

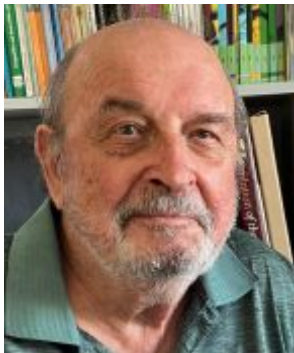
AD LIB

The magazine of
Paphos Third Age

www.paphos3rdage.org

Editor: Marian McEwen

December 2023



Message from the Chair David Sparrow

Welcome to the December edition of Ad Lib. The P3A continues to flourish and you will note from the committee page that we now, for the first time, have over 900 members. Also very encouragingly several new groups are being set up.

The AGM in October was very well attended and thanks go to all of you that turned up. This is not the most scintillating of the P3A activities but is a legal necessity so your attendance is particularly appreciated. We were very fortunate in having nominees for every position on the committee, and I would like to welcome David Richards who becomes our new vice chair and Suzanne Cousins who joins as an officially elected member. We now have a good mix of very experienced committee members and some new blood and are lucky to have a very dedicated team. I have been impressed in my time as chair at the excellent responsiveness of all committee members. Although traditionally the AGM has been held on a weekday, for future meetings we will try to organize the event on a Saturday that does not clash with other Saturday activities.

The annual group leaders meeting was held in October, and the opportunity was taken for a session on GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) to be given by our newly appointed Data Protection Officer, Gillian Richards. The P3A has always taken data protection very seriously but we were advised that we should have written evidence of compliance, which has now been obtained.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone Seasons Greetings and "Good Luck" to those of you travelling back to the UK for the festivities. We can then all look forward to an exciting 2024 with the P3A.



Chair	David Sparrow
Vice Chair	David Richards
Treasurer	Gillian Richards
Secretary	Sue Lourensz
Membership Secretary	Dale Ikin
Groups Coordinator & Website	Ros Sparrow
Ad Lib Magazine	Marian McEwen
Committee Member	Keith McEwen
Committee Member	Suzanne Cousins
Data Protection & Anti Money Laundering Officer	Gillian Richards

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

I am very pleased to report that we currently have **900** members which is the highest that our membership has ever been.

Of those, just over 79% have renewed their memberships for next year. Can I remind the remaining 185 members who are yet to renew, that annual subscriptions for the year 1st September 2023 - 31st August 2024 are now due. The renewal fee remains at **€5**.

If you do not intend to renew your membership, please let me know by email so that I can remove you from our database and our mailing list. **The final date for renewing your subscription is 31st December 2023.** After that, memberships will lapse and you will no longer be able to attend P3A groups or activities without re-joining.

Please note:

Members who have recently joined P3A will not be required to renew their subscription. These new members have membership numbers including or greater than A122.

Dale Ikin
Membership Secretary
Tel: +35797786488
daleikin1958@gmail.com

David Richards New Vice Chair

First of all I would like to thank you all for voting me on to your committee at our recent AGM.

Many of you will already know me from my activities within existing P3A Groups (Family History (assistant group Leader), History (occasional talks) and Play reading). Outside of P3A Groups I also play a lot of tennis (3 times a week) at Kamares club.

My wife, Marian, and I came to Cyprus full time in 2014.

I have been a Board member of St Michael's Hospice Charity for the last few years as well as its Treasurer for the past two years. I will relinquish both roles in early January 2024.

My aim as your new Vice Chair will be to support all 40 + Groups in what they do and to support the Committee in its task of meeting the Members needs.

Finally I take this opportunity to thank all the Group Leaders for their work over the last year and into 2024, without them we offer no services to our Members.

I hope I can meet as many of you as possible over the next 12 months.

David Richards

Around The World Dining Group

The Around the World Dining Group met in October when we enjoyed a delicious meal from the Languedoc and Provence Region of France. Our menu consisted of a pre-dinner cocktail, followed by starters of Stuffed Zucchini Boats and Salada Nicoise.



We dined on Chicken Provencale and Pumpkin Gratin for our main courses and then enjoyed French Fruit Clafoutis, Provencale Lemon Crème Brulee and a French Cheese board – all quite delicious.



In November we visited Cuba.

