From: James Pinkass <james@kythera-family.net>
Reply-To: administrator@kythera-family.net
Date: 05 Mar 2012 13:08:54 GMT+00:00
An: <kvartalier@kythera-family.net>
* 7 Antalyas, 660 65

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your island's heritage online

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Dear Friends of Kythera,

Spring has arrived in Europe and the island is preparing for the tourist season. I'm on my way to Kythera now to prepare our summer holidays there by finishing the house we've been working on for the past 7 months. Except for the ubiquitous horse-flies and the still-cold Mediterranean, May is perhaps the best month on Kythera: not too hot, still green and covered in flowers, and the islanders glad to be out of their cases at last.

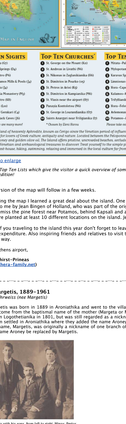
There have been dozens of great new entries on Kythera-Family.net over the past few months – a couple are presented in shortened form below. It's worth visiting the site regularly to see what's new – you can see them easily by clicking on the "newest entries" link in the navigation. And if you're planning to put some of your family history on the site to share with the rest of the community but lack the technical confidence to do it alone, ask a junior relative to help you or, failing that, I'd be glad to lend a hand.

In my last newsletter I reported the progress of the book of aerial pictures of Kythera I am doing with the visionary leaders of the Kythera World Heritage Fund, who were enthusiastic about the project and have contributed a lot of ideas to it. I'm now in the middle of the book, which is a lot harder than I thought it would be when I first had the idea. This week I'm stuck in the middle of planning the book I realised that we needed a map showing where the book and so I've spent the last few weeks working on that as well. I've included a list of the 10 "best" sights, walks, and with the help of Kythera history expert Eleni Harou, 10 of the most beautiful and interesting churches on the island.

After putting so much work into it I thought it would be a shame only to use it for the book, so I've arranged for it to be printed in Athens at the end of this month. The idea is to distribute it free to anyone who has ever been on the island, but to hiking clubs and other groups in Europe and beyond who might not be aware of the beauties of Kythera. As usual, the target group isn't the average summer tourists, but people who will fill the island's hotels and restaurants in the Spring and Autumn.

It isn't the most detailed map of Kythera – there is an old army map which takes that prize and the excellent SEAS map of Kythera identifies many more dirt roads and churches, so seasoned hikers can always stick to that one. Some omissions in my map are intentional: there are over 100 churches on the island and to depict them all would overload the map, so there are only a couple of them chosen for their importance or position. The same goes for the dirt roads – many are shown but by no means all. If you click on the small version of the map below you can view a larger picture of it online. And if you want the full-blown version you can either pick it up on the island during your holiday or I can send it to you for the cost of postage and handling – details on how to do that in the next newsletter – or download it as a pdf here and print it out yourself locally in any size that suits you. Don't forget to send the map link to friends who might be interested in our island and travel agents who can recommend it.

Click here to enlarge
Left: Front cover of the folded map *Right: Unfolded the map is 50 x 70cm*



Click here to enlarge

Above: The Top Ten Lists which give the visitor a quick overview of some of the best things to do and see on Kythera. Send me your your "top ten" lists so we can make a "top 20" list in the next edition!

A Greek version of the map will follow in a few weeks.

While creating the map I learned a great deal about the island. One of the most interesting things were details regarding the reforestation of the island which was explained to me by Yiorgos Bengas of Holland, who was part of the original team and who has spent much time on the island since the 1960s when the reforestation began. It's hard to miss the pine forest near Potamos, behind Kapsali and around Cerakari if you've ever been up that way. What I didn't know was that over a million trees were planted over approximately at least 10 different locations on the island. Jean wrote a short history of the project and I've included it below as a separate article. Thanks Jean!

For those of you travelling to the island this year don't forget to leave as many purchases (and even functions!) as possible until you get to Kythera so the island can profit from your expenditure. Also inspiring friends and relatives to visit the island helps keep shops open and Kytherians employed. Times are tough in Greece and we can all help in this way.

