

CHAPTER FOUR: FROM BITTER LEMONS TO PRICKLY PEARS GREEK GARDENS IN AUSTRALIA: AN HOMERIC ODYSSEY.

...the gutterings were blue and the walls were white and we used to say - oh that's a Greek house, that's a Greek house and there is another Greek house.

Freda.1992. commenting on her childhood as a Greek immigrant in Marrickville

Let us say for example - Melbourne is supposed to be the second biggest Greek city outside of Athens - let us say we went to Melbourne, How would you know that you had walked into a Greek area?

...Oh, by the jasmine, the lemon tree in the front garden, the olives...

...even in Sydney, to pass somewhere, it is easy to see it is a Greek house for first you see one olive tree, or you see a fig tree, or marigolds, oregano, basil and - oh, the jasmine - or otherwise the grapevine...

Conversation about the Greek migrant experience with ten Greek migrants in Marrickville, Sydney. 1992.¹

The Homeric Odyssey

The history of the Greeks in Australia goes back to 1829 when the first Greeks came as seven young male convicts from the island of Hydra. In the 1850s, Greek mariners from the Ionian Islands left their ships to find their fortune on the Australian goldfields. Later in the 1880s, Greek communities called 'paroikies' came to Australia and became established in Sydney and Melbourne. Most of the Greek community in Australia, however, resulted from two main periods of migration. The first migration consisted of a small number of people who came in the 1920s. They mostly went to country towns where they had small businesses such as cafes, fish shops, or fruit and vegetable shops. The second migration was made up of the post World War II migrants who stayed mostly in the large cities of Sydney and Melbourne because they were contracted to work in factories in order to pay off their assisted passage.

The earlier wave of migration dispersed into country towns, so there was not the sense of an existing Greek community in the cities to greet the second wave of migrants arriving in the late 1950s and 1960s. The newer migrants settled predominantly Melbourne which, until recently, was considered to have the highest population of Greeks outside Athens.

For many Greek migrants, particularly the young men, the journey to Australia symbolised the Homeric Odyssey. Their pioneering spirit reflected the classic Greek journey. For Greek women, there was another version of the Homeric Odyssey. After the massive migration of Greek men in the late 1940s, young Greek women were sent out on 'bride ships' as prospective brides for the men who were working on the new industrial projects in Australia. These young women, many clutching photographs of men they had never met, arrived in Sydney and Melbourne to embark on married life in a new country, without the traditional support of their families. Some of the *brides* were not met. It would appear no one had considered the possibility that some of the young women could be abandoned in a strange land, unable to speak English. Fortunately the Salvation Army rescued these young girls. In Sydney, the Salvation Army building near Taylor's Square, now a luxury apartment block, was home to many young Greek *brides* until suitable husbands could be found.

Those who were met by family or prospective husbands were often surprised by what they found. They had been told that in Australia the '*streets were paved with gold*' and they came with high expectations. Many elderly Greek migrants reminisce with amusement how dismayed they were by their first impressions of Australia. Despina, who came to Australia as a young bride, described how surprised she was when she saw the small dark houses in St. Peters, Sydney. The village where she had come from consisted of two storey whitewashed houses. Bathed in Aegian sunlight, the houses with their flat roofs, supporting trellises with grapevines, provided a strong contrast to the drab little terraces in inner Sydney. She was confused by her brother's single storey house in St. Peters, because she was

under the impression before she left Greece that her brother had made money in Australia. She was shocked when he explained to her how much money the house was worth. She said ' *I don't give even one cent for such a house!*'² Similarly, when Rena and her husband came to Australia, they visited her husband's uncle whom they thought was rich. She described how she was shocked that '*the house was bagged and whitewashed, just like in Greece.*'³

The Greek migrants were renowned for altering their houses. Greg, a post world war II migrant, commented that when he came from Athens to Marrickville in the 1950s, he did not understand the houses

...I think - you know this is the personality of Australia. I was used to white houses, straight lines, not fussy - why all these decorations? [cast iron balconies] This seemed a bit anachronistic you know...[Greek people] wanted fresh, new, plain, open ...more spaces and so on....I didn't understand the houses when I first came - small dark brick- I thought how could people live in those houses which were so dark and depressing. - but over the years I got used to it or came to appreciate it and sometimes I think, you know, this is the personality of Australia.

