



Aigli pictured in the 1970s by which time it had fallen into disrepair.
(Kastellorizo, Hellenic Girl Guides & Boy Scouts Association, 1977)



Aigli as it appears today. (courtesy Foteini Chalvanti)

AÍGLI AND THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF ANASTASIA ARNAOUTOGLOU AND MARIA SAMIOU

By Nicholas Pappas, Sydney

On their walks from Kastellorizo's main harbour to the enchanting *Mandráki*, visitors can be forgiven for overlooking one of the island's more intriguing neoclassical homes. This is the house that was named *Aigli*, a word dating back to Antiquity that means 'glow' or 'lustre' but which can also connote 'glory' or 'splendour'. And rightly so, because *Aigli's* largely forgotten story is indeed 'glorious' within the broader context of the island's traumatic 20th century history.

It is uncertain precisely when *Aigli* was built, but we can be fairly certain that it was erected no earlier than the first decade of the 20th century. While the structure we see today is a pale echo of what originally existed, its characteristic design features remain: two symmetrical staircases leading to separate, semi-detached residences overlooking the serenity of the *Mandráki* basin. Why was *Aigli* designed in this unusual style and for whom was it intended?

In the last decades of the 19th century,

school education went through a major transformation in the Greek-speaking world. Grand school buildings, many in the neoclassical style, and often funded by expatriates, were built and proudly unveiled, particularly within the Ottoman Empire. Much of this energy for an improved built environment for education radiated from Smyrna, then the cultural epicentre of the Hellenic world.

Like most of the other Greek islands of the Empire, Kastellorizo was very much a part of this flowering of education. The author has previously examined in some detail the story of the construction of Kastellorizo's school for boys, the *Santrapeía Astiki Scholí*, which was built between 1902-1903 and funded by wealthy expatriates **Loukas & Anastasia Santrapés** of Cairo. Together with **Theodosios Penglis**, the couple had also paid for the construction of the *Parthenagogeíon* in 1903, the school for girls just across the church square. But all this new educational infrastructure

required teaching staff and it is here that the story of *Aigli* begins.

In the early 20th century, the education of females lagged well behind the education provided for boys. Until the *Parthenagogeíon*, the only opportunity for young females to be educated on the island was in one of the small, privately-run schools and, even then, instruction was limited to basic numeracy, religious studies and home skills. However, with the opening of the *Parthenagogeíon* in 1903, young females were given the opportunity to benefit from a broader education, albeit in a manner that was still skewed towards a domestic life.

The headmaster of the *Santrapeía*, the great chronicler of Kastellorizo's history, **Achilleas Diamantaras**, was tasked with identifying and recruiting female teachers for the new girls' school. One of the first appointees was a local 27 year-old unmarried teacher, a graduate of the famed *Arsákeion* school in Athens, **Maria Samiou**. Samiou had been born on the island on 18 November 1876 and,



Samiou (in pale coat) and Anastasia Arnaoutoglou (in dark-lapelled coat) photographed with the island's Greek Governor, Odysseas Horologas (with bow tie), in February 1915. (Author's collection).



Arnaoutoglou pictured with her infants' class in 1931. The other teachers are, at left, Evangelia Harami and, behind Arnaoutoglou, trainee Eleni Agapitou. (courtesy the late Irene Livissiani)

on her mother's side, was a cousin to Diamantaras. We know that she was looking for work in Asia Minor at this time because her letter dated 30 July 1903 seeking employment beyond the island's shores survives in an Athenian archive.

Diamantaras' next recruit was the product of a broader search from within the educational fraternity of Smyrna. A visit to that city by representatives of the *ephoría*, the committee charged by the island's governing council (*demogerontía*) to oversee the schools, identified a 28 year-old (also unmarried) teacher from Smyrna by the name of **Anastasia Arnaoutoglou**. Already well-regarded for the austerity of her demeanour and instruction, Arnaoutoglou had been born on 20 December 1875 and schooled at the prestigious *Kentrikó Parthenagogeíon* of Smyrna. Once terms had been agreed, she travelled from Smyrna by steamer to Kastellorizo in July 1903 to assume her position as inaugural principal of Kastellorizo's own *Parthenagogeíon*.

Before she arrived, plans were already afoot on the island for accommodation for the two teachers. It is unclear precisely when, but it is probable that the *demogerontía* identified a vacant plot of land above the *Mandráki* as a suitable site given its proximity to the school and its relative tranquillity. Surviving records reveal that the two teachers became co-owners of the land and, between them, raised the funds required to construct their dwelling. Designed to accommodate the two spinsters while also providing relative privacy, the house adhered to the neoclassical style. And it is here that these two dedicated teachers resided

for the next 50 or so years. But this is not the end of the story of *Aigli*.