Best from Athens airport,

James Dewhirst-Pinkass
(James@kythera-family.net)

Bretos Margetis, 1889-1961
by Vasilia Ulrweiss (nee Margetis)

Bretos Margetis was born in 1889 in Aroniathika and went to the village school with his brothers and sisters and was a keen student. Of interest is the origin of the surname. It appears to come from the baptismal name of the mother (Margeta or Marieta), but was used as a nickname in the beginning but appears for the first time in the parish register of Kythera in the year 1821 as a family name. The family name Margetis is very common in the parish of Aroniathika and there are many families with the surname Margetis in two of villages!

Bretos married Eleni Kosmas in Aroniathika where they added the name Arizeva in order to register their origin. A century later it made an appearance in China. It appears that the present day family name, Margetis, was originally a nickname of one branch of the large family Arizeva of Aroniathika, but it was decided by the Prefects of Argostolio and Corinthian, that the family name Arizeva be replaced by Margetis.

George Margetis with his sons from left to right: Nikos, Bretos and,Zoe, taken in Vienna, about 1940

Life on the land was very hard, so their father decided that the boys had to seek a better life elsewhere, and chose Australia as they had relatives there who would be able to help them.

Bretos was the first to go and arrived in Sydney on the 1st of December 1903 on the ship Orsolina. He stayed with an Uncle and went to school, and learnt English quickly by reading the local newspaper and having a dictionary beside him to look up words he didn't understand. He was a good student and did well, even with his language difficulties. When he left school he helped his uncle in his business and managed to save money to send home to his family in Kythera. He continued saving as much as he could and by the time he was 21 years old he had enough to open a fruit restaurant. He then became active in the Kytherian Association, and was one of the founding members of the committee, and was the Secretary 1924-1926.

Bretos opened a restaurant at 617 George St Sydney with white tablecloths on the tables and red velvet covered chairs. It was an "up-market" restaurant and served three course meals for one and half shillings, which was expensive for those times. It is interesting to note that the shop was opened three years before the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built! Bretos was a very shrewd businessman and he added the name Arizeva in order to register their origin. A century later it made an appearance in China. It appears that the present day family name, Margetis, was originally a nickname of one branch of the large family Arizeva of Aroniathika, but it was decided by the Prefects of Argostolio and Corinthian, that the family name Arizeva be replaced by Margetis.

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He developed a thriving business, especially opera,and took singing lessons with a Mrs Cressswell who taught him many songs from operas, but his favourite was "La Donna Mobile" which he sang with great gusto at friend's parties. Through this interest he met Theodora Lianos who was also a music lover, and had learnt to play the piano quite well, and soon there were wedding bells in the air and they married at the Agia Trathia in Surry Hills.

Dad had also bought two "picture shows" in Fairfield and while he took care of the business in town, Mum travelled to Fairfield to manage the businesses out there. It was in Fairfield that Dad became involved in his long passion for cricket and in 1925 was asked by the Fairfield Cricket Club to be their Vice-President, which he accepted with pleasure.

This was at the time of the depression and things were not going well in Australia and the rest of the world, and Dad had to close the restaurant at first, and later the Picture Shows, and so lost everything. But he was the eternal optimist, and always believed that when one door closed another one opened. Then Dad was offered a job in Canberra with Harry Holateo and went there to try his luck.

When they arrived, Dad met many men who were customers, who came to say goodbye to him when they leaving for service in Europe and some kept in touch by letters. When the war started, Dad joined Dunmore Military College, would ring to say they were coming in the evening for a meal. Even though it was after hours in Canberra, Dad served them with a meal and they would sit around the table and laughed and talked so Dad while he cooked them steak and eggs on the fuel stove there.
continued at www.kythera-family.net/megaria/

by Vasilia Ulrweiss (nee Margetis)

Read the rest of this wonderful entry at
www.kythera-family.net/megaria

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2 Houses for Sale between Potamos and Karavas

Karithianika (near Karavas)
Home with Spectacular Views for only €150 000!

