

Mnimosimo for the first Kytherian to migrate to Australia

Emmanuel George Kritharis

At 12:30, on Sunday 19th of November, the Karavitiko Symposium, Sydney, organised a mnimosimo for the first Kytherian to migrate to Australia - Emmanuel George Kritharis. The idea to conduct the mnimosimo was proposed by Peter Vanges, and enthusiastically embraced by the Committee of the Karavitiko Symposium, Sydney, and the Kytherian Association of Australia.

The gravesite of Emmanuel Kritharis is surprisingly easy to find. It is Plot (Grave) 406, in Anglican Section 1 (the oldest Anglican section), at Woronora Cemetery, 121 Linden Street Sutherland 2232. (Enter this area where the signpost Anglican Section 1 is, next to a large tree - look slightly to the left, and look for the first rounded top gravestone. See the photograph attached to this article.)



For a grave and gravestone of such age – 104 years old – it is in very good condition. The Committee of the Karavitiko, relatives and friends attended the mnimosimo. Father Constantine Varipatis, and presvytéra, and their mother, embraced the ceremony with great enthusiasm. Father Constantine, is the priest at the Church of Saint Stylianos, Saints Peter & Paul, and Saint Gregory of Palamas Greek Orthodox Parish, Gymea. Father and presvytera also supplied the koliva for the ceremony. For those who attended, the ceremony was quite moving. Hopefully Kytherians will embrace the need for a mnimosimo to be held at what is ostensibly a Kytherian sacred site, and pilgrimage centre - more regularly, and in greater numbers - in the future.

Father Constantine suggested that the grave should be cleaned. It is incumbent on the Kytherian Association of Australia to maintain this gravesite in the most pristine condition. Attendees at the first mnimosimo are certain this will be achieved.

Others suggested that a significant plaque should be placed next to the grave, indicating where Kythera is; its significance as a source of Greeks migrants to Australia;

that this is the burial place of the first Kytherian to migrate to Australia; to correct the misspelling of Kritharis name; and to acknowledge the presence of a second person interred in the grave – whose name will be revealed to you shortly. The management of Woronora Memorial Park Cemetery will be approached to determine whether this can be achieved.

Many people also suggested that other prominent Kytherians should have mnimosimo services, conducted in their honour. One name that came up repeatedly was the late Nicholas Anthony Aroney, to whom Kytherians in Australia owe so much.

After the ceremony attendees proceeded to The Greek Island Tavern 47/40 Belmont Street in Sutherland, here they partook of a very enjoyable lunch, and toasted the first Kytherian to migrate to Australia.

Emmanuel George Kritharis. A brief biographical sketch.

According to Emanuel's birth certificate, he was the son of Giorgakis Krithari and Chrisoula Manolesou. He was named Manoli and born on 8 July 1831 in Karavas. He was baptized on 18 July 1831 in Karavas.

Manoli had six siblings, four brothers and two sisters. It is unknown how many migrated to Australia, but brother Dimitrios certainly did. Descendants of Dimitrios live in Queensland.

For a more comprehensive biographical sketch, read the interesting article - <http://www.kythera-family.net/en/people/notable-kytherians/emmanuel-kritharis>

The article states that Fr Phocas performed the funeral ceremony. Fr Phocas would travel to various Anglican Churches performing Greek Orthodox ceremonies at this time.

Apparently, Emmanuel was a cousin to Papa Vangeli Kritharis from Agios Haralambos in Karava.

The most avid researcher of Emmanuel Kritharis life has been Peter Vanges, former President of the Kytherian Association of Australia (1984-1986), and author of *Kythera. A History*. In 2014, 'and after yet another attempt to put an end to the misinformation that continued to be printed', he was able to publish new official documentation, which proved that Emmanuel Kritharis was the first Kytherian to arrive in Australia. He established that,

- Emmanuel Kritharis was born on the island of Kythera (Karava) in 1832.
- Departed for Australia from London aboard the

celebrated auxiliary steam-ship Great Britain on the 16th December 1871.

- Arrived, after a journey of more than 50 days in Melbourne, Victoria, in February 1872.

Nothing is known of his movements, from that date, until he arrived in Mortdale N.S.W. in the late 1800's. He lived there for the remainder of his life. Emmanuel lived for many years as 'a gentleman of independent means' in a house, which he owned, called "Athena Cottage". He never married, never became naturalised, never owned a business, and never involved himself in the affairs of the Greek community. To the Kytherians of Sydney he was known only as "the monk". Just before his death Kritharis made a very substantial donation of "all my personal estate to be converted into money ... and be applied ... in the Relief of the wounded Greeks and in the carrying on of the present war..." This donation exceeded the amount of 30,000 franks. He died only two days later, in Mortdale (Sydney N.S.W) on Sunday the 9th March 1913, and was buried in Woronora Cemetery (Sydney N.S.W.) on Monday the 10th March 1913. "A large number of fellow-countrymen and friends being present at the graveside".

On the gravestone he was erroneously named as George Emmanuel Kritharis.

Details of Emmanuel Kritharis Will, were officially transferred to the registry of Potamos, Kythera, on the 21 August 1913.

The burial ground of Emmanuel Kritharis remained undisturbed in Woronora General Cemetery for eleven years to the day until his friend Spyro Bennett died on Thursday 13th of March 1924, and was buried with him, in the same grave. Spyros' name was never inscribed on the gravestone, nor did any one ever correct the mistake that the engraver had made on the original monument, regarding his correct name - Emmanuel George Kritharis. Spyro Bennett was a native of Greece, and the husband of Mary Bennett, the Executrix and Trustee of Emmanuel's Will; but more importantly a very close friend, and, Peter Vanges believes, a trusted associate of Emmanuel's for many years.



Profound thanks are due to Peter and Tessie Vanges, KAA President, Victor Kepreotis, and Kathy Kepreotis, Barbara Zantiotis, the chief organiser, and Anna, Theo, Vicki, Peter, Sophia, George & Lorraine Poulos, Kyrranne and Aphrodite Samios, and George Zantis, for helping to make this event such a success.

George Poulos







Photos: Barbara Zantiotis, Sophia Poulos, Victor Kepreotis, George Poulos