During the years of Italian occupation (1921-1943), the Italian regime went to considerable lengths to monitor and act upon what were viewed to be anti-Italian, specifically pro-Hellenic, activities from within the indigenous communities of the Dodecanese islands. In particular, Greek teachers were closely monitored because they were often the conduit through whom patriotic zeal was relayed to students. On Kastellorizo, both Samiou and Arnaoutoglou were recorded as being of 'political' interest and their movements and personal correspondence were regularly checked by the local *carabinieri*, the Italian police.

As early as 1922, Samiou was described

as being so 'fiercely' pro-Greek as to risk expulsion from the archipelago. On one occasion, the same report continued, she had responded in an annoyed tone (when asked to present her students to greet a visiting Italian dignitary) that there was no need to divert her students from their lessons for such an event. Later, in 1934, her correspondence to the Greek consulate in Rhodes seeking a pension for her services to education was intercepted by the Italian authorities and confirmed for them her devotion to the Hellenic cause; "*the principal aim of my work has been to infiltrate the minds of our young students with respect and love for our holy religion and for our beloved homeland, especially at such a critical moment for our nation.*", she wrote.

Samiou would have been horrified that these private communications were being read with interest by the Italian authorities and she continued to make representations, not only for her own benefit, but also in support of her aspiring students from Kastellorizo who were seeking tertiary placements in Greek universities. She was assisted in this by her cousin based in Athens, **Pavlos Vasiliou Pavlides**, who had served as adjutant to former King Constantine I and by 1934 was chief of staff in the Greek Ministry of Aviation.

Arnaoutoglou's experiences were no different during the Italian occupation – with one notable, indeed ironic, difference. While viewed with similar suspicion, Arnaoutoglou's fortunes were to undergo a radical change as a result of an act of bravery that propelled her to prominence not only across the Dodecanese, but in Italy as well. It was in February 1941 that the British



Maria Samiou, at right, in a family portrait from 1905, soon after her appointment as a teacher at Kastellorizo's *Parthenagogeíon*. To her right stands her brother, Evangelos (later ordained a priest), his wife Foteini and their daughter Paraskevi. (courtesy Samiou family)

launched their audacious bid to seize Kastellorizo. The offensive began when British commandos landed at Niftis in the early hours of 25 February 1941. As they progressed toward the town along the Kondylios road (*Odhós Anapáseos*) from the island's cemetery, they were met by the unprepared Italians, most of whom were swiftly despatched by the advancing commandos.

As the British approached *Aígli*, they came upon a lone Italian soldier trying in vain to slow their progress to give his compatriots the time they needed to retreat to the *Paleócastro*. He was shot in the leg and fell to the ground immediately outside *Aígli*. Just as the British troops took aim to deliver their coup de grace, 66 year-old Arnaoutoglou emerged from her home and, while shielding the wounded soldier, called upon the British to shoot her instead. To the wounded Italian's great relief, the British commandos hesitated and moved on, leaving the Italian in the arms of the gallant teacher.

Word of Arnaoutoglou's selfless act became a major news story in Italy and across her colonial empire. On 8 April 1941, she was awarded the bronze medal for military valour by the Italian regime and, on 25 May 1941, Rome's *La Tribuna Illustrata* devoted a full page to her deeds with a dramatic coloured illustration and a caption in the following terms:



È stata concessa la medaglia di bronzo al valore militare allo signora Anastaoglou, di Smyrna, vedova italiana, con la seguente motivazione: "Vede che un marinaio italiano, - ucciso perché ferito a un piede - era stato circondato da un gruppo di nemici che stavano per fucilarlo, con magnifico gesto di pietosa difesa si offerse il proprio petto, volentieri. "Ma sparate e ferite! Ammazza quel mulo, perché compiere un atto di barbarie... Isola di Castellorosso (Igre), 25 febbraio 1941.-M.E. (Immagine di VEZZANO VISUALS)

The page from *La Tribuna Illustrata* extolling the bravery of Arnaoutoglou in February 1941 (25 May 1941 edition). (author's collection)

The bronze medal for military valour was awarded to Mrs Anastasia Arnaoutoglou of Smyrna, an Italian subject, with the following citation: 'Seeing that an Italian sailor who had fallen with an injury to his leg was surrounded by the enemy who were about to finish him off, with a magnificent gesture, she stood in front of the wounded soldier and offering herself exclaimed: "Don't shoot, he is wounded! Kill me instead because you would be committing an act of barbarism." Castellorosso, 25 February 1941.'