The house is the perfect holiday home or investment for anyone who likes a fantastic view from a comfortable house with an established garden on a quiet road in the village of Karavas (and it's famous bakery) is only 3 minutes walk away, the village of Potamos with supermarkets and cafés, The beaches at Platiges and Plaka Kontras are about 12 minutes drive. View Details

View more pictures and details here:
http://www.kythera-family.net/index.php?mas=214-216&cid=150&did=2004&page0num=1

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1. Karithianika
(near Karavas)
Gorgeous farm house with stunning sea views

€425,000

Lovingly restored farm house of approximately 200 square meters set in approximately 1.5 acres (1.5 stremma). Fantastic large country kitchen with wood burning oven. Stone floors.
http://greekislandforsale.kythera.weebly.com/

KYTHERIAN MEMORIES CONTINUE. THEN AND NOW.

by Maria of Louradianika

As yet another month arrives, my memories do not fade of my Kytherian life, the good, the bad and the happy times.

Memories are a treasure which cannot be taken from us, as each month, my life is once more opened for all to share. My memories of Kythera are amongst the most precious of my life. The time spent with family, my grandparents, so sense, his words still so clear in my mind, as I thank him for his wisdom which has allowed me to learn from my many mistakes in life, yet also, how to pick myself up, shake myself off, and continue, knowing that yet another valuable lesson has been learned. I will forever be grateful to this shepherd man who I adored, and spent hours upon hours listening to his stories, and I will be reunited with him, when my time comes to be tied to rest in my family tomb.

How many quaint and interesting lessons were learned. One in particular I use to this very day. The tying of the knot. This goes back in my family for centuries, handed down from mother to daughter, a tradition that I have taken as to how it works, but, I assure one and all, it does.

My mother taught me from a very young age that when an item was lost or misplaced, I should take a handkerchief, tie a knot in one corner, speaking certain words as I do this, speaking of the lost item. No matter how many times I have searched, when the knot is tied, the missing item is always recovered. How many times have I searched in the same place, yet, with no results, but with the magic of the "knot" it miraculously appears. My husband comes to me so often, beside himself, losing his precious car keys usually, asking me to use the magic. Of course I do, and behold, there it is.

Or when family visited from Brisbane for Easter. Having had such an incredible day, breaking the red eggs, saying "Christos Anesti" then, as they prepared to leave, my beloved grandmother would say to me, "Go to the kitchen, take a knife, cut a piece of bread, place it in your pocket, and they will return to Kythera". Of course, I would do as I was told. The words must be recited in Greek, and when the item is found, the knot must be untied. How relieved I was. A dozen people searching, but I knew the knot would save the day.

Another year has passed, and another birthday celebrated, as I shudder as I think of this, yet I find that I am rewriting more and more each day to my older Greek ways.

When I hear of my wonderful spinach pie called "Spanakopita" I think of it as "Kalitsouni". How does it not lose its wonderful flavour, no matter how many years pass? In Kythera, the word "Kalitsouni" is used for a pie made with cheese, and I have to think twice when I make it, as I have to think twice when I make a "Kalitsouni" when I am making pies of any kind. Although the special cheese though, the "alfalitsa" which I recall my mother and my grandmothers using to somehow get this precious cheese through customs, and how I enjoyed it, although it was given in small pieces, as when it was finished, there would be no more.

Still clinging to the old word of "rogio" instead of bucket, or "koava" makes me feel the bond that will never change bring me such comfort, a simple word, but so meaningful for me.

Many changes seem to be happening in Kythera. Suddenly I hear or read of neighbourhoods, or villages. Louradianika was and always be a village, founded by my great-great grandfather, with only the Louradianika family living there. A tiny village, but so special.

Seeing in the latter Kythera the new sector field at Livadi brings such memories back to me. My son would be invited by the few young people on the island to play soccer at what was just a piece of dirt really, but where laughter rang out as the youth played and enjoyed themselves, and now, I see this piece of land transformed into something so special, makes me swell with pride. Well done! How wonderful to see such wonderful plates, marking one once more to years return, as such changes are made.

