

## The Spanish Influenza Pandemic on Kastellorizo: February–March 1919

By Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney



*The influenza pandemic between 1918–1920 infected an estimated 500 million people. It resulted in the deaths of between 3–5% of the world's population and its impact was felt in nearly all places across the globe. Kastellorizo was to be no exception, which is hardly surprising given its exposure to infection through the comings and goings of its occupying French forces and other harbour activity during these turbulent years.*

The influenza pandemic did not reach Kastellorizo until early February 1919. January had been a relatively good month in terms of mortality on the island, with only three reported deaths out of its then population of just under 3,000. These had followed the usual pattern of common mortality among infants (usually from undernourishment or from tooth infections) and deaths from more natural causes among the elderly. But all that was to change in the month of February.

The first sign was an abrupt incidence of acute fever among the very young, those in their late teens and the elderly. Within days, this had been diagnosed as acute viral influenza. Underestimating the risks of physical contact with the sick, the island's four medical practitioners, two pharmacists and six priests did their best to treat and console the ailing islanders, but in doing so they unwittingly contributed to the spread of the disease as they made their increasingly frantic calls from household to household.

The first to succumb to the pandemic was **Asimina Louka Seha** who died in the early morning on Tuesday, 4 February aged 60. Two days later, the islanders' fears were heightened when one of the island's chanters, **Antonios Papadimitriou**, died aged 49 after the sudden onset of the disease. The island's churches were full that Sunday, 9 February, and special prayers were offered for those who were showing signs of the mysterious fever. But no sooner had the services ended that word spread around the quay that **Anastasia**

**Mangou**, aged 6, had fallen victim to the disease. And the pandemic did not discriminate between occupier and occupied; later that same day, **Emile Le Saint**, a 28 year-old French nurse working in the overcrowded infirmary, died of complications from the virus' sudden onset. Le Saint was to be one of four French servicemen who succumbed to the illness over the next three weeks.<sup>1</sup>

By the following Sunday (16 February), another five civilians had perished, including the much-loved pharmacist's assistant, **Anastasios Passaris** (aged 39), and the 28-year old wife of ship-owner **Nikolaos Papanastasiou**, **Anna** (nee Efstathiou Atzemi), leaving behind a fourteen-month daughter. The island's churches were again over-flowing that Sunday, but this time, at the conclusion of the services, the priests led a solemn parade of icons from the four main churches around the island's main thoroughfares to ward off the evil spirits that were said to have delivered the unfolding tragedy.

Nevertheless, matters were to deteriorate markedly the following week, with 22 reported deaths between 17–23 February. Among these were publisher of *Filia* (the island's fortnightly journal between 1909–1914), **Mihail H'Petrou** (aged 33), shoemaker **Andreas Yeorgiou Pispinis** (aged 78), carpenter **Nikitas Kremastos** (aged 60) and metal worker **Kyriakos Harsas** (aged 66). But even more tragic was the impact on the family of **Stamatios Konstandinou**, originally from Makri, who lost his wife **Aikaterini**, daughters **Papadia** and **Evangelia** (aged 22 and 13 respectively) and son **Konstandinos** (aged 16) in the space of just nine days. And there was also a great outpouring of community sorrow for the passing of popular merchant and island benefactor **Loukas Yeorgiou Loukas**, the eldest of six Loukas brothers, who died aged 60.

<sup>1</sup> Another was **Robert Lereverend**, an armourer who died on 14 February 1919.

Between 23 February and 2 March, mortality abruptly fell, with seven reported deaths from the disease that week. As quickly as the pandemic had arrived, it began to vanish and the next few weeks saw only three more fatalities, though many islanders took many weeks to recover from the effects of the debilitating fever until the warmer weather arrived.

In all, there were 40 reported influenza deaths in the period 4 February to 2 March, though it is estimated that up to 56 perished from the effects of the pandemic in those traumatic few weeks. Ironically, the last to fall victim to the disease was **Agapitos Emanuel Matteas**, one of the island's overworked gravediggers, aged 60.

Writing to her brothers in Perth in August that year, young **Kyriaki Panegyres** summed up the impact of the pandemic on a population already demoralised by war and emigration:

*In 75 days, 56 souls departed. They even paraded the icons of all the churches to rid us of the disease and now, thank God, good health has returned. We caught it too, from Dad to Yeorgia [her younger sister], and we suffered greatly, and Mum still suffers. It has put her into a neurotic condition and whenever the weather worsens, she too becomes worse. She has become like a barometer... Everyone here was ill and suffered terribly.*<sup>2</sup>

For the locals, the event marked a sad postscript to over three years of calamity on their island. As with the earthquake that was to strike seven years later, events were later recalled by the islanders as having occurred either before or after the pandemic, such was its devastating and lasting impact on their small community.