Greg.10.1992.⁴

Despite their misgivings, the Greek migrants bought these drab inner city terraces and tried to recreate some sense of the Greek Islands by painting the houses pastel colours and by opening the houses to the sunlight with large aluminium framed windows. Because the Australian houses had pitched roofs, the traditional grape-arbour on a Greek roof had to be recreated in the small back gardens. The gardens the Greek migrants made in Australia thus developed into two types; either small inner city gardens which were highly productive or gardens associated with their second houses - *Mediterranean opulent* - which while retaining their role as productive gardens, were also filled with statuary, colonnades and other features of luxurious Mediterranean villas.

Greek communities are spread throughout Australia. Melbourne is renowned for its large Greek community. In Sydney, two significant Greek communities developed, one in Kingsford and one in Marrickville. One of the gardens described in this chapter is characteristic of the Sydney communities. In Brisbane, there were fewer Greek migrants, but the Greek community was strong, clustered together in a small inner city suburb known as West End. One of the West End gardens is described as an example of this tightly knit community. The other two gardens described here are Greek-Cypriot gardens; one is a Cypriot bride's garden, the other a Cypriot- Australian orchard. These gardens are intriguingly different to the mainland Greek-Australian gardens.

The Sapounakis Gardens, Kensington and Thirroul⁵

Jim and Denise Sapounakis have two gardens in Australia. Their first garden is characteristically an inner city productive garden. It is also characteristic of the houses and gardens of the Greek community in Kingsford. When the Greeks settled in Kingsford after the Second World War, the houses, surrounded by small tidy gardens, were typically Federation bungalows with ornate polychrome brickwork and coloured leadlight windows⁷.

Jim and Denise Sapounakis came to Australia from Greece in 1965. Jim was from the Peloponnese and Denise from the Island of Ikaria. They both left Greece because of the civil war and the high unemployment at that time. They met and married in Australia, setting up their first home in Kensington. Like many other Greek families who came to Sydney in the 1960s, they altered their inner city home by painting the house white. They also modernised the interiors by removing the fireplaces and by replacing the coloured leadlight windows with larger aluminium framed windows. Denise says she would not do this now. She feels it is a stage that migrants go through, as she is aware of a number of Greek families who are now restoring inner city terraces and bungalows to an original Australian character.

When they bought the house, the garden was simply mown grass with a neglected orange tree against a side fence and a frangipanni near a low brick front wall. They immediately changed the garden by digging up the grass in order to grow vegetables and citrus trees. The first thing they planted was a lemon tree in order to recreate a little bit of Greece. Now the garden has three mandarin trees, two orange trees, a lemon tree and a grapefruit tree, as well as a mango tree and a bay tree. The vegetable

beds in the back garden grew all the vegetables they needed for Greek cooking; tomatoes, eggplants, Greek beans, peas and garlic and rosemary.

In the early 1980s, Jim and Denise bought a holiday house in Thirroul, a coastal village south of Sydney. Thirroul consists of humble cottages built of fibro or timber either as miners' dwellings or simple holiday homes, all of which are perched on the steep slopes under shale cliffs. In this precarious position, the cottages command spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean.

The soils at Thirroul are rich chocolate shales in contrast to the infertile sands at Kensington. For Jim and Denise, the cottage at Thirroul reminds them of Greece, particularly the steep slopes and the views to the ocean. The original back garden, up the slope from the house was a tangled mass of weeds through which flowed a small creek. Jim had grown up understanding the land, so he recognised the boggy ground indicated a natural spring and instinctively sank a well. Having solved the problem of the water on the site, they started to terrace the garden in a traditional Greek way. In Greece the terrace walls would be made of small round stones found in the fields, but in Australia, Jim has used beautiful Sydney sandstone blocks which he salvaged as old hand-adzed remnants from construction sites.

In the terraces of rich soil, they have planted traditional Greek vegetables such as cucumber, zucchini, potatoes, onions, eggplant, artichoke, Greek beans and lettuce. There are also vines such as broadbean and choko and herbs such as chicory and aniseed. Planted among the vegetable beds are traditional Greek trees such as figs, olives, lemon, mandarin and pomegranate as well as cold climate fruit trees such as apricots, nectarines, walnut, and tropical trees such as avocado. This is truly a Garden of Eden.