In the frantic hours that followed, the British commandos were to take control of the island, only to lose it to the Italians three days later after Allied reinforcements failed to arrive. One of Italy's few outright successes of the war, the failed British invasion received widespread coverage in Italy. And in November that year, a commemorative service was held in the island's cathedral and the 13 deceased Italians laid to rest in a segregated section of Kastellorizo's cemetery.

In the few surviving images from that day, a reserved Arnaoutoglou, by then an Italian national hero, can be seen at the forefront of the memorial service for the Italian dead. A humanitarian act of bravery had been reinterpreted as a heroic deed of national significance. It was an ironic far-cry from her pro-Hellenic activism of earlier years.

Samiou and Arnaoutoglou continued to live together on the island until the former's death on 23 April 1957 aged 84. Today, apart from Samiou's simple grave in the island's cemetery, all that remains to remind us of these two teachers is *Aígli*, their unique home in the *Mandráki*. It would be most fitting if passers-by pause for a moment to recall their dedication to their profession - and their altruistic bravery.



Arnaoutoglou and Italian dignitaries during the memorial service for the Italian dead at the island's cemetery, 2 November 1941. (courtesy the late Gino Vecchi)



The procession of school children pauses outside *Aígli* to honour the deeds of Arnaoutoglou, 2 November 1941. (courtesy the late Gino Vecchi)



Greek families waiting to board a rescue ship in 1917. Courtesy: Service Historique De La Marine, Vincennes

How can Mister Johns be a Greek?

by Phil Kafcaloudes

My ten-year-old self offered this poser to my mum, herself a second-generation Greek-Australian. I don't remember her answer.

Mr Johns wasn't the only Greek in our area with an English name. There was also a Mr Stott, a Mr Young and a Mr Vass. All people with English names but with Greek accents, looks, and religion. I may have been confused by this contradiction, but perhaps I should have looked closer to my own home, because by this time my dad and some of his brothers started using *Kaff* instead of *Kafcaloudes*. The family had been builders in Darwin since my grandfather arrived during the first world war. He and his family had been evacuated from Kastellorizo in 1917.

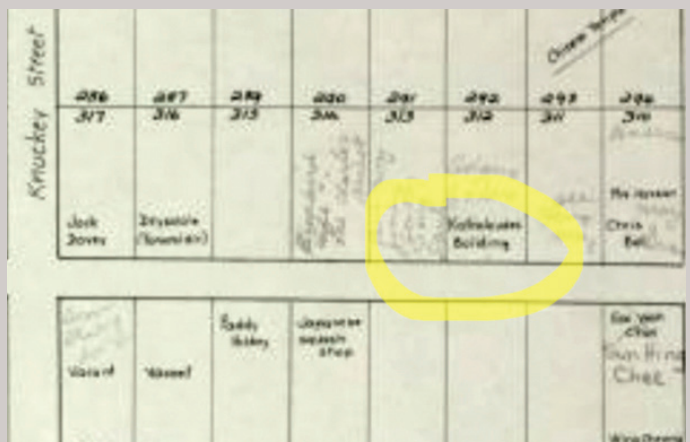
This was at a time in Australian politics when the Australian government was desperate for workers for Vestey's meat-works in Darwin and for the construction of the north-south rail line in the Northern Territory. In light of this manpower need, Greeks were considered to be the least disagreeable of non-British migrants.

Perhaps with so many Greeks in Darwin, having a long foreign name was no issue. My dad's dad wore his proudly, even displaying his full Greek name, *Soteris Kafcaloudes* across the front of his 1930 building in Darwin's main street.



The Kafcaloudes building, 1930s. Courtesy: The Kafcaloudes family collection

A search of the property records indicates local authorities had no problem with his name either; the building was known in official documents as *The Kafcaloudes building*.



Official map of Cavenagh St, Darwin with the Kafcaloudes building circled. Courtesy: Darwin Library

Given this name acceptance, it is surprising that by the 1960s my dad, then in his fifties, made the decision to anglicise his name to *Kaff*. Although he never explained why he did this, it was most likely for simple convenience. *Kafcaloudes* was hard to spell and easy to mispronounce. Was it the same reasoning for Mr Johns or Mr Vass?

My academic research project tried to find out why Greeks let go of their names. I did this by surveying the families of the people who had made such anglicisations.

