

GREECE

After all the excitement of the *Hammer Thrower* and having made a little money, Margie and I decided to take a holiday in the autumn. There was a problem we had to face and a break would give us a chance to think about it. Our two years in England were fast running out and we had to decide what we were going to do. Either I would return to Australia and an unknown future or stay in England and sculpt. Actually there was not really any choice as I just could not imagine giving up after 20 months of excitement with the promise of more to come. As I had been talking about Madeira all of our married life, Margie suggested that I should show her the island.

If we were going to take a trip to Madeira I thought why not see other places on the way. I decided to travel to the island via Madrid so we could see the Prado Museum and visit Toledo, as Margie was a fan of El Greco. After Madeira we would fly to Gibraltar, and then take the ferry across to Morocco, and overnight train to Meknes and Fez, and then fly home from Tangiers. As we were anxious about us both flying in the same plane while leaving three small children alone in England, I worked out a very complicated schedule that had us on separate flights. This turned out to be such a nightmare of logistics that we vowed never to repeat it, so decided that all future holidays abroad without the children were to be by train!

Madrid was as exciting as Paris had been. The Prado was out of this world and seeing Goya's *Naked Maja* in the flesh was thrilling, although I did wonder if Mr Ozane would approve! We took a bus out to Toledo and visited El Greco's house and saw his famous altar painting in S Tomé. It was all excitingly foreign to us Aussies from the Bush. Going back to Madeira was fun and brought back many happy memories for me, especially when we met some of my teenage friends from the past.

In Gibraltar we took a taxi up to the top of the Rock to see the apes before boarding a ferry to cross to Tangiers. It was an amazing feeling to be standing in Africa, a bit like going to the moon. We stayed a night with some of my mother's friends and experienced for the first time the necessity of having a guard sleep across our bedroom door for security.

One of the most exciting places we visited were the caves where Phoenician miners carved the millstones used for pressing olives for oil. Looking up at the ceiling of the cave we could see the circles that had been left when the miners had hacked the wheels out of the mother rock. It was my first experience of the ancient world of Troy, Mycenae, Knossos, Tyre and Sidon.

We visited the market of the old town and for the first time I experienced the unpleasant bartering world of the Arab merchant. We saw the ruined stables of the Sultan that had once housed a thousand horses. Morocco was an interesting experience and I saw things I needed to see, but we were very happy to return to Marwood and the boys.

The trip had allowed us to talk over our future and we had decided to ask Jimmy Smart if we could stay on another year at Marwood so we could see if the *Hammer Thrower* had been just a flash in the pan. If, at the end of a third year things still looked promising and we decided to settle in England, it would mean buying a house and finding a school for the boys. Luckily Jimmy had no plans for Marwood and was happy to extend the lease for one more year, although he then wanted to sell the house to pay for a new one he was planning to build in the garden for his retirement. This meant that we had a

year to think of where we wanted to live and in what kind of house. We would never be able to afford a house as large as Marwood, but as we didn't need one that big we started to look at cottages.

Once again the winter had set in and the temperature had dropped to freezing in the barn, driving me up into the attic. Our trip abroad had caused a revival of my interest in the past and led me to search out all I could about Greek mythology. My maquettes started to have titles like *Hera's Cuckoo*, and *Hephaestus modelling Pandora*.



Hera's Cuckoo

As I learnt to manipulate the wax my armatures became more daring until eventually I did one of two men, one lifting the other in the air on one arm. I called it the *Acrobats*. I liked the finished bronze so much I decided that it would be my next summer's project. It would be 16 feet tall and be a make or break sculpture, as this would be my last chance to do something really big if the circumstances decreed we had to return to Australia.

Having steeped myself in Greek mythology all winter I decided that we should take a trip to Athens in March before I started on the *Acrobats*. There was no way we were going to fly in separate planes again so chose to take the Orient Express from Paris to Athens instead. Once there we could hire a car and drive around Greece, cross by ferry to Brindisi and from there catch a train to Venice and another to Paris. It all looked very simple on paper so I bought

the tickets as soon as we had found some nice girls who would take care of the boys for the three weeks that we needed to do the round trip.