### Recorded deaths on Kastellorizo from the Influenza Pandemic, February-March 1919<sup>3</sup>

Date	Name	Age	Cause of death	Occupation
February 4	Asimina Louka Seha	60	Flu	-
February 6	Antonios Papadimitriou	49	Flu	Chanter
February 6	Mihail Nikolaou Voskou	55	Flu	-
February 9	Anastasia Mangou	6	Flu	-
February 12	Xeni Nikou Kaili	8 months	Flu	-
February 13	Anna Nikolaou Papanastasiou	28	Uterine bleeding caused by flu	-
February 14	Anastasios A Passaris	39	Flu/nephritis	Pharmacist
February 14	Despina Christodoulou Passari	22	Flu	-
February 15	Evangelia Stavrou Santixi 'Hrisohou'	2	Flu	-
February 17	Zabetta K Hatsatouri	55	Flu	-
February 17	Andreas Yeorgiou Pispinis	78	Flu	Shoemaker
February 17	Irini Papakoti Kelletzi	55	Flu	-
February 17	Petros Mihail H'Petrou	33	Flu	Journalist
February 18	Kazakos Ktistis	50	Flu/pneumonia	Builder
February 18	Christina Yeorgiou Papakoti	42	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 18	Aikaterini Stamatiou Konstandinou	50	Flu/bronchitis	-
February 18	Papadia Stamatiou Konstandinou	22	Flu/gastroenteritis	-
February 18	Aikaterini Vasiliou Samiotou	45	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 18	Vayiani K Kotza (nee Nikoliou)	27	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 18	Evangelia Stefanou Savva (nee Kotza)	38	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 19	Nikitas Kremastos	60	Flu/pneumonia	Carpenter
February 19	Evangelia Stamatiou Konstandinou	13	Flu/gastroenteritis	-
February 19	Anesta Skordi	70	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 20	Anesta Vasiliou H'Yiakomi	75	Flu	-
February 20	Yeorgios N Patiniotis	38	Flu/pneumonia	Shepherd
February 21	Kyriakos Harsas	66	Flu/pneumonia	Metal worker
February 22	Nikos Vasiliou Stefanou	6 months	Flu/bronchitis	-
February 22	Loukas Y Loukas	60	Flu/nephritis	Merchant
February 22	Konstandinos E Sarantis	60	Flu/pneumonia	Carpenter
February 23	Olga Mihail Moulali (nee Mandali)	29	Flu/nephritis	-
February 23	Haralambos Antoniou Stamba	19	Flu	-
February 25	Christina K Viollari	30	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 25	Paraskevi Savva H'Palassi	75	Flu	-
February 26	Andreas Yeorgiou Papakotis	12	Flu/pneumonia	-
February 27	Konstandinos Stamatiou Konstandinou	16	Flu	-
February 27	Koutsoukos I Psaras	55	Flu	Fisherman
February 28	Mihail Iakovou Koutsoukos	50	Flu	Carpenter
March 2	Mihail Kalios	45	Flu/pneumonia	Carpenter
March 6	Evdokia Mihail Ioannou Koutsoukou	22	Flu	-
April 2	Agapitos Emmanuel Mathaias	60	Bronchitis	Pallbearer/gravedigger

<sup>2</sup> Kyriaki Panegyres to Mihail & Apostolos Panegyres, 11 August 1919. Thanks to Elizabeth Backhouse of Perth for granting permission to the author to publish this extract.

<sup>3</sup> This table has been compiled from the volume of deaths recorded by the civil authorities between 1918-1923 held by the island's municipal council. The causes of death in each case are as recorded in the volume by the municipal secretary. Thanks to Evdokia Karpathiou for permitting the author access to these and other archived municipal records.

# Greek island homes looted and but but mayor denies a grudge



David Moore at sea towards the end of his life.

## David Moore: A Life Forever Touched By Kastellorizo

By Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

Between July and August 1984, *The Times* ran a series of articles about alleged British looting and damage on Kastellorizo during the Second World War. These articles elicited some considerable comment, most notably via letters to the editor, about the scale of looting by British servicemen in the occupied islands of the Aegean.

There were swift denials from ex-servicemen, but also one very candid letter from Emeritus Professor G. S. Kirk of Suffolk (11 August 1984) who conceded mass theft of household items after the civilian population of Kastellorizo had been evacuated in October 1943. Nevertheless, Kirk's view was that taking 'bits and pieces' from a town that was 'wrecked and empty' did not strike one as looting. The fact that these items included countless pieces of valuable Iznik plates and Megri (Makri) rugs from Anatolia, most of which were later sold in the markets of Beirut, seemed to matter little.