When they bought the cottage, there was a rusty iron, spider infested shed at the back of the garden. After completing the terraces and a small bridge, Jim built a new 'shed' in which he constructed a traditional Greek oven. Once the oven was completed, Jim and Denise were not only able to grow all their traditional fruit and vegetables, they could also bake Jim's village style bread and biscuits. When they make bread, they preheat the brick oven, overarched by a circular ceiling, with a wood-fire until the walls and ceiling become very hot. The fire is then removed and the heat retained in the bricks cooks the bread. Being true to his Homeric ancestry, Jim is intrepid and enterprising. He rescued a set of stairs from a demolition site and has used them to create access to the roof of the shed. Now the roof can be used in a traditional Greek way for vines and to ripen pumpkins.

Once the garden at Thirroul began to produce fruit and vegetables, the garden in Kensington changed into an orchard suitable for sandy soils and a place where Jim and Denise could develop their interest in Australian tropical plants. They now have tree ferns, fishbone ferns, cycads, arum lilies, epiphytes, philodendrons, orchids, and palms in the Kensington garden.

Greek migrant men are renowned for their enterprising and ingenious ways of solving problems. Jim's imaginative experiments include his own design for a compost bin, an innovative pergola structure made from bamboo stalks to hold up the choko vine, and creative ways of using the old sandstone blocks he has found at construction sites. He also continues an age-old Greek practice of ripening the pumpkins grown at Thirroul, on the roof of their house in Kensington.

Although many of the village traditions are being kept in both gardens, there is nevertheless an urban sophistication about their Sydney garden. In contrast, the tightly knit Greek community in Brisbane sustains its colourful village traditions in an unselfconscious way.

Filippos and Panaguta's Garden, West End Brisbane.

Filippos and Panaguta show me their harvest from their tiny garden at the back of a small West End cottage for just one morning. It consists of eggplants, sweet and hot chillies, okra, special Greek spinach, figs and lemons. The garden is tiny, consisting only of a single U-shaped bed, a central concrete path, all of which is covered by a Hills Hoist clothesline and yet it provides such bounty.

Filippos came from a village called Asklepion on the island of Rhodes in 1960. Rhodes is a mountainous island, surrounded by beaches with numerous fertile valleys between high ridges. The villages, clustered on the lower slopes of the valleys, are very old and are overlooked by ancient castles perched on top of the mountains. Farms consisting of vineyards and olive groves cover the fertile flat land of the valleys. When Filippos was growing up, the 'farms' consisted of crops which had

numerous owners, each farmer owning a length of vines or a certain number of olive trees. In most cases, these had been inherited or had been gained as dowries. Filippos still has three hundred olive trees on a 'farm' outside his village. Filippos's family also had another 'farm' that supported crops such as watermelon, cucumbers, potatoes and okra as well as a small 'garden' by the stream at the edge of the village.

The 'gardens' which are also outside the village are intensively cultivated areas located near a water supply such as a stream or a spring. Such 'gardens' are cultivated on the lower slopes where the water from the springs can be captured and piped to the vegetables. They are rather like allotment gardens where each family tends a fenced area, big enough to provide the family with vegetables. What is 'farm' or 'garden' is determined by the water supply from the mountain springs. Even up to the 1960s, the village did not have a water supply. The water for the house would be collected from the old springs in large earthenware urns. Within the village the houses are close together, bordering narrow streets. Any space between the houses is used for flowers and herbs, such as carnations and roses, mint, parsley, oregano, and rosemary. Productive gardens with vegetable beds and small fruit trees are always outside the village.

Filippos first returned to his village in 1978. After eighteen years he needed to connect with his land again, so he planted a citrus grove of lemon, mandarin, and orange trees in his 'garden'. Since then he has gone back every second year to tend the olive trees on his 'farm' and the citrus in his 'garden'. When Filippos lived on the island, he had a mule and donkey to assist in the cultivation. They were kept near the house tied to trees in the summer, and in the winter they were stabled in the village. He also had a pig, just one each year, which they killed at Xmas time. The family would feast on the pig, leaving the fat and any meat left on the bone for a special spread known as cavrouma. Nothing was wasted. The head was cooked, as were the trotters.