'Acrobats', maquette in bronze

We arrived in Paris in the evening and changed railway stations to catch the Orient Express. In 1971 the train was the original pre-war steam engine with wagon-lit coaches as it had not yet been turned into the luxury joy ride it is today that only goes as far as Venice. This was the real thing, genuine old-fashioned transport and we were really excited by the sight of it when we walked along the platform and looked at the huge steam engine. The wagon-lit coaches looked clean although tired and worn, but this gave them a very romantic air. A uniformed steward, who came straight out of the *Student Prince* opera, welcomed us on board. He showed us our couchette that was set up for the day as a large sofa. In the corner was a little washstand with a potty in a cupboard underneath! Situated by the steward's cubby hole was the one lavatory that catered for the six couchettes in the carriage. As there was no dining car we bought ham and cheese baguettes from a platform trolley, along with a bottle of water and another of red wine. The steward said that he would serve us an Espresso when we had finished our dinner.

Soon we were rolling across France heading for the Alps, eating our picnic dinner and sipping cheap wine. What an adventure and how sad that all this has now gone! The steward brought us our coffee asking if he could make up our beds as we sipped it in the corridor. He quickly changed our compartment into the romantic scene from the film *North by Northwest*. We climbed into our bunks and were soon lulled fast asleep by the sound of the wheels on the track. I woke in the night and looked out of the window at a full moon shining in a clear sky above the snow-covered mountains of Switzerland. It is at moments like these that you just have to hug yourself, you feel so happy and fortunate.

The morning found us rolling across the vast plains of the Po River towards Venice. The steward brought us morning coffee and bread and when we had finished he turned our compartment back into our personal little sitting room. Some way out of Venice we stopped and our carriage was detached, shunted onto the train bound for Athens and we were off again heading for Trieste, about to enter Communist Yugoslavia.

Travelling in our carriage was a young American bound for Trieste. He asked me what I did in life and when I told him that I was a sculptor he said, "Are you going to study the works of Praxiteles?" I am ashamed to say I had forgotten that Praxiteles was the greatest of all the Athenian sculptors. I have never forgotten the withering look he gave me before turning away!

Lunch in Italy had meant another dash across the platform to a trolley when we reached Trieste. The steward announced that there would be a dining car added after we crossed the border, so advised us not to eat too much as we would have a *cordon bleu* meal that evening.

The cabin next to ours was occupied by a rather large and distinguished-looking gentleman. On one of my walks to the end of the corridor he stopped me and asked what we were doing and where we were going. I told him that my wife and I were on our way to Athens to see the wonders of ancient Greece. He informed me that he was a judge and then showed me a copy of *Playboy* magazine! I nearly died laughing inside. He then asked, "Would you do me the honour of joining me for dinner as my guests?" As he couldn't take his eyes off Margie's red hair and had just shown me *Playboy* I realised he was only really interested in one of us! During the afternoon, while waiting for dinner, we watched miles of very unattractive wet muddy Yugoslavian countryside roll past our window.

At eight o'clock the steward walked up and down the corridor beating a gong to announce dinner, so we joined the judge and walked along to the dining car. Margie and I were looking forward to the promised sumptuous meal after eating sandwiches for 24 hours. The dining car had even more atmosphere than the wagon-lit, but of the wrong sort! It was a relic of the Crimean War with wooden seats and practically had straw on the floor, which did not bode well for the *cordon bleu* meal we had been promised. We were handed a very greasy menu that had only three words on it. Soup, Meat, Dessert, with no other explanation whatsoever! The carriage was empty except for two Americans sitting across the aisle from us. Our fellow diners had already ordered and their soup arrived while we were looking at the menu. I heard one man ask the waiter, "What's that in my soup?" I couldn't believe my ears and I saw our dreams of a good meal evaporate before our eyes. However, there was some Yugoslavian wine and the judge was paying. At the end of a quite awful meal we thanked him politely, escaped back into our compartment and collapsed in laughter.