The very first Allied serviceman to set foot on Kastellorizo after the fall of Italy in September 1943 was a certain David Moore, a young officer serving in the Royal Navy. Moore was actually an Australian who had volunteered for service in Britain, but he was present on Kastellorizo between September-December 1943 when Allied looting and destruction were alleged to have occurred.

In 1995, after I had written my first book on the island's history, Moore made himself known to me in Sydney. As a lawyer, I had heard of him. Moore had built a strong reputation in the profession as an advocate for those less fortunate and as a fierce opponent of discrimination. I was, frankly, flattered that he had reached out to me, but unaware precisely why. We agreed to meet the following day.

I welcomed Moore to my office with some nervousness. He sat down, declined a coffee and quickly reached into a small bag to produce a tattered book which he placed on the table between us. "My wartime diary", he announced. Could this be, I thought? An actual account of the British landing on Kastellorizo?

I turned first to the entry for 10 September 1943, the day British Special Forces had seized control of the island from the demoralised Italians. Here, at last, was an eyewitness account of that historic moment:

*Fri 10th: Arrive Kastellorizo [sic] 2am: Three am bullet through top of scalp. Take island at dawn. Wound v. slight stitched.*

I was enthralled. Here, in typical laconic style, was a contemporaneous account of that first Allied landing, three days before the arrival of the Greek cruiser Kountouriotis. And, in front of me sat the central participant, an Aussie.

But what of the wound he had suffered? I looked up from the diary to see a smiling Moore remove his cap. There, just below the hairline was the line of that bullet, fired by an Italian sentry, that had so nearly killed him as he stepped ashore. I was, frankly, amazed and thanked him with jumbled words. "But this is not why I'm here", he replied. "Read on".

And I did, to passages that simply took my breath away.

Two extracts will convey their gist. The first, from 29 November 1943, read as follows:

rescued the islanders from the ship. "It was a tragic scene".

Thirty-five people were lost and 10 suffered serious burns. "There were rumours that the ship had been scuttled, but there is no evidence of it," Mr Hondros said.

When the islanders reached home, they found buildings had been burnt or looted.

Mr Hondros said: "We had to break bottles to use as drinking vessels. We used empty jerry cans to sit on."

"Our churches had been looted. The richest houses were empty. Their carpets had been sold in markets in Beirut. There

MUM.

SEPTEMBER. 43.

Wed 1st

native

Still at an hours  
Parcel from DAD

Thurs. 2nd

Step off at last  
a quiet run to the Officer's  
club - Harriet - & friends.

FRI. 3rd.

WROTE.

SAT. 4th



An Iznik plate of a variety found in Kastellorizian households in the early 19th and early 20th centuries.



Megri rug common in Kastellorizian households in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mon 29th: A day off. Go into Kasta [Kastellorizo]. At 10am, land with Cox and Sanders while ship returns to Vathi [on the Anatolian coast]. A perfect orgy of looting. Everything including the kitchen stove (two in fact). Lunch with 3 mad pongoes [army personnel]. Much grenade, Breda 3.7 fire. Stay night in Kasta.

When I asked Moore what this all meant, he explained, with impressive candour, that they had gone from home to home and taken everything they could find. The local inhabitants had long departed, German bombing had reduced large sections of the town to rubble and the bulk of the Allied force had hurriedly been shipped out two days earlier in fear of further Luftwaffe raids. The temptation to help oneself to the lavishly-stocked homes of the Kastellorizian traders was just too great. After their 'orgy of looting', they had ascended one of the island's peaks and his three army friends had then tossed grenade after grenade down into the town in a drunken fit.

Another passage caught my eye as I flipped the diary's weathered pages. It read:

Wed 1st [Dec]: Into Kasta at night after a very blissful day watching the rekkis. More loot which now includes 2 motor bikes, and push bikes etc etc.

I asked Moore why he was showing his diary and he replied, with heavy sadness in his eyes, that he felt he needed to show it to someone while he was alive to set the record straight. Yes, he said, there was large-scale Allied looting on Kastellorizo in late

1943 and, worse still, they had failed to protect the town and had participated in its further destruction.

I should add that Moore could not confirm or deny whether Allied troops had been complicit participants in the massive fire in July 1944 that destroyed a large section of Kastellorizo as he had long departed by that time. But his account was otherwise clear and precise.