Chickens were only kept for eggs, white meat was supplied by partridge and red meat by deer which they hunted. Goats were kept for milk and cheese. Filippos's brother had five hundred goats, but Filippos kept only one or two goats for milk for the family. The goats were kept in the same area as the donkey. If the goat had a kid, it was slaughtered for the Easter feast. Fish were brought to the village by the fishermen who lived in the coastal villages. Often they bartered for fish with sultanas from the grapes. When Filippos explained the recipe for Cavrouma, he reflected that although the villagers had to work very hard, it was a happy life. He thought nostalgically about the simplicity of their island life. The dish, Cavrouma, symbolised the self-sufficiency embedded in such rituals.

Cavrouma

Cut the fat from the pig after it has been slaughtered and keep aside. Roast the pig for the traditional Christmas feast. After the feast, remove any vestiges of meat from the carcass of the pig. Take the fat which has been put aside chop it up and fry in small amount of oil. Add the meat scraps and some oregano, pepper, garlic, and salt.

Fry for 20 minutes until the fat melts and the ingredients have combined. Pour mixture into jars. Allow to cool and seal. It can be kept up to six months. Use the cavrouma on bread, rice, or on spaghetti with cheese as a meal. It can also be used for a small meal by melting some of the cavrouma in a frying pan and breaking two eggs into it.

This was life in the village in Rhodes, but as Filippos said, it was hard and the villagers were very poor after the Second World War. Many people emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s. But for the migrants at this time, Australia was not the land of milk and honey they had expected. When Filippos first came to Brisbane, he cried. *'In Greece, I had the good life. I find the very bad life here. I come here and buy the bread! Can't eat! There I had everything, bread, oil, cheese. I had no money because I have to send money back to Greece. I earn eleven pounds a week and pay eight pounds rent.'*

In Rhodes, in the 1920s, the villagers used a bartering system, which did not allow them to accumulate money. Filippos's father, in the hope of accumulating assets to pay off his debts and establish financial security for his family, came to Australia in 1927. He lived on the outskirts of Adelaide, working on a

farm for a shilling a week. After a while the farmer was unable to pay him due to the depression. He then started to work in a salt factory as a packer. He was strong and after a year and a half, he had earned enough money to return to Rhodes in 1929 and paid off his debts. He then took a job in a ceramic factory in Rhodes, extracting clay from caves. He only worked there four weeks when a cave-in killed him, leaving his pregnant wife and five children. His mother had no money, so Filippas, at the age of nine, started working on the farm. As he grew older he also took on timber cutting, felling the local cypress pine. After such a childhood of hard work and responsibility, when Filippas married and started a family, he decided to migrate to Australia to find a better life.

He came straight to Brisbane from Rhodes. He chose Brisbane because his brother had been living there since 1956. There were also other people from Filippas's village in Brisbane. They had come in the 1920s and 30s to work on the first cotton farm in Australia. At this time West End was predominantly a Greek community. Greek families from Rhodes lived in little weatherboard Queenslander houses, bordering narrow streets. It was a tightly knit community often gathering to dance and celebrate christenings or weddings in an old building renamed Colossus Hall and observing their religious traditions in a Greek Church. At least fifty percent of the Greek community in West End, more than a thousand people, came from Rhodes. When Filippas returned to his village in 1978, there were only forty people left. Gradually the islanders have returned and now there are seven hundred people in his village. Since 1978, Filippas has returned to his village every second year but he has found that he cannot settle in either Greece or Australia. Both places are now in his blood.

In contrast to his village life, when Filippas came to Brisbane, he started to work in a chain factory welding chain links. He had never welded before, learning on the job. He worked hard, making a hundred and forty links an hour for which he earned eleven pounds a week and every weekend he took on other jobs to supplement his income. After a year, his wife, Panaguta and their three children joined him. They rented a small house in West End for nine months until they saved enough money to put the deposit on the house they still live in. At the same time as saving for the deposit for the house, they were paying back the Council of Churches in Greece for the money that was lent to them in order for them to come to Australia. During this time neither Filippas nor Panaguta could speak any English. Later Filippas left the chain factory to join the Ford Motor Company as a welder where he worked for thirteen years. He still was unable to speak English; speaking Italian or Greek in the factory.

