

The Beautiful Voyage

Winter South/Summer North

I've always travelled, and always for the sake of the journey rather than for any pull the destination might hold. Yet at the same time, since I first came to Greece in 1970, I've always hankered for a house on a Greek island. Thirty years were to pass before I finally bought my house on Kastellorizo. Cavafy's *Ithaca* comes to mind:

*Always keep Ithaca fixed in your mind.
 To arrive there is your ultimate goal.
 But do not hurry the voyage at all.
 It is better to let it last for long years;
 And even to anchor at the isle when you are old,
 Rich with all that you have gained on the way....*

I spent most of the 1970s studying and teaching in London and Montreal. Alone or with family and friends I would come to Greece each summer: Corfu, Paxos, Ithaca, Crete, Santorini, Skiathos, Andros, Simi, Ios. Despite the fact that in Athens once I sold my blood to pay for an air conditioned room, living in Greece was easy then, we could camp on beaches or rent cheap rooms. Sunshine and seas the colour of aubergines were guaranteed. These holidays were a reward for enduring long dark winters in Canada and the UK.

It wasn't until 1978 that I first made a chance visit to Kastellorizo. I was returning to Sydney, after an absence of eight years, to take up a teaching job. As a diversion on the overland 'hippy trail' back to Australia I'd hitched a ride on a yacht, *Shaheen*, sailing from Simi to Cyprus. We called in to Kastellorizo overnight. Nothing stirred on what seemed a quaint island, but it left a deep impression, partly because it was my last sighting of Europe. But it also remained in my mind as a place that had been overlooked, not only by me – in fact I'd never before heard of it, despite my summer visits to Greece for nearly a decade – but by the world in general.

Back in Sydney I taught firstly at Sydney Grammar School and then at Newington College. In both of these schools there were a number of Greek students. They stood out because they were always lively and they were always the lucky ones who got to celebrate two Easters! At Sydney Grammar I taught two youths whose families were from Kastellorizo – Colin Parras and Ross Karp. At Newington College Dion Cooney and George Comninos were students of mine and Stan Comino a colleague. I still held on to my Greek island dream and association with these Kastellorizians reminded me of my chance visit to the island of their ancestors.

By 1992, 12 years back in Sydney, I was beginning to feel unsettled. And I happened to read three works that made a deep impression at the time. "If a boy can't have a good teacher", wrote Robertson Davies in *The Deptford Trilogy*, "give him a psychological cripple or an exotic failure to cope with; don't just give him a bad, dull teacher". I was beginning to fear that I was falling into this latter category. At the same time I read another Cavafy poem, *An Old Man*, a few lines in particular striking me:

And he ponders... the liar who would say,
*"Tomorrow. You have ample time".
 He recalls impulses he curbed; and how much
 joy he sacrificed. Every lost chance now mocks
 his senseless prudence.*

I had no wish to doze off at the table, as the old man eventually does. But perhaps owing more to Paul Theroux's throw-away line in *The Old Patagonian Express* that "A geography teacher has a harmless excuse for being practically anywhere", I found myself approaching Kastellorizo in January 1993. I'd resigned from my job, rented out my Sydney apartment, farewelled family and friends. "On extended leave?" asked some; "dropping out", retorted others. I think everyone has a metaphorical Greek island in their head but it takes time, luck, changed circumstances, and re-positioning of priorities for that dream to be achieved.

So it was that I approached Kastellorizo on the *Kalymnos*. Close to the port side were the lights of Kas. On the starboard side was the spine of Kastellorizo, stripped in places to bare limestone where it shone in the full moon like the back of a zebra. The heaving stopped for a while in the lee of Ro and continued again until we were similarly in the lee of Kastellorizo. I had snorkelled here and what I was envisaging as we approached was the underwater landscape – swaying weeds, the odd groper skulking in the deep, and thousands of small colourful fish hanging in the water like



Coming Events on Kastellorizo

Youth Festival 2009

- Sun 12 July**
Boat ride around the island
- Monday 13 July**
Art workshop
- Tuesday 14 July**
Music Workshop with Greek Band
Greek Dancing
- Wednesday 15 July**
Literature Workshop
- Thursday 16 July**
Army Visit
- Friday 17 July**
Tavli Tournament
- Saturday 18 July**
Katharo Kastellorizo
- Sunday 19 July**
Water Glendi otherwise known as
the eve of Tou Profiti Elia

Film Festival

Film Festival during July & August

Katharo Kastellorizo Day

If you find yourself on Kastellorizo on the 18th July please come along to the Agora (market place) to collect your hat, gloves and bag for the Clean-Up (Katharo) Kastellorizo Day.

