

GROW BOLD

LEARN, LAUGH AND LIVE

In This Issue:

- The year the sun grew dim
- The king of card games
- My retirement career in Cyprus
- Glory & a crown of olives
- Did man make fire or did fire make man?
- Orchid cactus
- Embroidery in Cyprus
- Recipe - Tiropitta

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The year the sun grew dim



Throughout millennia, the Sun has wielded unparalleled influence over Earth, shaping the destiny of life and civilizations. It has been a relentless force, driving photosynthesis, orchestrating cycles of cooling and heating, stirring atmospheric currents, providing protection, and serving as the ultimate timekeeper. Yet, there are moments when the Sun's impact is intricately woven with other catastrophic events, creating a synergy that alters the course of history. One such epoch-defining event occurred in 536 AD, when a massive volcanic eruption shrouded the Earth in a veil of darkness. This eruption, compounded by the Sun's subsequent reduced output, triggered what historians and scientists refer to as the Late Antique Little Ice Age (LALIA). This period, lasting nearly 300 years, wrought dramatic changes upon the world, reshaping civilizations, altering climates, and leaving an indelible mark on humanity's collective journey.

In the spring of 536 AD, a cataclysmic volcanic eruption in the Northern Hemisphere spewed vast amounts of ash and aerosols into the stratosphere. This volcanic veil reflected sunlight away from Earth, plunging global temperatures and cloaking the planet in a persistent, eerie twilight. The Sun, usually a beacon of life and warmth, became a dim spectre, its rays struggling to penetrate the thickened atmosphere. As a result, 536 AD is often cited as the beginning of the "worst year to be alive," a prelude to years of unrelenting cold, failed harvests, and widespread famine.

The year the sun grew dim

The synergistic relationship between the volcanic eruption and the Sun's diminished output did more than just cool the planet; it disrupted the very fabric of human societies. Crops failed en masse, leading to starvation and economic turmoil. The Byzantine Empire, already reeling from plagues and political instability, faced additional hardship as agriculture faltered and societal unrest grew. In China, the Nánběi Cháo period saw increased migrations and conflicts as resources became scarce. The cooling also likely contributed to the mass movements of peoples, such as the migrations of Slavic tribes into the Balkans, forever altering the demographic landscape of Europe.

The Sun, through its reduced activity during this period, exacerbated the climatic cooling initiated by the volcanic eruption. Solar output, measured through various proxies such as ice cores and tree rings, indicates a period of low solar activity known as the "solar minimum." This compounded the volcanic effects, prolonging the harsh conditions and intensifying the cold. The synergy between these natural forces created a climatic anomaly that historians and climatologists are still unravelling today.

The effects of the Late Antique Little Ice Age did not abate quickly. As the Earth languished under this prolonged cold spell, the impacts reverberated through the centuries. Societies adapted in various ways, but the environmental stresses were significant. It wasn't until the 9th century that global temperatures began to recover, ushering in a period of relative warmth known as the Medieval Warm Period. The resilience and adaptability of human societies were tested to their limits, and the legacies of this challenging era are etched into the annals of history. The Late Antique Little Ice Age serves as a poignant reminder of the delicate interplay between Earth's natural systems and the profound consequences when they are disrupted.

However, the story of the Sun's impact on Earth's climate does not end there. Another significant episode in this grand narrative is the Maunder Minimum, which occurred much later, between 1645 and 1715. The Maunder Minimum was a period of unusually low solar activity, characterized by a significant reduction in sunspots. During this time, the Earth experienced another bout of prolonged cooling, which coincided with the coldest phase of the Little Ice Age.

The Maunder Minimum's impact on Earth's climate was profound. As with the Late Antique Little Ice Age, reduced solar output led to lower global temperatures. Winters were harsh and prolonged, summers were short and cool, and growing seasons were significantly shortened. This period of cooling had substantial effects on human societies, particularly in Europe and North America.

The year the sun grew dim

In Europe, the cold weather exacerbated existing social and economic problems. The agrarian economy, already vulnerable to climatic fluctuations, suffered immensely. Crop failures were common, leading to food shortages and increased mortality. The harsh winters of the Maunder Minimum are well-documented in historical records, with accounts of rivers such as the Thames in London and the Seine in Paris freezing over, events that were rare and dramatic indicators of the severe cold.