The house Filippas and Panaguta bought was an old weatherboard cottage consisting of only four rooms and an outside washroom in the back garden. When they moved into the house, Filippas, Panaguta, three children and Panaguta's mother, they had no chairs, table, nor beds. They slept on the floor and when they prepared a meal, they ate on a blanket on the floor. After three days of this, Filippas went to a second hand place and bought furniture. After some years, he extended the house by two extra rooms and an internal bathroom.

When Filippas left the Ford Motor Company, he bought a small mixed business in New Farm, a suburb of Brisbane, which later was extended to include a fruit shop. He and his wife worked seven days a week in the shop and it was here that they learnt English from the customers.

By now there were two gardens; one at the back of the house in West End and one at the back of the shop in New Farm where silverbeet was grown to supply the shop. Local people soon realised that they could get fresh 'spinach' as every day he cut three or four bunches to sell in the shop. After working nine long years in the shop, Filippas suddenly decided to retire even though he was only in his fifties. His children had grown up in Australia and did not have his work ethic. They did not want to work seven days a week, so he sold his shop and devoted himself to his garden.

The tiny garden in West End supplied the fruit and vegetables for the family. These included 'Australian' beans (runner beans), broad beans, capsicum, eggplants, and silverbeet. Also special Greek spinach, which he brought from Greece, was grown. This is the traditional spinach that the Greeks boil and mix with oil, garlic and lemon juice. He also grew cucumber, lettuce, shallots, garlic, broccoli, endive, cabbage and dill. Along with the vegetables, he grew radish as a medicinal herb. Radish when boiled with lemon can cure a myriad of ills.

Unlike other Mediterranean gardens in Australia, he had only one grape vine because the vine was grown merely for leaves to make dolmathes. The traditional Greek lemon tree is planted in the narrow

metre-wide garden in front of the house. Because he lacked space to plant further trees, he eyed the apparently unused space in the garden next door which belonged to an elderly Australian woman. Filippus asked if he could plant some fruit trees in her garden and soon he was growing mandarin and fig. His Australian neighbour introduced him to the passionfruit, but he only grew it after he had become accustomed to the taste.

Over the years, Filippus, Panaguta and their neighbour became good friends, Filippus planting many trees in her garden. Unconsciously Filippus had created the same garden collective that existed in his village in Rhodes. When their neighbour died in 1966, they bought her house which allowed the family to occupy both houses. Unlike most of the tiny houses in West End, this house was on two blocks of land. There was a large grassed area, equivalent to a block of land, between the two houses and it was here that they had extended family lunches and dinners. Initially a rug was spread under the macadamia tree for large picnics. Now they bring out tables and chairs. Sometimes they light the barbecue and grill onions and eggplant, drinking their own wine that they have made from grapes bought at the market. Interestingly the wine is not retsina. The sound of Greek music and Greek dancing often extends late into the night. The grassed area is quite visible from the street and the sounds draw people to watch them dancing on the grass. Sometimes there are nearly three hundred people at the picnics. In Rhodes they had similar picnics but they were always on the beaches.

The garden in West End today is little changed from their first garden planted thirty-eight years ago. There is a large Hills Hoist, which was in the garden when they bought the house. Filippus has lain concrete over the areas, which are not vegetable beds. A garage, which Filippus built, occupies half the garden. They have parties in the garage, which has colourful linoleum on the floor, a large refrigerator and a sink. The remaining small garden area consists of vegetable beds along both sides and across the back. In late summer, the garden is planted with rows of capsicum, eggplants, cucumbers and a large area of Greek spinach. Filippus and Panaguta eat the spinach twice a week, believing that this is the secret to their good health. There are also Australian beans, snake beans and potatoes. In the winter he grows English spinach, parsley and salad vegetables because the Queensland climate allows many salad vegetables to grow all year.

There are papaya trees along the back fence. Filippus said that *'for a start I did not like it [papaya]. Now it is my fruit.'* The original side fence continues to separate Filippus's two gardens because the grapevine grows on it. He maintains that it is good exercise to walk around the front of the house to get into the other garden. Filippus has always maintained both gardens, his son being too busy.

The small front area is covered with highly glazed cream tiles. There are a few shrubs near the picket fence but a large lemon tree, covered in lemons dominates the area. The trunk of the lemon tree is painted with traditional whitewash and insecticide. Filippus brings out a small television and a chair and sits in his tiled front garden only an arm's length from the street.