When I last went to Kythera, there was still the stigma of the "kou Thimo" louter parts of Kythera and "mesa Thimo". The inner parts of our island. Just a few steps could take one from one to the other, but, the stigma was there. Now, I see that the stigma has gone, the locals as strangers, even within the island marriages were frowned upon with the outer and inner parts of our tiny island, although seeing maps now, it does not seem so tiny.

Times have changed though, and not only do the outer and inner now mix, they marry, and marriage outside of the Kytherian/Greek population is fully accepted, such are some changes, all for the better of our treasured homeland.

I myself grew up not permitted to speak English in the family home, suffering greatly when I attended school, punished by a teacher, accused of being disobedient and disrespectful for not speaking English, but I was just a child, not knowing any other language.

Recently, I learned that my cousin by marriage who purchased the paternal family home in Kato Livadi has spent many thousands of euros, laying a sealed road to the cemetery situated at the foot of Kato Livadi, where he had buried his youngest son, who was taken tragically at the age of just 24 years without warning, destroying it and passing in just 2 weeks. His sorrow was so deep that he would not visit his son's grave. My paternal grandparents, my grandfather, a Greek Orthodox priest are also buried there as are other family members, but it was difficult to access the cemetery. How wonderful to hear that my cousin had spent such a large amount of money to lay the road, and now visits his son's grave on a regular basis. It took many years for him to save the money, working his fields from sunrise to sunset, to enable him to achieve this wish. How it warms my heart to think that finally he has found peace and acceptance.

There will be many changes as our fellow Kytherians visit Kythera on their yearly pilgrimage each year to spend the summer months, but the small isolated and deserted monasteries I visited as a child, now with the gates locked, deserted, will always remain as part of the Kythera of old.

I will, God willing, return to Kythera when God calls me into his care, and my heart is filled with peace and happiness as I think of this day.

As I end yet another memory filled article, I must apologise to my dear Petro (Paul) Coumanis. As he pointed out to me, his mother had a cockatoo which would screech his name "Pedro" and this made him feel as if he was a Mexican and not a Greek. I mistakenly misspelt his name, receiving a phone call, telling me of the story of the cockatoo. I am sorry my dear, dear and precious friend. I will not only visit Paul, otherwise I may suffer another punch on my arm.

With this little bit of humour, I finish once more a time when I lose myself in my memories of days long past and days now forging a new Kythera.

Such changes must happen and I for one will always support whatever changes will benefit our island, as it will always be home for me. The Aphrodite Museum will make such a landmark, bringing tourism to our island to benefit our people who work so hard and needing more acknowledgement, as they go about their daily work in silence, such a proud people who deserve our support in every way.

Maria Whyte
4 Trinity Crescent
Sippy Downs
Queensland 4556
maria.whyte@bigpond.com

Good Kytherian Habits = Environmental Intelligence

We all know and are proud of the Kytherian virtue of "Thrift". Some of you may have indeed profited from your parents and grandparents frugality which enabled them to educate their children well and sometimes buy property which is a great asset.

Often when you try to do something which is environmentally friendly – like buying "green" products or organic foodstuffs – it ends up costing more. But would be more environmentally friendly if we could all adopt the Kytherian virtue of thrift. Unfortunately, the Kytherian virtue of thrift has been lost in the rush to the Western ideal of a consumer developed nation and life less electrically (which is easy to do if you know how – see below), then dozens of power stations can be shut down across the world. Here's how to take lots of advantage:

1. Cook for low-energy appliances when you need to replace old ones: light-bulbs, washing machines, television etc.
2. Get thermostat panels to heat your water. They've been around for decades, make financial sense, are reliable and make a long-hot showers cheap and less polluting!
3. Don't overheat or undercool your house: use you air-conditioning and heating systems sparingly and sensibly.
4. Use solar-heated water and stereo systems to a power-boost and turn it off every night when you go to bed. Standby power uses ridiculous amounts of energy when considered nationally and globally.
5. Only boil as much water as you need in your electric kettle. Heating and cooling are two of the biggest power users in the home!
6. Turn off the lights when you leave a room, even if you think you will return in a few minutes.