The Maunder Minimum also had significant implications for the global climate. Sea ice extended further south than usual, disrupting Atlantic shipping routes and altering marine ecosystems. In some regions, the cooling led to shifts in precipitation patterns, affecting agriculture and water supply. The period also saw an increase in the frequency of severe storms, further compounding the challenges faced by societies during this time.

While the direct link between reduced solar activity and climatic cooling is still a topic of scientific investigation, the evidence from the Maunder Minimum and other periods of solar minima suggests a strong correlation. The mechanisms through which reduced solar activity leads to cooling are complex and involve interactions between solar radiation, atmospheric circulation, and ocean currents. However, the historical records from these periods provide compelling evidence of the Sun's powerful influence on Earth's climate.

The Sun's role in shaping Earth's climate is a testament to the delicate balance that sustains life on our planet. The periods of cooling during the Late Antique Little Ice Age and the Maunder Minimum highlight the vulnerability of human societies to climatic fluctuations. They also underscore the importance of understanding the natural forces that drive climate change, as these forces continue to shape our world today.

As we reflect on these historical episodes, it is clear that the Sun's influence extends far beyond its immediate role as a source of light and heat. Its interactions with Earth's atmosphere and geological activity create a dynamic system that can produce profound and lasting changes. The story of the Sun and its impact on Earth's climate is a reminder of the intricate and often unpredictable forces that govern our planet's environment.

In conclusion, the events of 536 AD and the Maunder Minimum are key chapters in the long and complex history of the Sun's influence on Earth. They illustrate the powerful interplay between solar activity, volcanic eruptions, and climatic change,

The year the sun grew dim

and their profound effects on human societies. As we continue to study these periods, we gain valuable insights into the mechanisms that drive climate variability and the resilience of human communities in the face of environmental challenges. The Sun, in all its brilliance and variability, remains a central player in the ongoing story of our planet, shaping the conditions for life and the course of history.

With this historical perspective in mind, we stand on the brink of another solar minimum, anticipated to occur between the middle and end of 2025. As we prepare for this period of reduced solar activity, it is imperative to consider the lessons of the past. The potential impacts on global climate, agriculture, and society may not be as severe as those experienced during the Late Antique Little Ice Age or the Maunder Minimum, but they remind us of our vulnerability to natural forces. This upcoming solar minimum offers us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of solar-terrestrial interactions and to bolster our resilience against future climatic challenges. As history has shown, the Sun's influence is far-reaching and ever-present, a force that continues to shape the destiny of our planet.

Caterine Britton

The king of card games



I was first introduced to bridge when whiling away the early hours on a night-bind shift in the Royal Air Force.

The Cold War was at it coldest and our job was to provide the control for the Meteor fighter jets on permanent stand-by at designated airfields. The late-night shift could be a boring, uneventful and fruitless time waster at 0300 hours, were it not for bridge. The other diversion was 3-card brag which I played once and lost my week's wages of 21 shillings in as many minutes and have never again gambled on games of chance.

The bridge players - a cut above the brag spivs, we thought - had no notion of conventions or mind-bending rules of play: we just looked at our hands and if it appeared to have 3 or 4 quick tricks, one hoped that one's partner had a similar streak and you had a reasonable chance of winning the round with the trumps of your choice.

For us, Acol was a village in Kent at the end of the runway of RAF Manston. We had never heard of the Acol Convention in bridge. 5-Card Major was a flag officer in the army. Gerber was a dear little furry creature (almost) and Transfers were a posting to another base. It was all good natured though, and I cannot remember anyone losing their rag or having a tantrum. They would have been ridiculed and relegated to the brag addicts.

The king of card games

Not so today!

I am a little more sophisticated in my approach to the noble game now, but steer clear of the Serious Contenders: (SC). Two things I have learnt in my 4-score years and ten are: (i) never teach your wife to drive - even more taboo the other way round, and (ii) never partner your spouse in bridge! unless you have an exceptionally strong relationship and high threshold of tolerance. (There are exceptions, of course,)

The bridge table is a minefield of accusation and despair: a veritable blood-stained battlefield. I have heard of otherwise gentle folk. who normally wouldn't say 'boo' to a goose, but one unfortunate oversight during play brings forth a degree of unbelievable retribution: a stream of unspoken invective and loathing. Just as sitting behind the steering wheel of a car can change the persona for some, so being dealt a good hand in bridge can change a docile dolly or mild-mannered hubby into a silent seething psychopath.