During the night we crossed the border between Macedonia and Greece. On both sides we had to show our passports to heavily-armed policemen. Looking out of the window of our compartment while in no-man's land we found ourselves exactly opposite a steam engine and could see the drivers swigging wine from a large bottle, so we waved at them. A whistle blew and as their train moved off the driver passed the now nearly empty bottle over to me! Believe it or not, we poured the wine into a glass and drank it. It was pretty rough, but we felt a bond of comradeship with the drivers who were heading in the opposite direction. We had arrived in Greece!



Athens and Rhodes

The train steamed on and we eventually reached Athens in the middle of a thunderstorm. We leisurely collected our luggage and climbed out onto the platform to join the back of the longest taxi queue we had ever seen. The other passengers had known about the taxi problem and raced ahead of us so there was nothing to do but wait. As we stood there we saw the judge descend from the train to be met by a ravishing young redhead who gave him a big kiss. We guessed she must have been his daughter! We couldn't help but look with longing at a very large black chauffeur-driven Mercedes that was waiting to whisk him away into town. Due to the heavy rain our queue was nearly static as

there was only a dribble of taxis available to collect the large number of passengers.

As the judge was about to get into the car he looked up and spotted us standing at the back of the queue. We waved to him and then to our surprise he walked over to the policeman who was controlling the crowd and prodded him with his umbrella and pointed towards us. The policeman walked down the line to where we were standing and said, "Come, you are the guests of Greece," and led us to the front of the queue and put us in the next taxi that pulled up. We had a Christmas card from the judge the following year so we wrote back and thanked him for saving the day. I hope he survived the Revolution the following year!



'Greek judge' reading 'Playboy'

We had been recommended to stay at a little hotel in the Plaka, the ancient part of the town that nestles under the east cliff of the Acropolis from where we would be able to walk to the entrance of the temple with ease. It is also the part of the town where all the old cafés are situated and the home of Greek music. In the evenings after exploring the ruins we would have our dinner in a café and listen to the unique sound of the balalaika and watch the locals dance. It was all very intoxicating.

Climbing up to the Acropolis for the first time was utter magic. Without realising it we had chosen the Greek Orthodox Easter for our visit and our first day in the city was *Clean Monday*. Apart from the Acropolis everything was closed. When we reached the Temple there was hardly another person in sight! It had poured with rain all night so the white limestone plateau glistened in the soft sunlight. It was awe-inspiring. In those days you could actually walk inside the roofless temple. We wandered around for a couple of hours in a daze watched by a black cat.

As we were about to leave, an old man arrived carrying a camera and tripod. It was the type that can develop a sepia print while you wait. He wanted to take our photograph and we didn't have the heart to refuse as we could possibly be his only customer that day. We agreed to pose for him if he would take one of us with our own camera.



'Clean Monday'



The Caryatides

Because of the rain the three marble caryatides were crying real tears for their missing sister that is in the British Museum that doesn't appear to cry because water doesn't shine on the terracotta as it does on the marble.



The Caryatides' Temple

We descended to the ruined Agora and walked in a field of asphodels, their white flowers and grey-green leaves famous as the garland worn by the Goddess Persephone. It was here that we met another tourist wandering around on her own who asked if we knew why there were no people about. *Clean Monday!* It was lunchtime so we asked Mary to join us for a meal. She very kindly gave us a book on the Acropolis. Margie and Mary still write!

We passed the Temple of Zeus where some of the columns have fallen. It is not until you see the gigantic drums of marble on their sides that you realise what master builders the ancient Greeks were. The drums leave one breathless with wonder. Margie is standing behind one in the middle!