What came back was fascinating. Only one of the respondents who were born after 1960 had anglicised their name. In most cases it was parents, uncles, and grandfathers (yes, they were all almost always male) who made the change soon after arrival in the first half of the last century. The respondents gave a range of reasons. Some simply thought that an anglicised name would be more convenient (easier to spell; easier to pronounce). When 25-year-old Nikos Maniarizis

became Nick Manning in 1952 it was at the insistence of the Sydney Greek Consul-General's wife, who said an English name would be more acceptable:

She called out aloud: 'How can you send him out for a job with a name like Maniarizis?' She turned to the secretary and said: 'Type the letter again and make him...Manning.'



Nick Manning with the author's mother, 1960s.
Courtesy: The Kafcalouides family collection

It is interesting to note that the work that Nikos was applying for was a Greek restaurant where he would be working with Greek migrants for Greek migrants. Yet it was still felt he needed to anglicise his name. A similar situation happened fifty years earlier when another respondent's grandfather arrived in Australia from Ithaca in 1899.

His name was Ioannis Kallinikos, but English-speaking officials wanted an English name, so they called him John Caling.

One difference between the Caling and Manning stories is that Caling continued to use his Greek names (Ioannis Kallinikos) in the Greek community. Kallinikos was prepared to use his Greek names in the early days of the racially discriminatory White Australia policy, while Manning, in the last days of that policy, always used his anglicised name.

More darkly, a fear of racism led the family of some respondents to change their name:

My father was urged to shorten his name when he came in 1948 by his sister's family who were sensitive to the "neo-fermeni" i.e.: new Australians. And being called dago.

At least five respondents whose families arrived in the 1930s cited racism generated by the 1934 Kalgoorlie Riots in Western Australia as a motivator for their anglicisations. The riots targeted any central Europeans after an Italian barman killed a local footballer with a British heritage.

Racism, perceived or real, continued to be the cause for anglicisations even in later years. The parents of Sydney-based writer Panyiotis Papathanasiou tried to protect their son from racism by changing his name to Peter Pappas. It didn't work:

When the kids heard that Pappas wasn't my real name, they went on a quest of discovery. Finally, in high school, someone found it. I was teased relentlessly and got beaten up by some of the bigger bullies.

Actor Maria Mercedes was the only survey respondent to have changed her name in the last fifty years. Her father had kept their original family name, Moutsidis, but Maria changed her name to Mercedes in 1974 after a racist incident on national television:

I was appearing on 'The Graeme Kennedy Show'. He introduced me and started mispronouncing my name as a joke. The audience were laughing along with him, which was embarrassing to me.

Maria continues to use Mercedes and her answer to a question about reversion was typical of that of most respondents:

I would like to, but it is difficult.

This 'difficulty' was cited as the new post-911 security requirements that a name change would require certifications for one's passport, health, bank accounts, superannuation, property, business, education, marriage, and drivers' licences. It seems it was easier to anglicise than to rescind.

One respondent was definite about never reverting to the original Greek family name, saying they had many professional family members using the anglicised name, including a prominent mayor. Interestingly, another said there was a kind of heritage in the anglicised name:

My father strived to be accepted as an Australian and chose that name for himself. He was very pleased with his achievements. And I keep this name to honour him.

So, the respondent chose to honour the new name rather than that of her forebears. Peter Papathanasiou was the only one in this study who did go back to his original name. He says he did it for his children:

My own children have inherited the same troublesome, annoying, beautiful 13 letters. Pappas was just a bastardised version of my real surname.

Many of the findings in this research will not be a surprise. It was felt that an anglicised family name would help them fit safely and conveniently into Australian society. They may have wanted to give themselves the best chance of success; they may have wanted their names to be easier to pronounce; or, most darkly, they may have wanted to avoid discrimination or racism.

I should also acknowledge that there were many Greek migrants who did not anglicise their names even when racism was at its peak in Australia. There are plenty of Greek family names in politics, sport, arts, and the media space.

My overall impression though is that, for most anglicised respondents, a name is no longer central to what they see as their identity. For them a name is just a name.



Dr Phil Kafcalouides is an author and broadcast journalist who presented the breakfast program on the ABC's Radio Australia for nine years, broadcasting across the Pacific and Asia. For the ABC he worked in radio and television in 12 countries and hosted the corporation's first English language program from China. In 2011 his third book, the novel Someone

Else's War, was translated into Greek for Europe. It tells the story of his grandmother, a WWII spy in Greece. He also taught at La Trobe University and at RMIT. In 2022 the ABC published Australia Calling, his history of Radio Australia.

The Natural History of Kastellorizo by Robert Moorhead

What's on your plate? The fresh seafood of Kastellorizo.