Forthcoming event in Sydney

Dr Platon Alexiou's Artworks on sale and exhibited on 14 June at the Eastern Hotel, Bondi Junction from 3.00–5.30 pm.

Australian Friend

The Beautiful Voyage

a mobile over the crib of a child. There was no noise save the regular whooshing of waves on our bow, and water gurgling into grottoes and clefts in the rock. Even now, a night approach to the island still thrills.

Up until two years ago, when I retired, I stayed up to half the year on Kazzie and half the year back in Sydney where I had family responsibilities; and I would take temporary teaching appointments that would pay me sufficiently to return again to this little rock. A fairly meagre income was supplemented by freelance travel writing. In 1998 the Greek island dream was fully realized when I bought a ruin in the area of St George of the Wells: it's a quiet backwater (within a backwater!) amidst pine and olive trees, and my dear island friends live nearby.

Perhaps a further quote from Cavafy's *Ithaca* should end these reflections:

*Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.
Without her you would never have taken the road.
But she has nothing more to give you.
And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not defrauded you.
With the great wisdom you have gained, with so much experience,
You must surely have understood by then what Ithacas means.*

Harvey Stockwell
Sydney

Is it Kastellorizo with a 'K' or Castellorizo with a 'C' ?

The transliteration of Greek names into the English language has long been a source of vigorous debate among historians. Most feel compelled to begin their works with an obligatory 'note on transliterations' to explain to their readers why a particular rule of transliteration has been followed, particularly with place names. Historians of ancient Greece, in particular, always eager to distil the true Greek form, now follow an accepted rule that seeks to avoid the 'Latinisation' of place names. In many cases, this practice has seeped through into modern writing, so that names which bear no connection to an original Greek form are commonly 'Hellenised' when they appear in the English language.

A case in point is *Kastellorizo*. All agree, and ancient texts confirm, that the island's original Greek appellation was *Μεγίστη*, probably because it is the largest of its small archipelago of islands. If the original name of the island had not fallen into obscurity, and there is little evidence that it was in common usage beyond the 13th century, there would be no debate today. The preferred English transliteration of *Μεγίστη* is clearly *Megiste*, though this hasn't prevented variants appearing over time. As a somewhat ironic aside, one nation that has never deviated in its naming of the island is Turkey, which to this day still uses its own corrupted version of the island's ancient appellation: *Meis*.

What has complicated the matter is that at some point in the 12th century the island came to be known by other names after a long period of abandonment by its inhabitants. One of the earliest records we have is from the English chronicler, Roger de Hoveden, who had travelled on the Third Crusade with Richard the Lionheart in 1191. In his writings, he refers to the island as *Castellum-Ruge* which some have argued is an amalgam of the names of the islands now known as *Kastellorizo* and *Rho* (*Rho* appears in some early texts as *Rhoge*), while others have maintained that the second word is a corruption of the French word 'rouge' (red) – a reference perhaps to the island's characteristic red soil.

What de Hoveden's choice of name indicates is that the attention of travellers was drawn to a fortified structure on the island from as early as the 12th century. By the time the castle was re-built by the Knights of St John in the 14th century, the island's dual appellation had become entrenched, and it thereafter appeared in various writings as *Castel Rouge*, *Castello Rouge*, *Chateau Roux*, *Chateau Rouge* or in its Latin

form, *Castrum Rubrum*. By early 15th century accounts, like Pero Tafur's travel diary, the name starts to appear for the first time as one word: *Castelrosso*.

It appears reasonably certain that this hybrid name was adopted by the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the island from the 15th century and corrupted into *Καστελλόριζο* and this has largely remain unchanged until the present day. More modern occupiers, like the Italians in the 20th century, tried to revert to 'purer' Western forms of the name (the official name of the island was *Castelrosso* from 1923–1943), but *Castellorizo* in English had stuck by the time of union with Greece. English accounts of the island rarely used any other spelling.

While union of the Dodecanese islands with Greece in 1947 brought undoubted joy for the islanders, it also presented a dilemma in nomenclature in the case of *Castellorizo*. The other islands of the group bore names that were distinctly Greek in origin – *Kos*, *Kalymnos*, *Kasos* and *Karpathos* – were all names that were correctly transliterated into English to match their Greek counterparts by the use of a 'K'. But *Καστελλόριζο* was different; the name was clearly not of Greek origin and transliteration into English presented an option given the choice between 'C' and 'K' that did not exist in the Greek language.