One can imagine the recap at the end of the evening in the privacy of the car heading home or in the bedroom of the marital abode:

'Why did you trump that trick that I had already won?'

'Didn't you realise I was out of spades and was waiting to trump in?'

'Opening two clubs meant something, you buffoon'.

'It was a finesse, you twerp' (or even stronger)

'But you knew the ace was still out!'

'Why didn't you reply to my lead, you idiot!'

'But you left me in 3 No Trumps without a stopper in clubs!'

'We had a game in hearts, and you left me in 4 diamonds'.

'Your Re-Double' lost us 1200 points and we were vulnerable'.

'Five spades didn't mean five spades, you ignoramus'.

'Had it not been for your ineptitude, we would have won this evening, you cretin!'

I have heard of partners and SC's stomping off in a state of high dudgeon, puce with anger or even throwing their cards in the air. Mein Gott! 'You cannot be serious' - in the words of a tennis legend. The exasperated glance towards the heavens, the open-handed shaking grasp, the sharp ingress of breath: all are indicative of the intensity and despair of the moment.

The king of card games

My dear friend and bridge partner and I are of a different ilk, though. We've both lost it a bit when it comes to intense concentration for long periods, i.e. more than ten minutes, but we enjoy the challenge of frequently misunderstood bids and damage limiting responses.

So, he left me in one club with a combined points tally of thirty - so what; the night is young. We laugh as we fluff the next round of bidding and watch the bewilderment on our opponents' faces at our unorthodox calls. We go down for the eighth time that evening. Strange: we always seem to be vulnerable when we go down! I've never understood the scoring system, but I trust implicitly my other dear friend and opponent's honesty in scoring. Notwithstanding, there is a certain sadistic satisfaction in bringing joy to one's opponents.

What the hell anyway! It's only a game!

Ah, but what a game; devised by intellectual timewasters and played by hyper-active psychopaths!

Anyone for bridge?

I pass. Saved by the smoked salmon canapes and glass of Thisbe.

John Palmer.

My retirement career in Cyprus



I had lessons in playing the piano for about six years, from age six. I did not make a career in music, but I always remained enthusiastic about it. After retiring to Cyprus, I decided in 2006 to try to create in Cyprus small groups of amateur pianists, to hold private concerts, in order to improve pianistic skills and to entertain each other. For several years I succeeded, with the first such group in Paphos, and the second in Limassol. Significantly, I also spent some time developing my interest in composing music.

One of the members of my Limassol pianists group was Tatiana Stupak, an exceptionally good pianist who had trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, but was working here, in a Cyprus bank. After persuading her to play at the first C3A music group concert in 2015, she began to think about playing the piano in public.

I encouraged her, and we have worked together since then, holding well over a hundred music events. I found myself unexpectedly with a full-time retirement career, albeit with no financial reward. During the last ten years, I have spent as much time as I could (apart from engaging in my three hobbies of tennis, bridge and ten-pin bowling), developing the composing aspect of my work in the world of music.

My retirement career in Cyprus

I have composed 75 works to date, most for piano solo, although a few are for organ and for violin and piano.

Early this year, I began to think seriously about my music legacy. I wanted to leave a permanent written record of my compositions, in addition to their existence on two music publishing websites. The compositions were already listed in my Wikipedia article, but not in a way which promotes them, because advertising is not allowed on Wikipedia.

I needed a formal way publicly to catalogue all aspects of my music. The answer was to create a website, and tabulate details of my compositions there. I used to develop websites in the 1990s, but I had not created one for about twenty years. Techniques had changed in that time, and I did not know how to develop a site using modern methods. With a little help from Nigel Howarth, I decided in March this year to develop my own website, having rejected the idea of employing someone to do it for me. I rather surprised myself by having the website finished in about two weeks, but I needed a name for the site. I was very lucky: the best domain possible for me, davidpentecost.com was already allocated, but was not in use, and I managed to buy it from its owner.

So my website now exists, I hope in perpetuity, formally listing all my works. For each work, there are two active links on the site, to enable anyone wanting the sheet music, to buy it, and download it from either of the two music publishing websites. When I complete each new composition, the first thing I do, is to upload it to each of those two music publishing sites.