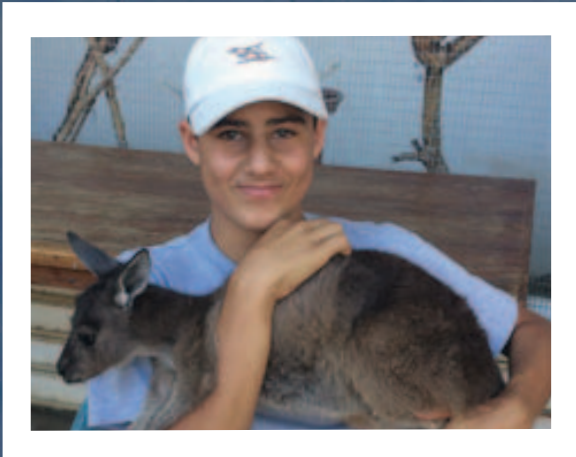
I asked Moore if I could take a copy of his wartime diary and he agreed, but like any good lawyer, he imposed one condition: I could not release its contents until after his death.

David Moore passed away peacefully in Sydney in April 2015 aged 93. A life of great achievement in the legal profession and in the civil service was justifiably praised. But equally praiseworthy, for me at least, was his burning desire to set the record straight about youthful wartime errors which had festered inside him for five decades.

War and combat regularly reduce even the most noble to acts of baseness. Of course, the events recounted by Moore seem almost slight compared to the acts of brutality we have witnessed on the world stage in recent years. And under the veil of war, much can be forgiven. But I will never forget the eyes of a man who wanted to confess a terrible wrong he had willingly participated in. And for this, David Moore will always have my highest regard.

Watermarks: Examples of the articles that appeared in *The Times* in 1984 and pages from David Moore's wartime diary.

# Student Exchange 2017



**Konstantine Manios**

*Konstantine Manios has Kastellorizian links from his maternal side of the family. His late grandfather, Constantine Phillips, was the son of Philip Phillips (Karazabounis) and Maria Kannis. Konstantine's grandmother, Despo Panegyres is the daughter of Chrysanthe Tsakalos and Michael Panegyres.*

It is a dream of mine to visit Kastellorizo to see where my family originated from in Greece. I have heard many stories and want to experience life on the island. I am really interested in the history of Kastellorizo and want to learn more about the people and what happened to them during the war years. I also really want to visit the grotto, as I have heard so many stories about the beautiful colour of the water and I want to experience authentic Greek food on the island and do lots of fishing.



**Kristina Todd**

*Kristina's maternal great grandparents were Michael Geronimos and Katerina Geronimos (nee Lazarakis). Michael Geronimos' parents were Nicholas Geronimos and Aiketerini Hatzistamatiou. Katerina Geronimos' parents were Lazaros Lazarakis and Philia Lazarakis (nee Papastatis). Kristina's grandparents are Peter and Christina Drimatis.*

I love being part-Greek and always involve myself in the Greek heritage. Greece has always fascinated me and I am very keen to travel to Kastellorizo as my great, great grandparents and my great grandparents were born there. I have always been interested in Kastellorizo from a little girl, as I watched my mother's wedding video and saw my great yiayia singing the old wedding songs to my mother. I also experienced watching a Great Aunt singing the wedding songs to my cousin. There is a family house still standing on Kastellorizo. I would love to experience this life time memory. My yiayia has lived with me since I was three years old and she has taught me many Greek recipes from the island which I would love to learn more about and pass down to future generations. My yiayia has told me many stories and traditions from this island. I will cherish these memories forever and I recognise that it will be an honour and privilege to be part of this program. This will be a great way for me to improve my Greek speaking skills.



**Matthew Zounis**

*Matthew's maternal great grandfather is Nikita Zounis and great grandmother, Maria (Mary) Zounis, née Manifis. They were born on Kastellorizo. Matthew's grandparents are Nick and Jenny Zounis.*

My name is Matthew Zounis. I haven't yet been to Greece, but I am proud to say that it is part of my heritage. I love Ancient Greek History and Mythology. I would also like to learn more about the history of the island as I am very passionate about history and being able to experience it firsthand will bring history to life for me.

I would also love to learn more about the culture and traditions, as well as how their everyday life compares to ours. Being able to go to Kastellorizo and see where my great grandparents lived, grew up and worked would be a magnificent privilege.

Because of my passion for history, I hope to become a Historian or History teacher, and there would be no better way to teach my students other than recounting the firsthand information and knowledge that I would gain from this experience.