Starting with a traditional Mojito and deep fried Plantain chips, we then enjoyed a starter of 'Kicked Up' Cuban Salad. Our main courses were, 'Arroz Imperial (layers of rice, chicken, mayonnaise and cheese), Ropa Vieja (pulled beef stew) with black beans. A side dish, Arroz Congri made of rice and red beans.



Our desserts were Boniatillo (Sweet Potato Pudding with rum), Cabezotes de Capuchinos (Spiced syrup cakes).



Our December meal will be what has now become our annual meal out. This year to Martikas Kitchen in Tala.

Carolyn Hart - Tel: 97762371

Card Making



The card making group continues to meet weekly near the Endros wreck in a disused taverna.

We currently have nineteen members but luckily not everyone is on the island all of the time so we just about manage in the table space available to us. We do have a waiting list for anyone interested.

We have recently been asked to donate some of our cards to raise funds for PASYKAF (Cyprus Association of Cancer Patients and Friends) which we were delighted to do.

The photo shows the wide variety of cards made by members on a single afternoon.



“STOP PRESS!” New Class

Circl Mobility Gold - starting Monday 15th January 2024 - contact us for details...

CIRCL MOBILITY GOLD is a new group to the P3A that started on the 4th of October. It is a basic chair based mobility and fitness exercise class. The class is held weekly in the Coral Star, Peyia. The Coral Star have been extremely helpful with this group, setting up the fifteen chairs for us each week, and accommodating changes in layout when requested.

The class is led for about an hour by a professional, qualified and licensed instructor, Tatiana.

Circl Mobility Gold helps to release stress, restore your range of motion and renew your ability to move better. It also reduces stiffness and tension to help you feel your best, and help in improving your balance and focus.

The class is primarily chair based, with gentle movements and exercise. As the class progressed we moved very quickly on to using resistance bands. In a short period of time, everyone gelled as a group and offered mutual support during some of the more “challenging” exercises. The class is conducted in a friendly, inclusive and enjoyable manner

Unfortunately, space dictated that we only had room for 15 chairs per class, so booking was essential. Within a couple of hours of the class being offered all of the fifteen chairs had been booked! We were completely surprised by the popularity of this class and a long waiting list was very quickly compiled!

As we approach Christmas, and the end of the first period for the class, the progress made by all participants is impressive. Everyone has progressed beyond the basic movements, with more and more challenging exercises being introduced, subtly, by Tatiana! To witness the amount of advancement made by everyone is astonishing, and the sound of laughter from the group is very encouraging!

Group leaders Keith & Suzanne Cousins



Computer Technology Group (CTG)

The P3A Computer Technology Group (CTG) was established to provide a medium for P3A members trying to better understand the use of Computers, Tablets, Smart phones and other devices in an increasingly complex world.

The CTG aims to cater to those members at the basic end, and at the more advanced Tech' levels, in a simple and friendly manner.

Since July 2021 physical, live meetings have resumed at the Coral Star, Coral Bay, with many Topics on different subjects requested by existing active members.

In recent months, meetings have included talks on AI, Electric Cars, Keeping Safe on Social Media, Choosing the right VPN, Browser, Search engine etc. Staying safe whilst shopping on line. Other talks have covered Use of Word or similar applications'; 3G,4G & 5G internet speeds, MS Word, Spread Sheets; Making better use of smartphones. Practical workshops are also conducted from time to time on a one-to-one basis.

For the more experienced members, topics have covered higher levels of expertise and extend to Technologies that are impacting our daily lives.

In the coming months, the CTG talks will continue to build on what has been achieved and highlight new evolving Technologies that will impact our members in the future.

So, if you're having trouble with emails, getting your head around a spreadsheet, or any other problem, take a look at the Computer Technology Group (CTG) page, or pop in for a chat. We meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at the Coral Star.

www.paphos3rdage.org/computer-technology-group

For further details, email us at: ctgp3a@gmail.com

Group Leader

Derek Noronha

Asst. Group leader: Bernhard Batchelor

Earth Sciences Group

The latest Earth Science Field Trip was to examine the area around the mouth of the Kouris River west of Limassol.