The result was that, beyond Greece's shores, most countries opted for the previously accepted *Castellorizo*, a name that was undoubtedly truer to the appellation's origins. And yet, over time, an English form that incorporated the 'K' was popularised in Greece so that, by the early 1990s, the two variants had become equally common. Both are also equally valid.

Language is always a fluid phenomenon. Nothing is ever fixed, and it is no different in place names and their transliterations. On the one hand, one would never spell *Corfu* with a 'K', mindful as we all are of the name's Latin origins. On the other hand, there is an understandable desire in Greece for uniformity in the English transliteration of place names and, in *Kastellorizo*'s case, the yearning for that to occur through the mirroring of the Greek spelling is arguably as much connected to the islanders' tribulations prior to their long-awaited union, as it is to questions of correctness of transliteration.

Nicholas Pappas
Sydney

Islands of Kastellorizo

Facebook, Heritage and Passion bringing Kastellorizians together across the globe

"Hello all from Kas, Turkey. I am looking for a way of living my whole life on Megisti."

The irony of this quote, found on a facebook internet site dedicated to young Kazzies, is that it came from a young Turkish man across the Aegean just over 2km away staring out to what he wished his future to hold.

For most of us, a trip to Kazzie has this euphoric effect and after spending several vacations on Kastellorizo, I too would love to stay there forever, but in reality my life, work and family remain in Australia.

But I can, like all of us, help make a difference by supporting the island through assisting from the outside using my skills and dedicating time to AFK projects that I can be involved in. Whether it be on Kastellorizo assisting on projects during the summer or in Australia writing my thoughts for this newsletter. I truly believe in the importance of contributing to AFK and developing the great friendships that the Australian Kastellorizians have been able to form with Kastellorizo.

For me, the warmth and energy of the locals is what makes Kastellorizo. There can be a bit of a language barrier and often a year goes by without speaking, but that cheeky Kastellorizian smile between one another can say a thousand words upon first returning. I think it's a sign of what the summer will hold as they see more and more young people returning often for the first time and ready to absorb themselves in all things Kazzie. The Kazzies without knowing it, make this a reality as the summer break is filled with barbecues at St. George Island (which includes 20kg of pork souvlaki), eating their yia yia's moussaka at their home, Greek dancing and hanging out at their 'office' drinking frappes and playing tavli between swims as afternoon hours pass by.

During the summer, upon the arrival of the week's boat or plane load of "new recruits" word will spread and plans will be made with the locals and other holiday makers for these potential new dance floor members and their yet to be created new age Zorba moves as the night often finds us coming together. We collect recruits and locals along the famous track of restaurants to head out for a night of dance, with napkins thrown in the air for effect, night swims and the final promise of the bakeries fresh pizzas on the walk home.

Recruits can also find themselves sized up and signed up for sports, as scratch matches with locals vs. Greek/Aussies commence daily, usually on the soccer field or basketball court. Of course, this comes with a warning, as 'passion' takes over, and a lot of humorous clashes between players, cousins, fathers, mothers, and other spectators occur.

The smug sign of triumph is apparent on the winners, but this has usually disappeared by the time they reach the gates and head towards their houses together again for their mama's dinner.

Whether on the dance floor, the sporting field or the way we have been brought up, our differences are quickly forgotten as we share the same heritage, common interests and sense of fun that is typical of our generation.

The positive development and growth of Kastellorizo is apparent each year, whether it be a new house, new restaurant, new people or the growing up of the locals. These signs will always make me look forward to the future of Kastellorizo and my growing connection with this island that I am lucky enough to have come from.

Telling people that Kastellorizo is where my great grandparents are from gives me a strong feeling of pride in my heritage as it is a truly unique island because of its history of survival and the locals upholding their culture and religion. I also feel inspired by the incredible landscape and architecture of the harbour, the sense of peace and silence of the farms, historic walks throughout the island and swims in the blue grotto.

With these last thoughts in mind, I hope to return there as often as possible and help develop the island and support my friends who live there and keep Kastellorizo as it is today, strong and prosperous. Sas euxomai ta kalitera filoi mou kai koitame mazi sto melon.

Filakia from Philia writing for Filia about filia.

