. Turn, and cook on the other side until browned. Add the onions, and reduce the heat to medium. Cook a bit longer to taste, preferably leaving it slightly pink in the middle.

Faggots with Onion Gravy

Most faggots are made using pig's cawl to hold them together and baste them - but try ordering that from a local butcher! Basically, it's a meatball made mainly with offal; in this version, the pork belly does the basting and the breadcrumbs do the holding.

25 gr unsalted butter, 1 medium finely chopped onion, 175 gr pig's liver, 2 lamb hearts (trimmed and cut into chunks), 450 gr belly of pork, 1/2 teaspoon allspice, 4 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley, 1 teaspoon freshly chopped sage, 1 beaten egg, salt and freshly ground pepper, 115 gr fresh white bread crumbs, 3 tablespoon olive oil

For the gravy: *4 red onions (peeled and each onion cut into 8 wedges), 4 sprigs of fresh thyme, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 900 ml fresh unsalted beef stock, 290 ml pint red wine, salt and freshly ground black pepper*

Trim and chop the heart. Trim and derind the pork belly. Cut the liver in pieces. Mince them finely in the food processor (or ask your butcher to do this). Mix them all well.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan and add the onions. Cook until soft and transparent. Cool slightly.

Add the cooled chopped onions, spices, herbs, egg and seasonings, and stir in the breadcrumbs. Using your hands, shape the mixture into 12 patties. Place on a plate and chill for about an hour.

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. For the gravy, place the onion wedges into a large roasting pan or ovenproof dish. Add the thyme and drizzle over the olive oil. Place in the oven and roast uncovered for 40 minutes until the onions are caramelised. Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large frying pan. Fry the faggots until golden brown on both sides.

Place the stock and wine in a small saucepan, bring to the boil and reduce by a third. Season to taste.

Remove the pan from the oven and place the faggots on top of the roasted onions. Pour over the gravy liqueur. Reduce the oven temperature to 180C/350F/Gas 4 and cook the faggots for 40 minutes.

Place two to three faggots onto a plate. Top with a spoonful of the onions and pour over the gravy. Serve with mashed potatoes and green vegetables.

Oxtail Soup

1 oxtail, flour, olive oil, 1 large onion, 2 large glasses red wine, 1 litre water, 1 large carrot, 1 celery stick, 1 tablespoon tomato paste, small bunch parsley, a few sprigs of thyme, 1 bay leaf, 3 cloves, 1/2 litre strong beef stock (preferably homemade but you can use a cube), Worcester sauce, salt and freshly ground black pepper

Buy the oxtail whole and joint it, yourself if possible (local butchers will chop it with a cleaver, and splinters of bone will fall off in the cooking). Wash, dry and toss in seasoned flour. Heat oil in a large casserole and fry the oxtails until browned all over. Add the chopped onion and continue frying until lightly browned. Throw in the red wine and allow to bubble, scraping up any sticky bits from the base of the pan with a wooden spoon. Add the water and bring to the boil. Simmer for two hours, skimming off any scum regularly. Remove from the heat and cool overnight.

Cottage Pie

Olive oil, 1 large onion, 1 large clove garlic, 500 gr lean minced beef, 1 heaped tablespoon tomato puree, 1 tablespoon plain flour, 1 beef stock cube dissolved in 1/2 pint water, 1 tablespoon Worcester sauce, 1 bay leaf, 2 sprigs thyme, black pepper

For the mash: 1 kilo potatoes, 100 ml milk, 75 gr butter, grated cheese (cheddar or graviera)

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan. Chop the onion and fry gently until soft. Crush the garlic and add to the pan, frying a minutes more. Turn up the heat and add the mince, breaking up the lumps with a fork until it is evenly browned. Add the stock little by little, deglazing the pan at the same time, tomato puree, flour, Worcester sauce, herbs and pepper (it may not need additional salt). Leave to simmer gently for about 30 minutes until thickened. You can prepare it in advance - see note below.

Meanwhile, peel the potatoes and cut as for boiling. Boil until ready, then drain very well and mash with hot milk and butter until completely pureed.