First, from the top of the cliffs near Kourion, we noticed the 22-million-year-old Pachna chalk terrain had been eroded by the sea to leave collapsing white cliffs. The sea level has since dropped to leave a raised sandy beach. Waves coming from the west have carried sand and pebbles east to form a Tombola at Akrotiri. In the distance we could see the dried-up Kouris River coming down from the Troodos Range to form a delta out to sea. Examining this later, on the seashore we found pebbles of white Pachna chalk, coral, black pebbles of Troodos Harzburgite rock, green Serpentinite and Picrolite. Most interestingly, were thin layers of asbestos in some of the dark pebbles.

At a spot further up the Kouris River, the dried-up bed was full of large igneous boulders that had been rolled down when the river had been fast flowing. While on the west bank was a cliff composed of layers of sediments of small pebbles and sand with freshwater mollusc shells. On the east bank, fine fertile soil had been deposited here, we could see an extensive agricultural area, where previously, sugar cane was grown.

Moving on to the Kouris Beach we first went to see the remains of the marble columns and the ruins of the 5th century Christian Basilica, that has only recently been recovered from the overlying sand dunes of the raised beach. Further along the pebble beach we examined the western Pachna chalk cliff face with various contortions and faults.



We were now hit by an unseasonal THUNDERSTORM, so we had to retire to the nearest Taverna. It just conveniently happened to be lunch time.

Dave Bowler

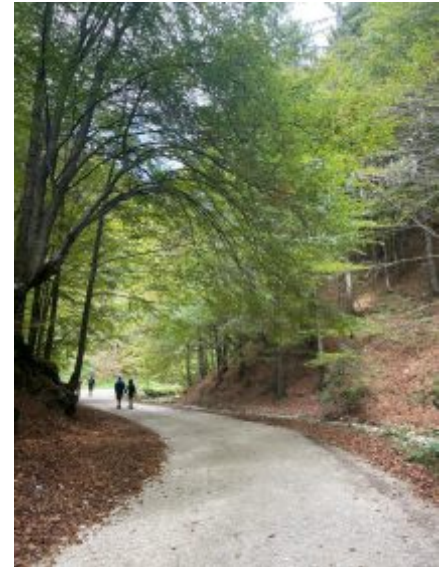
Friday Walking Group

A remarkable journey into the world of the Friday Walking Group.

**“If you want to walk fast, walk alone.
But if you want to walk far, walk together”**

I just finished reading a book named *In Praise of Walking*, by Shane O'Mara and a wise proverb mentioned in the book has stuck in my mind: “If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to walk far, walk together”. And it reflects the idea that while walking alone may lead to quick progress, the real strength and endurance comes from walking together with others. It highlights the value of teamwork, collaboration, and the support of a community.

FWG is a walking group within P3A where it is basically a group of remarkable people who walk on a weekly basis. This proverb perfectly summarises their collective spirit. Despite their age, they understand that together, they can continue to embark on these regular walks, enjoying not just the physical benefits but also the companionship and motivation that come with walking as a group. Some of them may not be the fastest walkers, but their shared commitment allows them to keep going and enjoy the journey together, creating a strong sense of community and friendship along the way.



Participating with this walking group was a wonderful decision. It's clear that their dedication and spirit has been a source of inspiration for anyone. By becoming a part of this group, you not only get the opportunity to learn from their experience and wisdom but also to share your own enthusiasm and energy. Together, you may find yourself walking at their level while making meaningful connections with these inspiring individuals. It's a fantastic way to learn, grow, and enjoy the benefits of both physical activity and companionship.

We have been expatriates outside our origin country for 30 years and when it came to retirement, we aimed to retire in the lovely country Cyprus. We were able to make the dream come true four years ago, when we owned a property in Paphos and settled there. For the past few years, I started to deeply figure out how much I can challenge my own limits by participating in one of my passions which is hiking trips. Also, I wanted to prove to myself that physically I am still young, healthy, fit, and capable of achieving goals if I believe in my strength.

Two years ago, I searched the internet for social activities which mainly included hiking within the Paphos region, and I immediately came across the website “Happy Wanderers” which directed me to the P3A website. Instantly, the FWG got my attention and after communicating with the group leader, my husband and I started participating in FWG hiking activities occasionally as guests and hopefully we will be active members of the group soon.



Friday Walking Group Cont.