The second thing I have to do, is to get each composition recorded, and uploaded to YouTube. This task has yet to be completed, but most of the compositions are now on YouTube. The link to each YouTube recording I then add to my website. So my website allows visitors to listen to and watch each recording, and if they wish, also to download the sheet music.

I make use of the considerable experience I gained from filming almost all Tatiana Stupak's concerts held in the last ten years, and learning to edit the videos and upload them to YouTube.

The videos of my music compositions can take any of three forms. The first is a film of a musician playing the music. The second is a soundtrack of the music being played, while the sheet music is displayed, synchronised with the sound recording. The third method (my favourite) is to create with the soundtrack, beautiful still photos (for example flowers, butterflies, or pretty landscapes) or short videos of beautiful scenes, such as flowing water.

My retirement career in Cyprus

I have a lot of work to do to improve the quality of the soundtracks of some of the older YouTube recordings, and to create recordings where there are none at the moment. This is not easy, because some of the music is now too difficult for me to play myself, with my increasingly decrepit hands and brain, and I have to try to persuade other pianists to play the music, so that I can record their performances.

I now have a never-ending battle with myself. If I spend all my available time composing, I shall never catch up with the backlog of recordings, and if I devote myself to dealing with the backlog, I shall have to reduce considerably the amount of composing which I do. (I am reminded of Sergei Rachmaninoff's problem with time: he had to spend most of it performing to the public, in order to make a living, and consequently he did not have enough time to compose as much music as he would have liked). None of us has enough time – our most valuable 'commodity'.

Here are four of my favourite videos of my music:

A Nocturne: <https://youtu.be/3XRfXcznFQU>

A Waltz: <https://youtu.be/VaeHVxxqAuU>

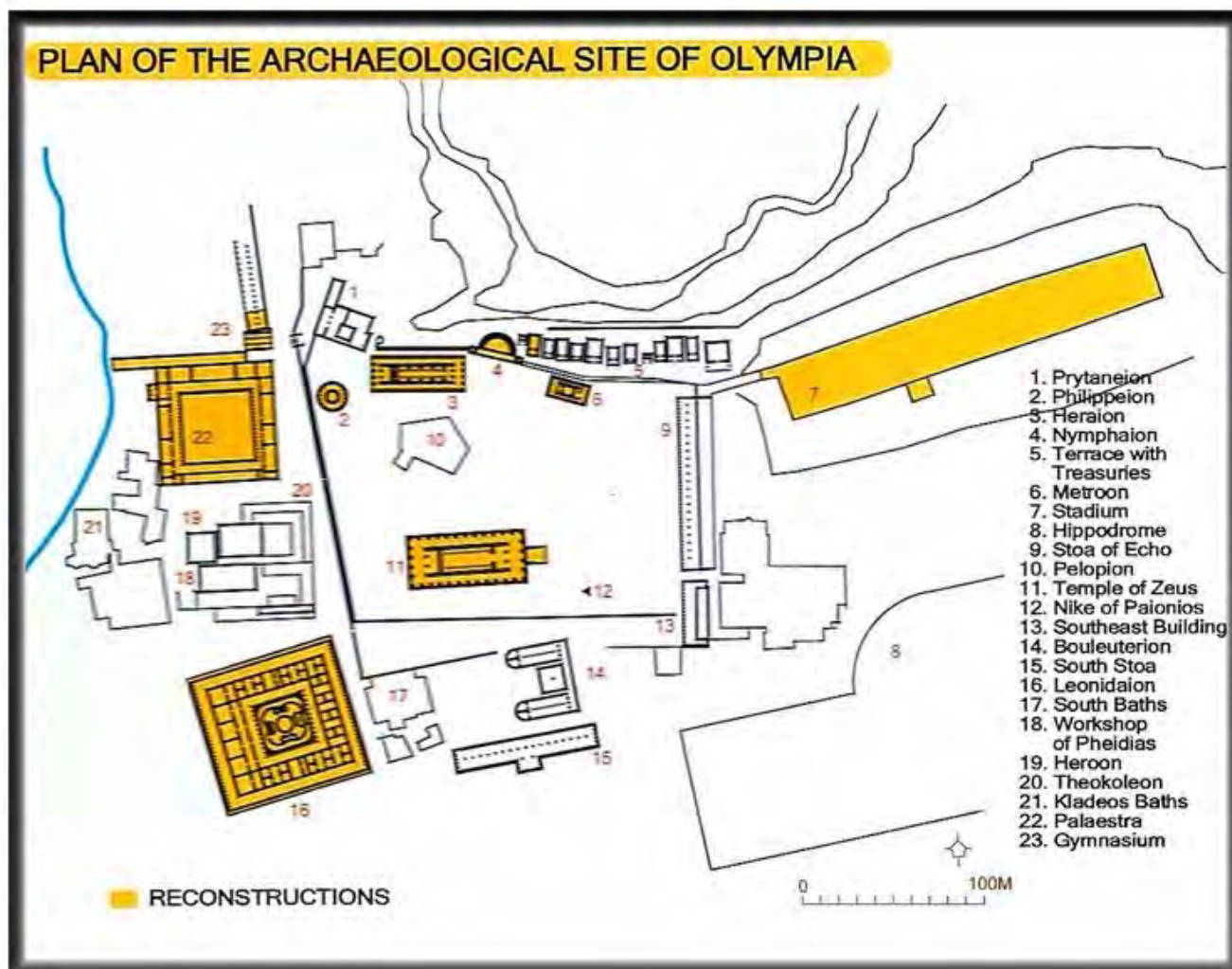
A Prelude: <https://youtu.be/RGBDhgxmeg>