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Temple of Zeus



'Ginger Tops' and 'Socrates'

One day we visited a small theatre that lies at the southern base of the Acropolis. Although from a ruin point of view it is not very interesting, in the front row of the marble seats there is a wonderful sculpture of Socrates. He looks so wicked and mischievous I asked Margie to give him a hug and took my favourite photograph of my favourite girl. Socrates and Margie have sat on my desk ever since to remind me of that happy day.



Jockey of Artemision

Next morning we went to the museum to see the bronze sculpture of the *Boy Jockey*. We wandered around and couldn't find it anywhere so eventually asked an attendant. *Closed*. What a disappointment! At that moment a nice-looking Englishman walked past and asked if he could help. We explained about our disappointment as we had come all the way from Australia to see this one sculpture. "Come with me." He led us past the guard and into the closed section. There was the *Boy Jockey* and what a delight to see! The sculpture captures such incredible action, which is what I wanted to see, as I believe all sculpture should be active if it is to live.



Hephaestus modelling Pandora

We visited the temple of Hephaestus, the god of sculptors. I had just done a maquette of him creating Pandora, his hands modelling the earth's clay into the smooth flesh of woman as she watches, reaching out to touch the miracle of creation. Making ideas come alive is the thrill of sculpting.

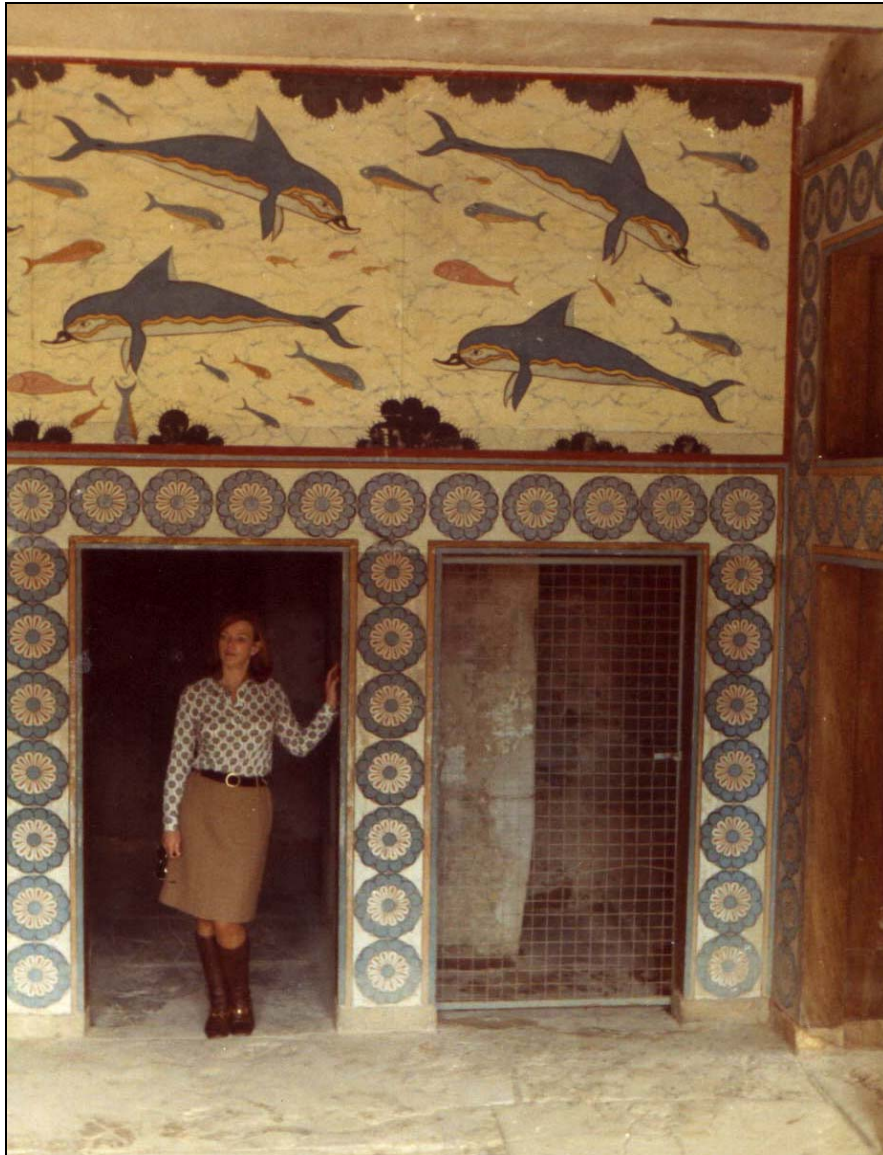
In the evening we took a taxi down to the port of Athens and boarded a ferry bound for Crete to visit Knossos. This trip was instigated by a book that we had read in the Ninety Mile Desert entitled *Bull from the Sea*, a story of Theseus and the Minotaur by Mary Renault. I really wanted to see the famous palace