Participating in the ongoing weekly hiking trips is a transformative experience that allows you to disconnect from the demands of daily life and immerse yourself in the beauty of nature. It's a chance to escape the hustle and bustle, breathe in the fresh mountain air, and challenge yourself physically and mentally. Each hike route offers new trails to explore, each one with its own unique terrain and scenic vistas. It's an experience that reminds us of the profound beauty that can be found in the simplicity of walking through the wilderness, leaving a lasting impression on both the body and soul. Besides that, walking together also encourages people to share their knowledge, skills, and interests in a friendly environment.



We were invited to participate in a hiking trip abroad in Romania with the FWG group in October, and it was an exciting adventure from the start. The group leaders of the hike trip abroad "Alf & Marilyn OLDMAN" played a key role in ensuring that the adventure is not just memorable but also safe and well-organised. They were the planners behind the journey, with a deep understanding of the foreign terrain, culture, and local customs. They were responsible for creating the itinerary, selecting the best trails, and coordinating accommodations and transportation in a foreign land. But beyond logistics, they serve as a source of motivation and an inspiration of expertise. They were encouraging participants to step out of their comfort zones and embrace the unknown. They ensured the safety and well-being of the group, making decisions that prioritise the welfare of all. Ultimately, the group leader's passion for hiking and their ability to raise a sense of unity and solidarity turned the hiking trip abroad into a transformative and unforgettable experience for

everyone involved.

The moment we met at the airport with all participants; we were warmly welcomed by all hikers who shared our passion for the great outdoors. Our hiking trip together was a challenging but breath-taking trek through the rugged wilderness, where we bonded over the shared experience of conquering nature's obstacles. Since then, I've not only discovered new trails and beautiful landscapes but also formed friendships with like-minded adventurers. Joining P3A has not only enriched my life with outdoor experiences but also connected me with a wonderful community of nature enthusiasts.



Most of the hikers in the group have been a tremendous source of inspiration. Their determination and enthusiasm for the trails have

left a lasting impact on me. Witnessing them conquer steep ascents and rugged terrain with grace and resilience has shown me that age is just a number when it comes to pursuing one's passion. They've taught me that a love for hiking can be a lifelong journey, and I hope to be as active and adventurous as they are when I reach their age. Their spirit and experience serve as a reminder that the beauty of nature is timeless and accessible to all, regardless of age. The great thing about new friends is that they bring new energy to your soul.

Being a member of P3A is a unique experience and walking with FWG proves that a human can do anything if they have the will, strength, and determination. It has brought into my life a sense of belonging, adventure, and friendship that I cherish deeply. I look forward to every adventure with a heart full of gratitude for

the wonderful community of fellow hikers that I'm fortunate to call my friends.

Joumana AK MAKARI

MAH JONG

Monday 1.15 – 4.00pm at Angelikas restaurant



A Chinese form of Dominoes, played with 144 tiles comprised of 108 suit tiles, 28 honors and 8 flowers/seasons. There are 3 suits (Bamboo, Characters and Circles) each suit contains four each of the numbers 1 through 9. Honors – there are four of each of the Red, Green and White Dragon, East, West, North and South Winds. Flowers are individually marked with the numbers 1 to 4. We also have four blanks which can be any tile you wish it to be.

The Mah Jong group restarted a few months ago on a Monday afternoon at Angelikas restaurant. We are quite small at the moment and looking forward to

growing. We currently have mixed abilities – from those who have played a few times to the more experienced players. We play as groups of four on a table, the game can also be played with three people

If you are interested in learning a new game, then why not come along and see us. Free tuition together with Full instructions and pictures of the types of hands you can make will be available for all new comers.

Contact

Fay or Lynne on email MahjongatAngelikas@outlook.com



Photography Group

So, another year is drawing to a close. Where does the time go? How will we remember 2023? Will it be for the ongoing conflict in various parts of the world, or for the devastating effects that climate change is having? Or will it be for the beautiful sunny climate we enjoy here in Cyprus, with all the opportunities it provides for photography enthusiasts to get out with their cameras and photograph some of the many features and events that exist on the island? Whilst not denying the seriousness of conflict and climate change the ever-increasing membership of the Photography Group indicates that we are still keen to practice our photographic skills within the friendly and informative Photographic Group.