An Etude: <https://youtu.be/IHQKbYNiVyK>

I hope you enjoy at least one of them. Many more are on [my website](#).

David Pentecost

Glory & a crown of olives



This summer on the 26th July, the world's greatest athletes will come together in France's capital city Paris to run, jump, swim, twist, twirl, kick, punch and climb their way to the top of the Olympic podium. These Games are, for many athletes, the pinnacle of their sport - there is no greater achievement than earning an Olympic gold medal.

The concept of the modern Olympics was proposed by Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator, in the late 19th century. He believed that the Olympics could promote international understanding and goodwill through athletic competition. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894, and the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896.

The first Ancient Olympic Games, which took place almost 2,800 years ago, were religious festivals held every four years in Olympia, Greece at the sanctuary of Zeus who, according to tradition, liked to be entertained by sporting activities.

Glory & a crown of olives



All I about it was from TV pictures, with the priestesses lighting the Olympic flame at the Altar of Hera; on what looked like a very unexciting pile of rubble!

What a wonderful surprise it was when we visited on our tour of the Peloponnese, and I was overwhelmed with feelings of what it would have been like to compete there. This was probably aided by the excellent guide we had who took us through the experience of the athletes, as they arrived at the site and competed.

Local cities vied to organize the games but it was mostly the citizens of Elis who provided the powerful officials for each Games. They took up their duties and learnt the regulations of the games for ten months before the commencement. The athletes arrived in Elis to prepare about a month before the games were due to start. As well as organizing the training the officials also rejected competitors who did not perform at a satisfactory level of skill or morality. The institution of a sacred truce meant that all hostilities ceased and no one could enter Elis bearing arms. This was respected by all Greeks.

All free male Greek citizens had the right to participate in the games for the reward of glory alone - the only prize a crown of olives. Barbarians, slaves and women were barred. The games were open to all spectators except married women and they

Glory & a crown of olives

came as pilgrims from all over the Greek world. Cities sent their ambassadors and there was a large hostel for distinguished visitors. The emperor Nero even had an impressive villa built in the grounds in the 1st Century when he visited.

Two days before the Games began, athletes, judges and officials took part in a procession from Elis to Olympia along the sacred way. What they found was a large site. The earliest temple, built about 600BCE, is dedicated to Hera although Zeus was originally worshiped there. In front is the stone altar of Hera, where today the Olympic flame is lit. The later 470BCE Temple of Zeus stood in the middle of the "Altis" a walled sanctuary or grove. It is the largest temple in the Peloponnese and, within it, stood a statue of Zeus considered one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world; it was a giant seated figure, about 12.4 m (41 ft) tall, made on site by the Greek sculptor Phidias.



Nearby is the lovely circular Philippeion, a memorial to the Macedonian King and his son Alexander. At the base of the hill which forms the fourth side of the Altis are the ruins of the nymphaeum and a row of small buildings in the form of temples. These were treasuries donated by Greek states from around the Mediterranean. The

Glory & a crown of olives



southern boundary is made up of a 100m long colonnaded stoa - or covered walkway built in 350 BCE which was the main entrance to the Altis. To the east is another walkway which had a sevenfold echo and separated the Altis from the stadium. Many other buildings on the site were for housing and preparing the athletes. The palaistra, wrestling school, had practice areas, several bath houses and a gymnasium.