that Sir Arthur Evans had excavated, and when we arrived in the morning we immediately hopped into a taxi and were driven out to the ruins.

We spent all morning climbing about on the reconstructed buildings imagining ourselves back in the days of the Minotaur. We had a fabulous time daydreaming and would not have missed the opportunity of seeing it all for anything. We walked along the oldest paved road in the world and sat on the King's Throne, something I am sure you are not allowed to do now!



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'Throne Room' of Knossos



'Queen's Chamber', and Margie with her favourite dolphins



The Greek boys and girls somersaulting the 'Minotaur'

The magic was completed when across the street we found a restaurant where we drank a sea-dark blood-red wine named 'Minotaur' and ate dolmadies with feta cheese! In the museum after lunch we saw the statue of the Priestess, bare-breasted and holding a snake in each hand, as well as the original paintings of the Madonna-blue dolphins swimming in the waves, and another of the boys and girls jumping over a bull. It was one of those breathtaking days that are full of sunshine and dreams.



Minoan 'Fertility Goddess' with snakes

The ferry was waiting for us at the quay, as was a vendor of sticky Greek pastries. We bought several cakes that looked absolutely mouth-watering for our dinner and climbed the gangway. The ship sailed out of the harbour into a beautiful sunset then turned east for Rhodes. We opened the brown paper bag of cakes as we watched the coast glide by and tried the first of our purchases. It was awful, sickly sweet and impossible to swallow, so over the side it went. Number two was even worse and number three quite appalling. A feast for the fish! As there was no restaurant on the ship we decided that as we were exhausted the best thing to do was collapse onto our bunks. Our cabin was small but had a porthole that I opened with great effort to let in some fresh air.

When we cleared the eastern tip of Crete the ship hit the Aegean swell. It was horrendous and very soon Margie asked me to leave her alone as she lay moaning on her bunk. I have never known such a pitch and roll to occur at the same time. It seemed that most of the other passengers were also feeling the effects of the rough sea as when I arrived in the bar I found it was deserted except for a young couple. The boy turned out to be a native of Rhodes, but his wife came from Scotland, and they were on their way to settle on his island. He was a painter and they planned to open a gallery-café and sell his work as she served coffee to the tourists, which sounded like a good life to me.

As we sipped our drinks and chatted, the motion of the ship got steadily worse, making us hang onto the bar rail with one hand and our glass with the other. It was time to see how Margie was faring. Getting to the cabin was a roller-coaster ride and to my horror, when I opened the cabin door, I saw water sloshing around on the floor, pouring in through the open porthole every time we rolled seaward! No wonder it had been hard to open as we were only feet above the Plimsoll line, which was why it was meant to be kept closed! I scrambled over the water using a chair, slammed the porthole shut and fastened the bolts. Luckily I had dumped our bags on the dressing table so only Margie's shoes were afloat. She was fast asleep on the lower bunk and totally unaware of the chaos that surrounded her. I climbed onto the upper bunk and hoped the water would disappear down a plug hole in the corner of the cabin, which it did thank goodness!