Despite representing less than 1% of the world's ocean surface, the Mediterranean is home to up to 18% of the planet's marine species. But the Mediterranean Sea is in trouble. *Posidonia Oceanica* (an endemic seagrass species known as the "lungs of the Mediterranean") is in rapid decline. The impact of overfishing, invasive species, litter, and pollution, compounded by the rising impact of climate change is destroying our oceans and sea life. Marine and coastal ecosystems are reeling under these pressures, and the waters surrounding Kastellorizo are no exception. The Psarotavernes of Megisti are still well stocked with fresh seafood, so let's eat responsibly. Now, what will you order?

IUCN is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature that records the extinction list.

White Grouper – IUCN: Near Threatened



The Sea Wolf pictured here has a great catch of arguably the king of our eating fish, the White Grouper-ΡΟΦΟΣ and ΣΦΥΡΙΔΑ (*Epinephelus aeneus*) is found in the Southern Med. Numbers are in decline, and have drastically reduced in recent years but is thankfully plentiful near Kastellorizo. Fisherman both professional and casual need to be careful not to catch breeding grouper.

Mediterranean Swordfish – IUCN: Near Threatened



George Lazarakis is holding a lovely example of ΞΙΦΙΑ- *Xiphias gladius*. They are a global species and are highly migratory with occasional spectacular catches around Kastellorizo in

May & June when they come to spawn.

Black Sea Urchin – IUCN: Near Threatened



ΑΧΙΝΟΣ (*Arbacia lixula*) has been a Greek delicacy since ancient times. Tragically it is being rapidly replaced by the invasive Black Longspine Urchin (*Diadema setosum*) from the Indo-Pacific which is much less edible. Highly sensitive to marine pollution, the observant visitor will witness its struggle to survive along the Limani.

Mediterranean Slipper Lobster – IUCN: Not Rated

The ancient *Scyllarides*



latus is excellent eating but is now rare or extinct from much of the Mediterranean due to overfishing. It can still be found around Kastellorizo and occasionally in our restaurants. IUCN has insufficient data to rate it, but please do not create demand for this struggling creature.

Common Octopus – IUCN Least Concern

Octopus vulgaris or ΧΤΑΠΟΔΙ is a global species found in



temperate waters and is fabulous eating. You are probably never more than a few meters from an octopus as you walk around the Limani. Common, but rarely seen, they are masters of camouflage. It is also highly intelligent and should be handled responsibly to avoid distress.

Red Mullet – IUCN Least Concern



Mullus barbatus or ΜΠΑΡΜΠΟΥΝΙ are a personal favourite. Common around Kastellorizo, these little goat fish are excellent eating when dipped in flour and fried as demonstrated by Mixali Papoutsis's special shown in the photo.

Atlantic Bonito – IUCN: Least Concern



We identify several small oily fish with the catch-all term ΠΑΛΑΜΙΔΑ including Atlantic Bonito, Little Tuna and Bullet Tuna. Whilst normally fried, try them as sashimi or ceviche – as delicious

as their endangered bigger cousins.

European Common Squid – IUCN: Not Rated



Alloteuthis subulate or ΚΑΛΑΜΑΠΙ is found abundantly in the coastal waters around Kastellorizo. A perennial favourite it is caught year-round.

European Spiny Lobster – IUCN: Vulnerable



Palinurus elephas or ΑΣΤΑΚΟΣ is spectacularly good to eat (Kastellorizian lobster pasta should be on everyone's bucket list). Tragically it is chronically overfished throughout its range and now listed as vulnerable. Again, we are lucky to have these around Kastellorizo and must ensure we harvest them responsibly. Normally caught by divers or in crab pots, they are often found around Ro.

Indian Lionfish – IUCN: Least Concern / Invasive Species

Pterois miles ΛΕΟΝΤΟΨΑΡΟ is a venomous invasive fish native to the Indo-Pacific and unfortunately now common around Kastellorizo. Please keep away from the spines of this fish which can inject a nasty venom. When



handled carefully, they are quite good eating.

Greater Amberjack – IUCN: Least Concern



Seriola dumerili or ΜΑΓΙΑΤΙΚΟ is often served as fillets of Kingfish. Fantastic eating, we catch some monster specimens off Kastellorizo. Another global species, it is usually caught from August to November and is a staple at our restaurants. **And much more..**

The above is a small selection of the abundant seafood that could make its way onto your plate. But there is much more to find and try, like Cuttlefish (ΣΟΥΠΙΑ) and local prawns (ΓΑΡΙΔΑΚΙ) from Billy's.

Whilst we can still get good catches around Kastellorizo, the fishermen will readily tell you about their declining catches.

I dream of the day when 50% of Kastellorizian waters are protected and our little island continues to be a haven for biodiversity and endangered species. And a place to go for a fantastic fresh and sustainable seafood dinner!