It would be a wonderful experience to learn how to converse in Greek, because it would make conversations at home with Yiayia and Papou a whole lot more interesting. I love my grandparents a lot, but one of the best bits about going to visit is the food. Whilst Yiayia is an amazing cook and can cook the most delicious Greek food, it would be a pleasure to try the local cuisine.

To become a member, to advertise or for general information contact Marilyn Tsolakis,  
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# Kastellorizo - the Birthplace of my Grandparents

by Jim Tsolakis, Sydney



As the ferry rounded the corner of the island, and the harbour came into view, I felt my heart race faster than ever before. I was about to visit the island of my ancestors; my grandparents. A journey I had wanted to take for over 30 years was finally real.

The ferry pulled into the harbour and I disembarked via the big ferry doors onto the island. As I walked by the cafes, restaurants and shops around the harbour, my eyes filled with water. I could not believe I was here. I could not believe how beautiful this place was. A sense of pride overtook my emotions.

My immediate thought was why I had left it for so long to come here. My second thought was how "at home" I felt. I made my way to the Hotel Posiedonas and checked in, eager to explore the island. On entering the room, my emotions took over and I experienced a bout of male sensitivity, as I looked out the window and saw and felt the reality of what was my ancestors' place.

The next seven days were filled with discovery. At times I felt I was in Australia, with the number of fellow Australians I kept meeting. At other times I could close my eyes and listen to the stillness; the history and the past.

A visit to the museum at the Mosque challenged my emotions once again, and for the first time I knew why my grandparents, Triantafillia Zisti and Pavlos Tsolakis left the island in 1909 bound for Cairo, Egypt. My father was born in Cairo, and he never made his way back to Kastellorizo. Instead, he left Egypt for Australia in 1947, arriving in Sydney and quickly moving to the country town of Aberdeen in NSW.

This visit was as much for him, as it was for me.

On my first day, I bumped into a lovely group of Adelaidian Kazzies. With their full embrace, I drank and ate with them, and enjoyed the lovely ambience of the Island. After dinner, we walked around and bumped into more locals, and Australians. There on the first night I was to meet my first unknown relative, Nicholas Bogiatzis, a second cousin and grandson of my grandmother's bother. He had been looking for me, and it was sheer coincidence that we were both on the island at the same time.

I spent the next seven days, meeting lots of people, exploring this birthplace of my grandparents. I swam with the glorious turtles; I ate with wonderful Kastellorizians I had not known yesterday; I listened to stories of the past from the seniors. I even sampled the famous Katoumari.

After eight days on the island, my senses will never be the same. My sense of stillness and calmness has been redefined. The island delivered an amazing tranquility that I have never witnessed before.

My senses of taste, sight and smell, all challenged. It was exiting to find new levels of fulfilment in my life. The food everywhere I ate was awesome. The colours of the island were a festival for my eyes, and the subtle aromas and odours of the flora and water, aromatherapy for my mind.

Everything about Kastellorizo was refreshing compared to our normal environment. I was mesmerised by the sheer scale of the backdrop of the mountains. I loved the homes. Each one similar to the next, but different.

The island of Kastellorizo is a treasure. A place where the people blend in with nature's plan. A place that challenges the humanity of where we live and work. I will there again next year.

## Proverbs by Dr Paul Boyatzis

Harisméno xidi pió glikó apó to méli.

(To receive even vinegar as a gift is sweeter than honey)  
Be grateful for any gift, no matter of its value. Appreciate it.

Epiásanton ta poulákia tou

(Translated literally .....his birdies have got hold of him)  
Common Kazy expression implying, he or she "has lost it".

## Kastellorizian Lexicon

The Kastellorizian word is in bold lettering with the demotic word in brackets.

<b>Esáhti</b>	kouníthike	he/she moved
<b>Aeráni</b>	ásprisma me asvésti	white wash with lime
<b>Loumbounária</b>	loupina	luppens (common food)
<b>Votirídi</b>	tsampí stafíliá	bunch of grapes
<b>Kouzí</b>	próvato	lamb
<b>Salándourma</b>	dolmáthes me kremíthia	stuffed onions with rice
<b>Ppoúsi</b>	omiáli	fog
<b>Harsí</b>	kouvás apó lamarína	billy (tin)
<b>Fóunda</b>	ta metritá tis prikas	the monies in the dowry
<b>Fayiá</b>	fayitá	food- generally
<b>Limasménos</b>	lémarginos	glutton
<b>Loutouryiá</b>	prósforon	consecrated bread for communion



*Nick Kakulas sponsoring the June Edition  
of Filia in memory of his late wife  
Anastasia (Tasoula) Kakulas (nee Pitsonis).*