Next morning we sailed into Rhodes harbour. What a sight the Colossus must have been as he straddled the entrance to the ancient port! I introduced Margie to my bar friends of the night before and they very kindly asked us to join them for dinner that evening after we had explored the town.

So much happened on the island of Rhodes throughout Mediterranean history. The Crusaders had come and gone, defeated by the Ottomans, but had left their legacy in the form of a mighty castle. We had a wonderful day sightseeing and then met up with our friends and took them out to dinner after which they walked us up to the ancient Greek theatre under a full moon. It was one of those evenings that you never forget and when we said goodnight and wished them both all the luck in the world for their new life, the boy gave Margie a ring set with a beautiful green stone. I wonder if they still run a café and if he is still painting. Hopefully he is.

The following day we hired a taxi and headed out to the temple of Lindos, which must be one of the most romantic spots one can imagine. To get to the temple you have to either walk or ride a donkey up through the whitewashed sugar lump houses of the village that clings to the cliff. The view from the temple to the horizon out over the sea was sublime and you could imagine the Argonauts rowing across it.

While admiring the view we had spotted a little seaside restaurant in the village below us that looked perfect for lunch. As the driver turned out to be so cheerful, we asked him to eat with us and to order, so our meal really was a Greek one instead of being the usual tourist fare.



Our taxi driver buying us oranges

When we had finished we set off to visit the Valley of the Butterflies. Every spring the Monarch butterflies congregate in one valley on the island. They come in their billions and settle on the trees so thickly you can't see a single inch of bark. Walking down the path in the valley is like walking through a glorious yellow tapestry. It is one of those happenings that I would give anything to repeat.

We were sad to leave Rhodes but it was now time to return to Athens and collect our car and explore the mainland: Corinth, Mycenae, Epidauros, Tires, Delphi and Meteora, before crossing to the island of Corfu, and then across to Italy to catch our train home to England. We had hired a VW bug for sentimental reasons, as it had been our first car when we were newly married. We collected it and headed south to see Mycenae, the famous city of King Agamemnon, the Conqueror of Troy.

We eventually managed to drive out of the labyrinth of Athens and headed for Corinth. As well as the heavy traffic, all driving at breakneck speed, the signposts were written in Greek, but the names on our map were in English. It was a nightmare! At last we were heading in the right direction and pretty soon left the traffic behind and by the time we crossed the Canal we were able to stop in the middle of the bridge and look down into the water below. It is a very impressive sight and to our delight made more so by a ship passing through just at the right moment, although I failed to photograph it!



Corinth Canal



Lion Gate

We arrived in Mycenae, left the car in the empty car park and walked up to the Lion Gate. One can feel the *Iliad* and the presence of King Agamemnon, captain of the 1,200 strong fleet that sailed to Troy. The names of Clytemnestra, Helen, Cassandra, Hector, Achilles, Paris and King Priam, all rang in our ears. To walk through the Lion Gate that had been used by people of this ancient time is something of a miracle. We passed through into the fortress and looked down on the tombs excavated by Heinrich Schliemann and his young Greek wife. Here they had discovered the golden masks and cups that disappeared from the museum when Berlin fell to the Russians, although luckily not before moulds had been taken. As we passed through the Lion Gate I couldn't resist buying copies of the two cups which now collect dust in the Agcroft inglenook. We climbed up to the Palace ruins to look out over the

plains of Argos. It was here that Clytemnestra murdered her husband Agamemnon, while he was taking a bath!



Agamemnon



Capturing the bull with ropes

Up early next day we drove east to visit the mighty walls of Tirrens, or at least what is left of them. How they moved the stones in the famous arched tunnel is quite beyond comprehension.

The theatre of Epidaureus is one of the wonders of the world. A great horseshoe of stone seats that reaches to the sky. It is in nearly perfect repair and the acoustics are such that if you drop a coin on the stone in the middle of the theatre floor, people sitting in the top rows can hear its ring. When Margie stood in the middle and recited a poem I could hear every word.