Over the 1000 years of the games the contests changed. At first only a one-day event - gradually extended to five days. The events also increased. There

was running over different distances, shot put, boxing and pankration - which was a mix between wrestling and boxing. Although the hippodrome cannot now be seen, it was behind the stadium, it featured both horse and chariot races with the victor being the owner of the horses not the rider. Finally, the pentathlon contests were added - Jumping, running, javelin, discus and wrestling.

On the first day the participants gave the sacred oath to uphold the rules, before the statue of Zeus. Lots were drawn to pair contestants or place them in order of competing. Over the next two days there were feasts and sacrifices with events taking place in the hippodrome and the pentathlon in the stadium. On the fourth day a procession began at the gymnasium and went to the great altar of Zeus where animals were sacrificed before the commencement of the races in the stadium. Victors were crowned at the temple.

The ancient Olympic Games continued until 393 CE when they were stopped by an edict of the Christian Roman Emperor Theodosius 1 who had the site set on fire. The statue of Zeus was taken to Constantinople where it was also destroyed by fire. Later on, the site was destroyed by two great earthquakes and was gradually buried by landslides and partially flooded.

This research was conducted as part of the Archaeology group work on sites members have visited. Pat Howarth

Did man make fire or did fire make man?



Charles Darwin, while working on his book *The Origin of Species*, had proposed that the two things that differentiated Man for other animals was his use of Fire and Speech.

Our early ancestors would have witness wildfires started by Lightning strikes, which regularly set grasslands and scrub alight. They will have noted that animals are afraid of fire and keep well away from it if at all possible. This included the large animals that regarded humans as prey. So, initially they may have sought to use fire as a means of protection

Recently, Primate researchers in Senegal have observed that the local Savanna Chimpanzees remained calm and even predicted the movement of wildfires. Unlike most wild animals they did not panic when faced with fire by calmly avoided the flames. They gathered, and ate, insects and small mammals fleeing the fire. This may be how our distant forebears have first learned how to control fire.

Evidence suggests that, about 1.5 million years ago, hominids were using fire regularly. Certainly by 800,000 years ago they were cooking their food, which led to changes in their teeth and their gut as cooking makes chewing and digestion easier.

Fires are also a source of warmth and light, allowing early man to move out of Africa into cooler areas. They could seek shelter in caves after evicting any earlier occupants, such as bears, by using fire as a tool. Hunting implements, originally sharpened sticks, were improved by hardening the tips by charring them in a fire.

Did man make fire or did fire make man?

Much later, baking certain stones made their modification into stone tools and weapons easier. This was the first step in a continuum that was to lead to metals being used to produce ever more effective equipment for hunting and, sadly, warfare.

Fire also gave light, enabling activity outside of the hours of sunlight. The earliest evidence of human artistic creativity is to be found deep in caves that were used by our ancestors for shelter. Here we find not only outline drawings of animals that were being hunted etched into the soft sedimentary rocks, but also the use of ochres and other pigments to paint them.

Sitting around the fire gave the opportunity for early man to develop and expand his communication skills and, it is postulated, led to the growth of speech. Also, it led to a major change in the human circadian rhythm. The human day is one of circa 18 hours awake and the balance in sleep. For almost all other mammals their day is tied to the hours of daylight, be they diurnal or nocturnal.



I remember with great affection the character of King Louie, the orangutang who appeared in Disney's cartoon version of Jungle Book. If I recall correctly, his one desire was 'Man's great Fire'. At the time of watching it, all those years ago, I never realised just how accurate he was in identifying the one thing that might enable him to be the 'King of the Jungle'.

John Lawley

Orchid cactus

Of all the plants that we grow in our garden the most spectacular flowers are produced by an epiphyte. Epiphytic plants do not grow in the conventional way, ie in soil, but attach themselves to other plants. This does not mean that they are parasitic, parasites feed off of their hosts and generally harm them. Epiphytes do not do this, they obtain their water and nutrients from rain, the air and debris that collects around them.

The particular epiphyte in question is the *Epiphyllum oxypetalum*. Epi – meaning upon, and phyllon – leaf, the flowers being borne on flattened green leaf stems that were originally thought to be leaves. Oxypetalum is from oxy – sharp, and petalum – petals.