The house on the second block, in which Filippus's son lives, is a very old weatherboard cottage on stilts, providing a shady area underneath. A large aloe and a range of herbs, all of which have been planted for their medicinal qualities, dominate the equally narrow front garden. Between the two houses the grassed area is planted with macadamia, mandarin, pomegranate, fig and pistachio trees. A large boat, which Filippus uses for fishing in Moreton Bay, is parked under the trees. Along the complete length of the side of his house is a bed of large okra plants and tall papayas. The front of this bed is bordered by up-ended besser blocks in which are planted red carnations and roses. These are the only flowers in the two gardens. There is another vegetable garden at the back of the second house where Filippus grows tomatoes and passionfruit vines. The remaining side boundary is planted with more papaya.

The two gardens supply all the fruit and vegetables for the extended family, some being cooked as soon as it is picked and others such as the sweet green chillies, put in salt and vinegar for storage. The eggplant are used for a range of dishes, including the traditional moussaka. They are sometimes fried and sometimes boiled and served with garlic sauce.

Garlic Sauce

Chop garlic and pound with mortar and pestle. When the garlic is crushed, add a little flour, lemon juice and slowly mix in olive oil. Continue until a smooth paste is formed. Add salt and a small amount of water. Put on low heat and stir until it forms a creamy sauce. Store in bottle in fridge for vegetable dishes.

Apart from using the garlic sauce with eggplant it can also be added to sweet chillies, and chips. The chips were one of the staples in the village in Rhodes, because they grew plenty of potatoes. When there was no meat, they often ate potatoes flavoured with garlic sauce.

Both houses face a narrow street, which contains predominantly Greek families. Most of the houses in the area are weatherboard Queenslander cottages, which are elevated to create a cool useable place underneath. They are set back from the street with the same narrow, one metre wide, gardens. Filippos and his son Peter occasionally sit in the tiny front garden and discuss their healthy diet in Greece where they grew up eating bread and cheese, olive oil and fruit. *' Instead of sitting down to have a steak and eggs at lunchtime like we do here, over there we have a couple of pieces of bread which you just break with your hand, piece of fetta cheese, a few grapes and a bit of water melon. And olives -the main thing.'*

The Greek gardeners in Sydney and Brisbane grow similar plants but they use their gardens differently. The Sydney gardens reflect the busy life of people in a big city, whereas the Brisbane gardens reinforce the idea that Brisbane is still small enough to allow for pockets of village life.

Two Greek Cypriot gardens described here similarly show the difference in the Cyprus experience in contrast to mainland Greece.

Greek-Cypriot Gardens

The island of Cyprus is different from mainland Greece in a number of ways. Culturally, the Greek Cypriots, although descended from the earliest Greek inhabitants, have been blended with various waves of invaders, the most recent influence being the British. Ruined Gothic monasteries with remnant stone arches merging into tall cypress pines tell the story of the Crusades, while distant views of the Turkish minarets hint at the recent troubled past.

Physically, the island has a wide fertile plain stretching between two open bays, Morphou Bay, in the west and Famagusta Bay in the east. This extensive plain lies between two mountain ranges, which span the length of the island. Because of the mild Mediterranean climate the plain is often covered with colourful wildflowers. There are patches of woodlands, which show the many influences on Cyprus; the dark green native cypress pines blending with the grey green Australian eucalypts and yellow acacias.

Cypriots are predominantly rural people with a tradition of citrus growing. In the villages, the squares have peppercorn trees for shade; familiar to many as the 'Tree of Idleness' in Lawrence Durrell's *Bitter Lemons*.

Mick's Garden in Arcadia⁸

Mick came from the village of Morphou, a little inland from Morphou Bay. His father was an orchardist so he grew up learning the many skills needed to grow fruit trees. In 1948, his father decided to migrate to Australia because life was hard in Cyprus after the war. Two years later, when Mick was sixteen, he and his mother came to Australia by ship. Mick remembers his arrival in Sydney Harbour as *'the most beautiful sight in the world'*.