Epidaureus
Margie reciting from 'Ulysses' learnt at school

We returned north and headed for Delphi, spending the night at a hotel in a very unattractive town called Lamia. It was March and when the sun disappeared the temperature dropped to zero. The fact that everything was built out of marble and lit only by fluorescent light made it seem even colder. We were glad to get up early and continue on our way towards Delphi. The

mountains got higher and we could soon see snow-capped Parnassos ahead of us. On up we drove and the sun came out so by the time we arrived it was a glorious day. What a place and what atmosphere! Olive groves surround the ruins that hang on the side of the mountain. The arena for the chariot races is almost in perfect condition; as is the doorway of the Treasury inscribed with the famous words, *Know Yourself*.

Delphi is one of the Earth's magic spots. Years later I did a sculpture entitled, *Know Your Self*, splitting the words into three on purpose to fit a three-sided stainless steel obelisk with a granite base. I had the Delphi inscription *Know Yourself* carved in ancient Greek on one side, Chinese calligraphy on another and Egyptian hieroglyphs on the third.

We walked down to the Tholos having sat awhile at the top of the Theatre gazing out at the fabulous view with not a soul in sight. We had seen the Tholos nestled amongst the olive trees below us, looking like the 'gem in the crown'. No one seems to be absolutely sure what the Tholos was used for, but this little circular temple holds incredible magic. Whatever it was must have been connected to peace and tranquillity, contemplation or meditation. Being there is one of our most treasured memories of Greece.



Tholos of Delphi

After leaving the temple precincts we went to the nearby museum and saw the *Charioteer* that is thought to have been sculpted in 480 BC. He stands, reins in hand, gazing out in front of him, waiting for the starter's signal. Oh what a sculpture! We left the museum totally bemused. In 2004 when Tim ran the pre-Olympic Marathon, I suggested that he should go to the home of the Delphic Oracle and see the Tholos, drink in the atmosphere and then gaze on the *Charioteer*. He had already run the London, Paris and New York Marathons

and had decided to retire after this one, which turned out to be the toughest of all, being uphill most of the way. However, he claims that it was a good note to end on! It all sounded like hell to us but we are very proud of his achievement.



Charioteer of Delphi

We left and drove to Itea across a plain full of the oldest and largest olive trees we had ever seen. There were hundreds of them all with gigantic girths at least 15 feet around and must have been thousands of years old. It was an amazing sight and if it hadn't been getting late we would have liked to have stopped and examined one. I have always thought it would be a wonderful place to go for a painting holiday. Van Gogh would have loved it!

Itea is a town on the north coast of the Gulf of Corinth. When we arrived at the guesthouse we had booked into they didn't seem at all pleased to see us. We were shown a bare room with damp walls, damp floor and two damp beds. By now it was well below freezing outside and the temperature inside was not much higher. Putting on every single piece of clothing we possessed, including our overcoats, we wrapped our heads in jumpers and crawled beneath the damp eiderdown and tried to sleep, which was not really possible as the wind kept the shutters banging all night.

We left as early as possible next morning, encasing ourselves in the VW with the heating up full blast, but even so it took a couple of hours for our bodies to stop shivering and thaw out. What a night!

However, we were soon approaching Arta to see the famous Turkish bridge that spanned the river in one gigantic arch. We dutifully marvelled at the grace of the structure, but it is not nearly as beautiful as the packhorse bridge outside Lucca in Tuscany.

Having seen photographs of the monasteries of Meteora I was determined to visit them. In the Dark Ages the monks had retreated to the top of these gigantic domes of rock and built their impregnable church fortresses to protect themselves against the marauding bandits that plagued the lands. In those lawless times it was impossible to reach them unless the monks lowered a thousand-foot-long rope attached to a basket down the side of the mountain that must have been quite a hair-raising trip! Talk about having faith!