This epiphyte is also a nocturnal flowerer. In order to attract pollinators, moths and possibly bats, its flowers are large and white, to be seen in the dark, and have an extremely powerful, very pleasant scent.

As they became better known in the gardening fraternity it was considered to be unfortunate that these attributes were being wasted, unless one was prepared to stay awake to enjoy them. Gardeners around the world began attempting to produce hybrids that were more daylight friendly. They proved to be very successful in their endeavours, producing a number of plants that flowered in the daytime, whose flowers lasted longer than a few hours, and displayed a greater range of colours. Sadly, on the downside they lost all trace of the parent plant's amazing scent.

We possess a few of the many hybrids that have been created, such as:

Orange Crush – fairly obvious how it got its name.

Desert Moon – due to its pale colour I assume.

JT Barber – many plants are named for famous people, or ones who have been associated with them. In this instance I have been unable to find anyone called JT Barber who might fit the bill.

Ambrosia – name of the food and drink of the gods of Olympus.

King Midas – the name of a number of ancient kings but mainly associated with the mythical monarch who turned anything he touched into gold.

Elektra – means amber. Name of the daughter of King Agamemnon of Trojan War fame.

Madagascar – the island country situated off the southeastern coast of Africa.

John Joynes

Orchid cactus



Orange Crush



Desert Moon



JT Barber



Ambrosia



King Midas



Elektra



Madagascar

Embroidery in Cyprus



In the Hellenic world there is a rich tradition of embroidery from the Homeric period (8th Century BC). In Cyprus embroidery was mainly influenced by Byzantine and Venetian styles, especially the latter when there was great development in this craft during the Renaissance.

Many women from the countryside were involved in embroidery either on a professional basis or to meet their own needs. The 1974 Invasion and the development in Cyprus since then have had a negative impact. The former resulted in women dispersed to the south and abroad, which meant that the local types of embroidery of Karavas and Lapithos in the Kyrenia District and Lefkoniko in the Famagusta District ceased to be made there. The latter has led to a different way of life with women working professionally outside the home and more modern or minimalist furnishing in the home where embroidered pieces may be out of place.

Embroidery in Cyprus



Traditionally, embroidery was used to decorate a range of clothing, notably chemises and headscarves, as well as sheets and pillowcases (for the marital bed) and towels. Embroidered women's belts with metal clasps were often part of a woman's wedding outfit. In the old days girls prepared their dowries from a young age.

My own mother was born in 1917 in the village of Akanthou in the north and was married at the age of 16. Apart from hand-woven sheets and tablecloths and such like, I have inherited four framed embroideries that were part of her dowry. Two she embroidered herself on black velvet with a design of small flowers and leaves and a saying in free-flowing writing: one says, "This, too, shall pass" and the other, "Love thy neighbour." The

other two pieces are large and done on silk with a motif of a long-legged bird and flowers. Satin stitch in variegated silks was used.

The two main types of embroidery are red work, which comes from the Paphos region and uses a version of cross stitch, and white work, which now comes mainly from the Larnaca and Limassol Districts. White work includes Lefkaritiko, Venice lace, Athienitiko and Pipilles (as well as the crochet).



Lefkara lace (Lefkaritika) is the most famous of the white work. Four main elements are used on linen: hemstitch,* cut work, satin stitch fillings and needlepoint edgings. The thread is usually white or brown on bleached or ecru linen and used to make intricate geometric patterns. Apparently, patterns can be combined to create more than 650 designs!

It dates back to at least 14th Century. It is influenced by indigenous craft, the embroidery of the Venetian courtiers, whose rule began in 1489 and lasted to about 1570, ancient Greek motifs and Byzantine geometric patterns. Apparently, Leonardo da Vinci visited Cyprus in 15th century and was so impressed that he took a Lefkaritiko cloth back to Italy with him and donated it to the

Embroidery in Cyprus

Duomo di Milano Cathedral, where it still adorns the main altar. In 2009 Lefkara lace was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

The professional women embroiderers of Lefkara were called “ploumarisses” and the men who travelled across Europe and Scandinavia to sell it were called “kentitarides.” Soon after I came to Limassol in 1970 I met two kentitarides. A retired couple called Sadie and Harris came to live next door. They had been living in South Africa for many years. Harris hailed from Lefkara and, in the past whenever he came to Cyprus, he would take a suitcase of Lefkaritika back with him to sell. The other came knocking on the doors in our street. I bought a very large tablecloth (probably for a twelve seater table) from him done in the river design round the sides, but it was expensive so we gave him a downpayment and he called every month for an instalment – who would believe that you could buy embroidery on HP in the early 1970s!