The family lived in Redfern at first, but soon moved to the coastal suburb of Manly where Mick's father and elder brother bought a shop. In a few years Mick's brother moved to a northern area of Sydney known as Arcadia situated on a sandstone ridge overlooking one of the National Parks that fringes Sydney. Arcadia is known for its citrus orchards and market gardens. When Mick visited his brother, he was enchanted by the area and bought five acres of land where he built his home, established an orchard and a poultry farm and has remained ever since.

Mick built a red textured brick bungalow, adding ornate Greek columns and an ornate balustrade to the front porch. Although the house is typical of the housing built by migrants from Mediterranean

countries, it bears no similarity to the double storey, flat roofed housing characteristic of Cyprus. In the front garden are two large orange trees, planted by Mick's late father, however, it is the back garden which reflects Mick's heritage both in the citrus orchard and white-washed outhouses as well as in small details such as white-washed rocks and peppercorn trees with white-washed trunks.

Mick has separated the back garden from the chicken farm beyond by a driveway which encircles the house, the orchard and a number of small buildings, the most intriguing of which is a small 'guest house'. This is a simple one-roomed fibro structure with a wide patio sheltered by a sloping galvanised roof. It is separated from the main house by a short, narrow concrete path so that the patio area becomes an entertaining area for the main house. Coloured lights hang from the roof and there are a number of tables and chairs. Next to this area are two large kilns made of white-washed concrete domes standing on brick platforms. The kilns are large ovens used to bake bread and also to cook whole lambs.

The garden between the back of the house and the 'guest house' is planted with tropical plants, Cocos palms, cycads, and impatiens. A jasmine grows over the columns supporting the back terrace. Mick remembers how as a young boy in Cyprus, he and his friends would cut fronds of Cocos palms and decorate them by threading the leaves with jasmine flowers. They would sell them to the tourists who were passing through their village. To the side of this garden area are two water tanks, both white-washed, and beyond the tanks the natural forest of tall eucalypts forms a backdrop to this little paradise garden.

The other defining element of the back garden is the orchard. It is here that both Mick and his father have been able to maintain their Cypriot traditions. The orchard contains a particular species of mandarin that Mick's father cultivated in their Cyprus orchard, the 'thorny' mandarin which produces very sweet fruit. The other citrus include grapefruit, lemon, orange and tangerine. The skin of the tangerine is used to make a Cypriot delicacy. The skin is carefully cut from the fruit and cooked in syrup until is soft. The skin in the syrup is stored in a glass jar until it is served in small individual cut glass dishes as a delicacy with coffee. Olives are also grown in the orchard and over time Mick has added nut trees such as almond, hazelnut and the Australian macadamia.

Mick has been a chicken farmer for most of his time in Australia, however, as his children do not want to continue the tradition of farming, he decided to retire and sell the chickens. The only element, which remains from the chicken farm, is a large shed. Mick has cleaned out any evidence of the chickens, white-washed the shed and added a long wooden fascia running the full length of this large structure. He stores machinery, tools and the lawnmower at one end of the shed. The other end has been converted into a garage for all the children's cars. Each car space is named with a name-tag carefully crafted by Mick, and nailed to the front of the long wooden fascia.

Mick's garden is a little bit of Cyprus in Arcadia. The other Greek-Cypriot garden is in Brisbane and tells a happy story about the Greek brides.

Lousie's Garden in Yeronga, Brisbane.

Lousie was a young girl when she came to Australia from Cyprus as an arranged bride in 1959. Unlike the Greek brides who came on ships, known as the *Bride Ships*, she was flown to Australia. Her intended husband was aware that she was most uncertain about marrying him and so ensured that she came to Australia as quickly as possible.

Lousie came from a village in Cyprus called Aradippou which is 3 km from Lanarel. Some of her family had already come to Australia. She had a sister in Adelaide and a brother-in-law in Melbourne as well as a sister in Brisbane. Lousie was only 15 years old when she arrived by plane in Darwin. She had been travelling with another girl from Cyprus who then flew onto Sydney leaving Lousie alone. Arriving on a Friday, she did not realise that she would have to wait until Monday for a connecting flight to Adelaide where her so-called fiance was waiting. Unable to speak English, Lousie was very confused and distressed for she knew no-one in Darwin and could not ask for help. A man waiting to catch a plane realised that the tearful young girl was speaking Greek. Being Greek himself, he called some friends to come to the airport and look after her for the weekend before hastily catching his plane. Lousie explained her plight to the people who took care of her suggesting that she telegraph her sister in Adelaide.