The church fortress of 'Meteora'

The geology is as amazing as the monasteries. The landscape was carved by a giant river system that scoured out the soft material many millions of years ago, leaving the harder rock as great domes. The truly incredible thing is that the domes are conglomerate rock made of ancient river silt laid down billions of years ago. The geology is awesome as these rocks reach back to the beginning of the Earth's history.

No longer do you have to go up to the monastery in a basket because a stairway has been built. Apart from it being a very steep long climb, it is comparatively easy to reach the tiny church although it left us quite breathless, but I guess not nearly as breathless as the monks were after hauling all the building material up to the top. I am not a great fan of religious Byzantine mosaics so the art in the church did not attract me as much as the scenery did. The monks certainly had a God-like view of the world!

From Meteora we headed for the coast and the town of Igoumenitsa, the port from which the night ferry leaves to cross to the island of Corfu. We arrived to be told that the sea was far too rough so the trip had been cancelled and the ferry would not sail until the morning. The sea didn't look very rough to us, but as there was nothing we could do about it, I walked over to the hotel thinking that it was more likely that the captain was in love with the innkeeper's daughter and wanted to spend the night in port. Ours was the only car waiting to board the ferry and apart from the four people we could see standing on the quay, there seemed to be no other passengers. At the hotel I enquired for a room and found they only had one, but luckily free, so I took it sight unseen. I was also told that the restaurant was closed and there was absolutely no food available until the morning!

Having secured our bed for the night we decided to go for a walk. We still had some of our delicious oranges from Rhodes so we took two to eat as dinner at the end of the quay where we found four very miserable girls from New Zealand. We discovered that they had nowhere to sleep, no money and nothing to eat, as they had depended on getting to Corfu where they had friends to stay with at a campsite.

We went back to the car and they were soon each wolfing down an orange. Greek oranges are quite the best we have ever tasted so pretty quickly the bag was empty. While they were eating I went into the hotel and asked if there was anywhere that the girls could sleep. Very grudgingly they agreed to let them use an empty storeroom, at a price! The girls had sleeping bags and could use our bathroom, so at least they now had somewhere to sleep out of the cold and had full tummies.

The following morning the sun was shining and the sea was as flat as a pancake. The six oranges Margie had hidden for breakfast were soon devoured and then we all walked down to the quay and waited for the captain to appear as surely there was no reason for him not to sail. A couple of trucks arrived and I have a sneaking suspicion they were the cause of our delay and not the innkeeper's daughter. We were soon all on board and set sail.

Apart from the fact it was the only way we could get to Italy, the reason that we were going to Corfu was to see the island that the Durrell brothers had made famous. Gerald Durrell's book *My Family and Other Animals* had enchanted us in our farming days. I was also a great fan of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandra Quartet*, *Bitter Lemons* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus* as all these

books had had an influence on my wanting to return to England and travel in Europe.

We arrived in Corfu harbour and set off to explore the island after saying goodbye to the girls, having made them promise to come and see us in Devon when they reached England. We found the Durrell house, but unfortunately so had the rest of the world. Like many dreams, the reality can be a disappointment, but we could imagine what it must have been like between the wars. The island has been built over and the town has become ugly. Years later the same thing happened to the little hill town of Menerbes after Louis Males wrote *A Summer in Provence*. Such is life. At least we knew Menerbes before it was ruined. Corfu was fascinating and I am really glad we went there 35 years ago, as God only knows what it is like now.

After touring around for a couple of days we regretfully said goodbye to our VW bug and boarded the ferry for Brindisi and Italy. The crossing only took an hour and we were soon settled into our compartment on the train and heading for Milan. Once there we changed for Paris and then again for the Channel crossing and London. A night with my mother and home after what had been for us an Odysseus voyage of discovery. After three weeks of Greece I returned fired up and ready to start sculpting again.

My other exciting discovery had been the ancient Cycladic sculptures from the Aegean island. They are stunningly beautiful and influenced both Modigliani and Brancusi. I bought a sculpture and he sits on my desk obviously meditating on the deep philosophical question of *Know Yourself*.



Cycladic 'Thinker'