Our Monday morning meetings at Coral Star Restaurant provide the opportunity to learn more photographic skills and knowledge from the presentations offered by Tom Brown, our lead presenter. In addition to this we have enjoyed presentations given by other Group members - exploring Namibia by Siggie von Brandt, the emotions behind some of the photos I have taken by Domenico Chille, images of North Cyprus, including Varosha, by Patricia Sainsbury, and suggestions and tips for taking portrait photography by Michael Watts. These presentations have taken place on the new format we have adopted for our meetings – one week is a formal presentation by Tom, and the following week is an informal session where members can ask questions or share knowledge to other members. This is where the opportunity for members to do a presentation arose, and it is proving to be a very popular and enjoyable format.

The best camera to use is the one you have with you at the time. This mantra is oft repeated in photographic circles. Increasingly we are seeing images taken 'on the spot' by Members with their phones, giving the opportunity to capture something on the spur of the moment, without having to adjust camera settings, use a tripod etc, but still managing to produce an acceptable and interesting image. This is one example :



Room for 2

Field trips on the island and abroad always very popular with members. A group of 14 members recently did a 3 day trip to Protaras and the abandoned Varosha suburb of Famagusta. We were very well looked after at the Mimosa Hotel in Protaras and the sheltered lagoon adjoining the beachside hotel was a great place to cool off from the heat.

Mimosa Hotel & Beach



The Group undertook a minibus tour of Varosha with Mr John, who was born and brought up in Varosha, so knows the area very well.

Photography Group Cont.



Waiting to board the Minibus

As we toured the parts of Varosha that are now open to the public we were saddened and dismayed at the scale of degradation and decay that we saw – main roads that were overgrown and weed-covered, buildings, like the King George Hotel, now a crumbling and abandoned ruin, which once had famous names such as Elizabeth Taylor on their guest list; a crane on a half- completed building waiting nearly 50 years for a driver; a mailbox whose contents were never collected; the home and surrounding lands where Mr. John grew up and helped tend the orchards belonging to his family.



The Road to Nowhere



Courtyard of the King George Hotel



Courtyard of the King George Hotel



No collection



Home and surrounding orchards of Mr. John

Photography Group Cont.

After our tour of Varosha we were driven to Famagusta for a lunch break and a look around the old town. No visit to Famagusta would be complete without a visit to Peteks – the famous restaurant and cake shop. What to eat – one is totally spoilt for choice



Peteks - Spoilt for Choice

Our most recent field trip was to the Lighthouse Beach in Paphos. A beautiful sunny Autumn was the perfect setting to explore the newly made broadwalk and photograph the lighthouse before the sun set over the sea.



Lighthouse on the Rocks



Autumn Dusk

The Christmas festivities will soon be upon us and we are now looking forward to our Annual Christmas Lunch and Prizegiving which will take place at the clubhouse of Paphos International Sailing club on Thursday 7th December. More of this in the next edition of Ad Lib.

For more information about the Photography Group and its activities contact our Group Leader, Chris Scorer at crscorer@gmail.com.

Our thanks to the P3A Committee whose hard work behind the scenes makes it possible for so many Groups to enjoy the benefits of belonging to P3A. We wish them and members of all other groups (including the Photography Group!) a very happy Christmas and peace and success in the coming year.

Liz Unwin

November 2023

Discover the real Cyprus

Are You New To Paphos? Want To Really Explore The Area?

Looking To Make New Friends? If So, Read On

Do you like to be out and about? Do you enjoy exploring many different locations, from traditional stone villages to battlefields from long before the time of Julius Caesar? Are outings to wineries, monasteries, castles, tavernas, hermit's caves, museums, catacombs, ancient harbours, marinas, churches, mine workings, a casino from 1878, botanical gardens, likely to appeal to you? Ever been flamingo watching? Seen Halloumi made and then dined on it? Viewed baby turtles hatching out? Visited a 5000 year old graveyard? Over the 7 years of our group's existence we have done all this, and much more.

The modern, vibrant, holiday destination we now call our home has seen many transformations over the ages. Most visitors simply experience the superficial trappings of a holiday resort. However, long before the Greeks arrived, building city states and creating a religion that drew worshipers here from all over the Mediterranean for 1500 years, stone age peoples lived their everyday lives along this coast. Their village has now been recreated. Greeks were followed by Romans, Crusaders, Venetians and Ottomans, who all built their empires and flourished for centuries, before they were moved on, leaving their imprint embedded on the fabric of the island. Present day Paphos is literally built on the ruins of these long gone civilizations.