Don't forget, most of us live in greater luxury than even a king or queen did 100 years ago. Our central heating and air-conditioning, flick-on lights, choice of cuisines, entertainment and transport are the envy of our ancestors. We are so lucky to be a degree unimaginable to our great-grandparents. Let's not overdo it and squander our good fortune by wasting our resources and threatening the livelihood and health of our children and grandchildren. We've got Kytherian blood, so wasting less should come naturally!

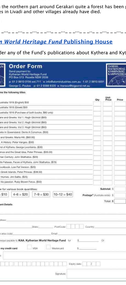
So get energy-savvy and save money.

World Council of Churches (WCC) Kythera Team Achievements

by Jean Bingen

On the map with the WCC Team's achievements up to November 1965 the green shaded areas were for the intended reforestation program. Where trees have been drawn are the areas where already actually a number of trees had been planted. In total at least 1.500.000 trees have been planted. Communities and private persons in the end all over the island did ask for treelets, but also not everyone got them.

Below. The map of the WCC Team's projects on Kythera. Click here to enlarge it online



I have no idea if the reforestation went on after 1971, which was the time work of the WCC Team was stopped.

Forests:
Kapsali: Cerakari (but also left on main road from Potamos to Karavas), Vroulva, small "Athenian" forest on the way from Potamos to Agia Pelagia
Groups of trees:
Kapsali camping: Agia Elesa, several at Agia Anastasia; junction at Kalokerines and Mylopotamos; main road junction at Karvounades and Mylopotamos
Line of trees along road from main road to Ano and Mylopotamos

Below a text on reforestation being part of my contribution to a commemoration day on the work of George and Anna Koksma the Kythera Summer Reforestation Edition would like to organize this summer.

Reforestation
Of course there was a local governmental forester stationed on the island. His name was Yannis Zerlendes. But he did not have a budget and no means of transportation. Here the team could help very well with money to start tree nurseries, pay the labourers and when the team got hold of an old Willys jeep from the WCC Team Ioannina in October 1965 he could use it to visit the reforestation locations. Of course, the Greek Forestry Department was not very happy with the idea of a foreign team doing the work on Kythera (planting trees and grass seeds were outrageously opposed). At the monastery Agia Elesa one seemingly clever person cut the saplings just below grade and placed them again in the soil. But he was caught and got quite a sermon of the judge of peace.

Early October the team started to plant around Potamos Reefer, the investigated the situation of the meandering rivers at Paleopolis. His advice is to cover the mountain slopes with thick bushes, to build dams higher near the top and to widen the river bed to accommodate a heavy water flow after torrential rainfall. This is an advice valid for all over the island. Already early August an Australian-Greek gentleman had offered £10.000 for a dam near Mylopotamos.

In the tree nurseries first at Myrtidia, but also at Karvounades and Kalamos, for some time seeds were planted in nylon bags. In 1966 the Bishop gave the gardens of Agios Nikolaos in Kythera Town and the team started to plant there seedlings in tins and later in plastic bags. Also the Kythera Gymnasium was involved in the project. The continuity between the governmental Forestry Department and the team when to plant the young trees. On Kythera they only planted from October through December. In the team's experimental garden we proved that planting up to April also had good results and for planting in this period more labourers would be available. In November 1966 therefore the directorate in Athens approved the budgets for planting up to April. The planting in numbers now grew very well. June 1968 the Prefect of Piraeus informed the team that they will take over the nursery at Agios Theodoros and that the Budget for tree planting in 1970 will be increased considerably. The number of planted trees by early 1969 was estimated at 1.500.000 and left over in the nursery approximately 250.000 tree tins. The reforestation results at Kythera are held up as example for other regions in Greece.

Unfortunately in May 1969 forester Yannis Zerlendes is promoted away from the island. This of course caused problems in controlling all the work in the fields. All over the island you will see groups in single lines of fir trees that were planted in that period.

Especially in the northern part around Cerakari quite a forest has been planted. Unfortunately a lot of young and older fir trees are seriously ill on account of a small insect. Many older fir trees in Livadi and other villages already have died.

Jean Bingen

Kytherian World Heritage Fund Publishing House

You can order any of the Fund's publications about Kythera and Kytherians by clicking on the form below and filling out the pdf form which will be download.

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