Philia Kailis, Perth

Student Exchange



Yanni Ragousis and Anthony Komninos

Austalian Friends of Kastellorizo would like to congratulate Anthony Komninos and Yanni Ragousis for being successful in their application for the Student Exchange Program to Kastellorizo in 2009. AFK will contribute half the boys' airfare and provide accommodation on the island with an Australian-Greek family during the September/October Australian school holidays. The Principal, Betty Mouzak is also working with her staff to include the boys in their educational program which will include some lessons in Greek.

The Student Exchange Program from Kastellorizo to Australia has been postponed until 2010 because of late withdrawal from one of the students. We look forward to this program continuing next year.



Kastellorizo

Myth Busters. Some facts... (and some cruel hard ones too).

Myth #1: 20,000 people lived on Kastellorizo in its heyday.

Busted: "...on the available evidence that at no period of its history did the island's permanent population exceed a maximum of 10,000 inhabitants".¹

That peak of approximately 10,000 people would have been in 1910 and that is an enormous number of Kazzies squeezed into a mere 8.88 square kilometres.

Myth #2: Kastellorizians are descendants of the Dorian Greeks from the Gulf of Argos.

Fact: "...Dorians from the mainland coast also colonised Megiste..." and "it is likely that the pre-Classical remains on the island date from the occupation of the island by these Dorian colonists and their successors."²

Conclusion: So if Kazzie men have the blood of Dorians running through our veins it explains why we all have 6 packs of Ridley Scott "300" proportions!

Myth #3: Ancient Megiste sent over 20 triremes (warships with 3 banks of oars) to the Trojan War (1194-1184 BC) to take back Helen who had been stolen by Paris of Troy from her husband Menelaus, the King of Sparta.

Busted: Ancient Megiste sent "zero" triremes.

"In Homer's *Iliad*, most of the Dodecanese islands are represented as contributing to the Achaean attack on Troy..." but "contrary to popular belief, there is no mention of Kastellorizo either by its ancient name, Megiste, or any other name, in the catalogue of ships in the *Iliad*" so "...there can be no sound basis according to current knowledge for the

commonly-held belief that the island contributed to the Greek campaign against Troy."³

Can you imagine the conversation at the time? Kazzie Wife: "you are going where, to free who, and she's not even a Kastellorizya! Not until I have five boukles for each daughter are you stepping off this island".

Myth #4: The people of Ancient Megiste worshipped the god Apollo.

Fact: "... the islanders worshipped Apollo..."⁴. In fact, there is evidence that Doric inscriptions show dedication to ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙ ΜΕΓΙΣΤΕΙ (Megistean Apollo).

Why be surprised? We couldn't be like the rest of Ancient Greece and worship just Apollo. No, if we were going to worship him he had to be a Kazzie.

Myth #5: Grapes from Kastellorizo were rumoured to be regular fare at the table of Cleopatra!

Busted: Get real!

Myth #6 : Katoumaryia is a sweet unique to Kastellorizo.

Fact: Absolutely correct. Once we work out a way to franchise them we will be happy to share with the rest of Greece.

Myth #7 : Your family make the best keftethes.

Busted: Wrong, our family do.

Advice – these words are never to be uttered to your spouse or in laws.

Source ^{1,2,3} Kastellorizo : An Illustrated History of The Island and its Conquerors' by Nicholas G. Pappas 1994.

⁴Ancient Megisti : The Forgotten Kastellorizo' by Norman G. Ashton 1995.

Application for AFK Membership

To date the funding of AFK projects has been by way of \$90,000 of seed capital contributed by a number of individual members. To continue delivering our projects further funding is required. Thank you to all those members who have already made a contribution.

At the February 2009 meeting of AFK, members expressed a desire to make a financial contribution to assist AFK achieve its objectives and deliver on its programs and projects. To this end it has been decided that any member can become a Foundation Member by paying a minimum of \$100. Of course payments in excess of \$100 would be most welcome and some members have already indicated they will be making larger contributions. Any contribution will be appreciated.

AFK Membership will of course still remain free to any person wanting to be a friend of Kastellorizo by simply completing the Membership Application form or online at <http://www.australianfriendskastellorizo.org/membership.htm>

Full Name : _____

Residential Address : _____

Postal Address : _____

Are you over 18 years of age? : Yes ☐ No ☐

E-mail Address : _____

Telephone : Home : _____ Work : _____

Mobile : _____ Fax : _____

If you wish to become a Foundation Member please make cheque payable to Australian Friends of Kastellorizo Ltd and post to: 75 Marlow St, Wembley, 6014.