Mementos of the events from the islands varied past and present are to be found all over the area.

Amongst many other things, we visit them.

We are unlike most other P3A Groups. We have no set meeting time or place. Much like nomads, we look for the right event, time and place, then off we go. Events are often linked to the seasons. There is little point in going flamingo watching when the birds have departed for Africa.

The only common theme that occurs on all our outings is having a long lunch, usually in a well loved traditional taverna, purely as a reward for all the effort that our merry little band has put into the day. If any of this sounds like something you would like to do, simply email me. In particular, new arrivals to

Paphos might find our group of particular interest. You will be very welcome.

Discover & Explore The Real Cyprus

Brian

brianandjeanincyprus@gmail.com

96136047



These evenings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at the Coral Star restaurant opposite Phillipos hypermarket in Coral Bay. 8pm start. If you want to eat, please allow time for that. The Quiz consists of six rounds of Trivia and General knowledge in no particular order; plus a picture round and a flyer containing puzzles and posers.

We finish the main Quiz then go into a quick round that contains four True or False statements and a general knowledge question; get All five right and win a bottle of whisky !!

There are bottles of wine on offer as prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the main quiz. The average correct answer rate is usually between 70 & 80%. Our finish time is before Ten o'clock.

We need more teams to take part; so if you have been thinking about it, why not give it a go? Come along as a team or a pair or by yourself; we will look after you. Ideally teams should have four people but we accept up to six.

Quizzes are about winning, but we do have a good laugh along the way especially when yours truly makes a boo boo or two!

There is a small charge of €2 per head to cover prizes and printing.

So do come along and take part. Below are the dates for December and January.

December 4th and 18th **January 8th and 22nd. (Not using January 1st)**

Some sample questions used in the past: (answers below)

- A.** Name two towns mentioned in the Titles of plays by Shakespeare.
- B.** True or False: *The Finnish flag is a white Cross on a Blue background.*
- C.** Name Tin Tin's dog.

I hope to see you there one Monday evening.

All the best
Mick

Answers: A. Any two of: Windsor, Verona, Venice, Tyre and Athens.
B. False. Blue Cross white background.
C. Snowy.

Saturday Talks

A big thank you to all the members who are making the talks so popular. We have a full program of talks for next year which we hope you will find to your liking. Below you will find brief details of the talks in February and March 2024. There is no talk in January.

The Annabelle Hotel has increased the price of the refreshments for 2024 to €5. It did ask for a raise to €6, but we bartered for €5. However, next year will see an entry fee of €6 for members and €7 for non-members. This leaves €1 from members and €2 from non-members to offset the €100 cost of the room hire (we did negotiate this cost down from €200)!

We have looked at other venues, but believe us when we say there is nothing to come close to the Annabelle in terms of comfort, available technology, maintenance support and high quality refreshments.

ROMAN SOCIETY AND LIFESTYLE

This talk will be given by Gary Adnams. Gary has previously presented talks to our History group.

This presentation will be based on what life was like in Rome 2000 years ago. Inspired by Dr Mary Beard's TV series 'Meet the Romans' we shall meet the Real Romans and who they were and how the people of 3 continents lived together in a very overcrowded city of 1 million people. It wasn't all White Marble and pristine Togas!

I shall discuss most aspects of civic life and the traditional style of housing for the Patricians, upper classes of Romans, to the living conditions to the Plebeians (how the name Plebs originated?) where, as Cicero said, even the Rats have packed up and left.

Rome was probably the first city to become a truly commercial environment, goods were imported from 3 continents; primarily food to feed the 1 million population in the city. We shall look at how that was managed without any Forklift Trucks. Also, without Tesco, Sainsbury and the like!

We shall end the talk by looking at how average citizens can be remembered.

Living here in Paphos we have a wealth of archaeology, most yet to be uncovered, that we can look at and perhaps relate to Pompeii, maybe to postulate what there could ultimately be found below.

BRONZE AGE

Some of you may know Bryan Tolladay from his activities within U3A/C3A since 2004!

Bryan will present this talk in 2 parts, each of approximately 50 minutes allowing for a 20 minute break.