Put the mince mixture into a large oven-proof dish and place the mash on top. Fluff up the mash with a fork and sprinkle with cheese (you don't need a lot - it's just to help it to brown, or omit altogether if you have cheese-haters in the family). Place in a hot oven for about 15 minutes or until the mince is bubbling and the top golden. If you've JUST cooked the mince and not prepared it in advance, you need only put it under the grill until the top browns.

Next day, remove the fat from the surface (mix it into your dog's or cat's food; they'll love it!). Add the stock, tomato puree, carrot and celery roughly chopped, and the bay leaf and cloves, and simmer for another hour or two until the meat is falling off the bone.

Remove the oxtail joints and extract the meat. Chop finely, removing any gristle. Press the remainder through a sieve into a large bowl, pushing through as much of the vegetables as you can. Put this back into the rinsed out pan. If you have got one of those stick blenders that are so useful, give it a whizz - this will help it all hold together in a velvety puree. Add the chopped up meat and a good splash of Worcester sauce, return to the heat, and check seasoning. If you like the soup thick, mix a tablespoon of flour with some of the liquid, return it to the pan and simmer for five minutes, whilst stirring. Serve very hot with some robust village bread and a plate of Swiss cheese.

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10 Key Things to Look For in a Good Web Designer

When you are investing in a new or newly refurbished website you need to find a company to get that website up and running. This means more than simple design. You also need someone who can help you conceive and write copy; plan functional site structure; get a domain registered; upload files; set up email accounts; and deal with other technical details. Below are ten things to look for when choosing such a company.

EXPERIENCE You will need someone with all the techniques, tools and tricks that will help you prepare your web site and accomplish your online goals. Ask all prospects for a portfolio and find out how many years of experience each one has.

CUSTOMER SERVICE As important as experience is a mindset and attitude of making customer service a priority. If a designer/developer is too busy to answer e-mails or phone calls, will they be able to keep the production schedule? Ask for references, and make a point of actually calling them. Ask the prospect's previous clients if the web developer was responsive, on time and effective.

ORIGINAL COPY AND DESIGN Creating professional and 100% original web graphics separates the men from the boys every time. Anyone can do some quick copy writing and slap it on a page with some pictures and hyperlinks. On the other hand, a talented and veteran designer will demonstrate knowledge of page layout, have a way with colour and know how to place elements on a page for best appearance and web site performance.

CREATIVITY You need to decide right away (before you even start talking to designers) just how much the designer you find will be involved in the conceptual process. Your designer may need to help you with some of the "big picture" questions, such as marketing, web copy writing (for search engines) and how to generate traffic. You want someone creative, but who can also work with your ideas to bring them to fruition.

MARKETING EXPERIENCE The easiest way to find out if your prospective web designers are good at marketing web sites is to view their website and their portfolio. You'll want to ensure that you can find what you're looking for on their site quickly and easily and that you can do the same on some of the sites in their portfolio.

COST For a full picture of all the costs involved in the project, ask for all the costs to be broken out individually - domain name and hosting, graphic design work, marketing fees and web development matters. You may need to place a deposit if the job is large enough, and you should have all payment terms worked out before work starts. Get every detail in writing, including deadlines and how many revisions are included.

JOB TIMELINE After you ask the developers how long the process will take, make a point of asking references if their project was, in fact, completed on time.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS Don't hire anyone who insists on speaking to you in "computer-ese" or won't explain unknown terminology. You have to communicate with this person about things that are important to your business, so you need to be clear at all times.

FULL SERVICE There may be one or two things that your designer/developer cannot do and will have to buy in from a third-party, but for the most part you should be able to find a reasonably-priced professional who can handle just about everything.

AVAILABILITY Are these prospects full-time web professionals? Or are they moonlighting from some other job, even a completely unrelated one?

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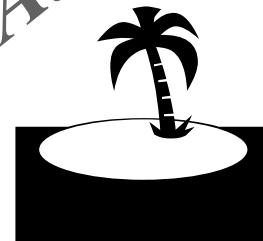
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