Pittota or Venice embroidery needle lace is mainly from Athienou in the Larnaca District. It dates back to 15th Century Venice and was initially adopted in Lefkara during Venetian rule, but it was later adopted by the women in Athienou in the 20th Century because of high demand for it. The embroiderer uses cotton threads on a special pillow (a padded frame) which acts as a base. The motifs are free-style, based on the lace-maker’s inspiration, and usually geometric (square, triangular, circular). These are known as “pittes”. The non-geometrcal lacework is known as “oloploumes” (full of embellishments).

Fervolite is a type that originated in France. In medieval times there were French nobles in Karavas in the Kyrenia District and the local embroiders adopted the “frivolite” style of circles, but they gradually adapted it with traditional shapes and motifs. The major motif is the flower, but small circles, known as “fengarka” (moons) were linked together to create square, rectangular, circular or a rhombus formation. Fervolite was also made in the neighbouring villages, e.g. Lapithos. Post 1974 the women were dispersed. However, today it can be found in Omodos.

Pipilla needle lace was added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage in 2015. Today it is made in Kilani and Omodos in the Limassol District and by refugee lace-makers from Lapithos. it is of Byzantine origin. It is made from white or beige twisted thread and uses the knot-stitch (“velonokombos”) or double-knot (“diplovelonokombos”). The lace always starts from the centre of the design, except

Embroidery in Cyprus

when patterns are in stripes. If there is no raised relief work, then both sides are exactly the same. Lace-makers create different patterns as freeform pieces to make doilies, tablecloths, and edging for curtains and pillowcases, amongst other things. In the past it was used to decorate the traditional bed as well as the bedlinen and pillowcases.



The final type I will mention is redwork, which is mostly associated with the Paphos District. It is a form of counted thread embroidery worked in dark red silk on a fine linen (later cotton) ground. A variety of stitches are used, including various forms of cross stitch, double running stitch (Holbein stitch) and satin stitch. The motifs were spiral designs of branches with flowers or fruit and linked “S” scrolls ending in stylised vine leaves. In the past it was often used to decorate the borders of sheets and covers. It’s quite impressive and a complete contrast to the white work varieties.

It is clear that embroidery has played an important role in Cyprus and it has been one of the most significant contributions to local art. Despite the changed life-style, embroidery is still being made and there is a demand for it from some local fashion designers for use in clothing and accessories. Traditional centres of embroidery may have changed (e.g. the Lapithos embroiderers now working in Omodos), but the centres have also expanded in number. Lefkara lace, for example, is not exclusively made in Pano Lefkara and Kato Lefkara today, but also in the villages of Kato Drys, Vavla, Vavatsinia, Ora, Choirokoitia, Skarinou, Dali and Athienou. This shows the high esteem in which it is held.

Cleo Kyriakidou

* One or more threads are drawn out of the fabric parallel and next to the turned hem and stitches bundle the remaining threads in a variety of decorative patterns.

Recipe - Tiropitta

This is easy to make and good for feeding a crowd! You can adapt it to taste by using different hard cheeses and using fresh mint instead of dried.

You'll need a ring tin, approximately 25 cm in diameter, well oiled and floured. Alternatively, you can use 2 loaf tins 12x25 cm.

For the tiropitta in the photos I used a combination of halloumi and cheddar, a couple of handfuls of fresh mint coarsely chopped and slightly less flour. I also added a splash of brandy to the eggs!



Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- 1 glass sunflower oil, not completely full
- 1 glass milk
- 3 glasses of flour
- 4 tsps baking powder
- 2 + glasses of grated halloumi or a combination of halloumi and cheddar etc.
- Dried/fresh mint

Method

Sift the flour and baking powder together.

Add the mint to the grated cheese and combine well.

Beat the eggs, preferably in a stand mixer, until thick and foamy.

Gently beat in the oil and then the milk.

Tip in the cheese/mint mixture and combine.

Lastly, fold in the flour and baking powder.

Bake in a moderate oven (Fan 170) for about 35 to 40 mins. Test with a skewer.