Up until the Late Bronze Age there was ample evidence of civilisation existing and maturing. Then suddenly there is a 500 year gap in the records starting in about 1177 BCE.

Part 1 Bronze Age Civilisation and Trade

Firstly, I try to establish the relevance of the subject to Modern Times and outline the common misconceptions of the period establishing the importance of the scale of civilisation and especially trade.

I then describe the development of civilisation, from the earliest fundamental needs of man, to the fully operative Late Bronze Age Cities, the requirements of these cities, the organisation, skills and especially trade. The period and civilisations are set in context and location; trade fundamentals established. Then the detail of the levels and scope of trade is described with special reference to the role of Cyprus. The development of Bronze workings, its advantages and limitations discussed and other trade in raw materials and finished goods.

I move onto transportation needs and the limitations imposed by the Mediterranean. I review in detail the wonder of the Ulubrun ship.

Having outlined the needs, I address the evidence available, especially dating methods and the scope and analysis of the Clay Tablet records. From these, the scope & scale of the civilisation of the Late Bronze Age can be established and hence the subsequent scale of the collapse.

Part 2 “Who Dunit”

In this part the impact of the collapse of the bronze age is described in detail, with special reference to Cyprus. The prevalent theory of the last century, and until recently, blames the 'Sea Peoples'. This is described and analysed in detail with the historic evidence and its interpretation.

A number of alternative scenarios are each developed, with the supporting evidence and especially the impact on trade. The detail of their impact on the civilisation and results are developed and conclusions drawn.

A sample story written by a member of the Writers Group.

THE WICKER MAN

BY PATTI SHERRATT

I was one of Merlin's children, destined to go to the wicker man. This is my story.

I was born an Atrebate, from the village of Silcestre. This was my ancestral home although my mother, said our people came from Arras in France. I was the only child of my parents. My mother suffered several miscarriages before I was dragged, kicking and howling, into her world. So, I was really looked after and treasured by my mother Rowena and father Edwin. My mother named me Cwen, meaning born a queen. She said our family had links to French royalty. I don't know how true this was but it made a nice story to tell a child. I enjoyed my life, for I was so loved. There was nothing my parents wouldn't do for me. But all this changed when I had passed 10 summers. It all changed the day the Romans came.

The day started bright enough. It was early summer and I had been out gathering herbs for my mother. I had run out of our wicker hut at day break, eager to pick the best leaves and flowers. I called to my friend, Cuthwulf, who lived nearby. He came bounding out, jumping briskly over the fence that separated our two properties.

'Race you to the river,' he called, as he sped past me. I ran after him, eager not to be left behind. He was the same age as me, and we were great pals. I had several girlfriends but much preferred the boys. They were much more adventurous. I suppose you might say I was a bit of a tomboy. When we reached the river, we lay on our tummies for a while, watching the fish darting amongst the pebbles. So engrossed were we in this activity, that we didn't hear the noise at first. Or smell the fire that came from our homestead.

But then we heard the noise. We were alarmed at first by shouts and screams. Then we saw a large column of smoke drifting across the meadow from our village. I wanted to jump up, to run to my mother but Cuthwulf pulled me back. 'Don't go. Wait, something is happening.' He pointed to a group of men running into our village. The men had bright shining helmets and long red cloaks. 'Romans, he hissed 'Stay down. They are bad men.'

We watched in horror as the fire from our village first engulfed the outside stockade, then spread inside to the huts. We saw the Romans dash in, swords raised. I covered my mouth in horror. I wanted to scream, but Cuthwulf held onto me, his arms around me. 'Don't make a noise, we are safe here. There is nothing you can do,' he concluded sadly.

When the Romans had gone, we crept out of our hiding place. We looked around, but there was nothing left of our village. All the livestock had been driven off by the Romans, no pigs grunting or chickens clucking. Nothing. Only dead people, my parents among them. I screamed when I found the burnt bodies of my parents. They were by the central hearth in our hut. They had fallen onto the hot logs. I just hoped they were dead before the fire burnt them. Cuthwulf held me by the hand. 'My parents are gone as well. Come, we must leave. There is nothing we can do here.'

'But where can we go?' I asked. 'Who will take care of us?' I knelt amongst the debris and clasped my hands in prayer to our god Taranis. 'Please help', I whispered. Then, as if in answer to my prayer, a hand helped me up. Startled, I looked into the kindly face of Merlin the Druid. 'You are safe with me, little maid. I will look after you.' He already had his arm around Cuthwulf. 'Come with me, both of you. You will be known as Merlin's children. Come away from this place of death and join the others.' And with that he led us both to a waiting horse and cart. Other rescued children from our village greeted us as we clambered up. We didn't feel so alone.

After their murderous rampage, the Romans fortified our village and made it into a large town, Calleva Atrebatum. But I never went back. Instead, my days were spent training to be a Druid's helper. Merlin took us to his compound on the island of Anglesey, called Mona by the Romans. There we learnt the magic tricks of his

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trade. We gathered herbs and made medicines, to treat the local villagers. We were all orphans, rescued by Merlin from the Romans. It was a nice life, when I look back on it. But we had no idea of the fate that might befall some of us.

We all knew about the wicker man. It stood 100 foot tall on the beach and faced out to sea, towards Ireland. Every year it marked the summer solstice and at that time the wicker cage was filled with flowers, fruits, small birds and animals. Then it was set alight and the flames filled the air. It was sad that the animals were burnt alive but we were told it was good, because their ashes would help to make the crops grow.

Two more summers had passed since I had become one of Merlin's children. I had thought my idyllic life would go on for ever, until one day in summer, I overheard a conversation between Merlin and the goodwife we called our hut mother. 'It is Cwen's turn to go to the wicker man,' said Merlin to Editha.

'What about Cuthwulf as well? They are always together in this life. They should say together in the afterlife,' said Editha. 'Yes,' Merlin stroked his beard thoughtfully. 'Always two are chosen. Let them be the ones. It is their time'

My time, I thought, running to tell Cuthwulf. My time. No! I want to live! I don't want to die. I had always thought of Merlin as a kind old man, but now I saw the real reason he housed and fed us orphans at his own expense. Now it was payback time. Some of us had to go to the fire. I found Cuthwulf chopping wood and told him what I had overheard. Then and there we hatched a plot to escape.

'They will look for us,' mused Cuthwulf. 'We must find a place to hide.' He said we could dig a shallow pit in the forest, and pull branches and leaves over us, until the hue and cry had died down. 'How many days have we got left?' he asked. We calculated it was seven days to midsummer. We had time. So secretly, we went to the forest to dig our pit, using gardening tools. With the other children, we helped to build the wicker man and then, we were instructed about the part we were to play - how it was a great honour to be part of the ceremonies. We were to be dressed in white and decorated with flowers. And all the while, we planned our escape.

On the last day before Midsummer, we concealed a small trap door and rope at the back of the wicker man's legs. Then, along with the others, we carried in cages containing piglets, doves, foxes, baby sheep and goats. We arranged flowers amongst the cages, and made excuses to stay behind. Our companions left us and as dusk fell, we made our final plans. 'Hurry,' said Cuthwulf, 'We don't have much time.' He opened the small trap door at the base of the wicker cage. 'Here, grab the rope. Easy now. I will feed it through your hands. You go first.' I tied the rope around my waist as he slowly lowered me down to the stony beach. Collapsing in a heap on the pebbles, I let go of the rope and he pulled it back into the wicker cage. Then tying it firmly to an upright, he lowered himself carefully to the ground.

'They will find the rope, but they won't find us.' he said. With that, we ran swiftly to our hiding place in the forest. Once there, we pulled the concealing branches over us and waited. We didn't have to wait long. Torches lit up the night sky as Merlin and his helpers searched for us. They searched for a long time. I murmured a prayer to my favourite god, Taranis in hope of protection. It worked, because they never discovered our hiding place.

As daybreak poked its slim fingers under our covering of tree branches, we knew it was time to leave. Hand in hand we ran through the forest until we reached a small cove. Our luck was in. We saw a small fisherman's coracle, moored at the jetty. Stealthily, we crept forward and silently manoeuvred our craft. We took turns at the paddle, until the skin covered coracle was swept by the tide out to sea. Looking back, we heard chanting from the beach and saw the wicker man going up in flames. Thank full that we had not gone to the fire, we clasped hands and looked forward, towards the Irish shoreline.

'My name means one who is full of power,' commented Cuthwulf. 'And that's just how I feel right now!' I hugged him gratefully. Power indeed. We were free at last!

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