After explaining to her sister that she did not want to marry the man who had arranged for her to fly to Australia, her sister agreed to speak to him about it. She spent her first two months in Australia with her sister in Adelaide, then three months in Melbourne with her brother, finally joining her other sister in Brisbane where she worked in her sister's business for three years until she met her husband.

Lousie⁹ still speaks glowingly of the first time she saw Andy, her future husband. He had grown up in her village, his grandmother living in the house next door to Lousie's family. Andy was seventeen when he migrated to Australia, and Lousie was just the little girl who lived next to his grandmother. In Brisbane, all the Cypriots from the village of Aradippou used to get together at Christmas time. Lousie joined them for her first Christmas in Australia and she describes how her future husband came to the party looking sun-tanned and handsome after working in the cane fields in north Queensland. She was particularly drawn by his compelling green eyes and thick black hair. Despite their instant attraction, it was three years before they married because of the seasonal nature of cane cutting. They married in 1962 and three weeks later, Andy went cane cutting while Lousie worked in Brisbane. When he returned he had five hundred pounds and she had saved three hundred pounds. They pooled their money and put half in a fruit shop and half in a house.

Their first house in Morningside, Brisbane remains much the same however the grape-vine they planted is now a feature of the garden. When they bought the house, they started a garden straight away, however, because they were working so hard to pay it off, they had to garden at night. The first thing Lousie planted were roses. The gardens in Cyprus are renowned for their roses, especially the varieties used for rose water, which is a delicacy in Cypriot cooking. They planted sixty roses in their Morningside garden.

They had no furniture for years, as they were too busy working to need tables and chairs. Fruit boxes from the shop were used for chairs, their first furniture being the bedroom suite. The fruit shop was profitable and as a result of their long hours of work, they soon paid off their house. Once the house was paid for they decided to have children but they continued to work long hours. They would get up at 5.30am, Lousie would get the children ready for school and then the parents would be off to work, often working as late as 7.00pm.

When Andy's brother moved to Brisbane from Sydney, they offered him their shop and bought another shop in Ipswich. There were no Greek people in Ipswich at this time. Lousie and Andy lived in the house beside the shop in Ipswich for eight years where they made a little garden. The fence had to be removed so that they could park the car so there was little space for the garden. Mostly cucumbers were grown in the small patches, which remained around the car. After eight years in Ipswich they wanted to move. Their children were growing up, and they were aware that there was no Greek culture in Ipswich. They decided to move back to Brisbane so that the children could go to the Greek Church and the Greek school.

In 1970, Andy's parents became ill. They were living in West End in inner Brisbane which required that Lousie and Andy make the long journey from Ipswich to see them. Andy decided to live half way between West End and Ipswich, building a house in Yeronga that they still live in. Again the first plants in Lousie's new garden were all roses. Andy, however, was keen to plant trees. He first planted an olive tree, which is still growing in the front corner of the garden even though it has never produced olives. Instead its branches are used to decorate the church on Palm Sunday. He then planted a lemon, an orange, and a pomegranate tree, two figs and a grape vine. Unlike the olive, all of these trees are productive, particularly the orange which supplies enough oranges for juice every morning. Lousie also planted a vegetable garden. At last she was able to grow the range of vegetables that they ate in Cyprus: snake beans, broad beans, cucumber, zucchini and eggplant.

Their home in Yeronga is a substantial double-storey, decorative brick house with a colonnaded and tiled front patio opening onto a luxuriously verdant front garden. Although the houses in their village in Cyprus were 2-storeyed, they were built of lime-washed mud brick. In Cyprus, the front yard was walled so that it could house the animals when the weather became bad. The garden was just a small area beside the house where they grew roses and mint, parsley, shallots and coriander. There were often Cypress pines in the gardens. Lousie remembers the neighbour in her village had four Cypress trees, each one planted to mark the birth of her daughters. As each daughter married, a pine was cut down. Lousie planted Cypress pines on the side of her garden in Brisbane but these are just for privacy.

Today Lousie's front garden is decorative, neither used for the car nor goats and sheep. Until recently roses were still the main plants forming a colourful bed along the full length of the front fence. Gradually the roses, which have always been such an important aspect of Lousie's garden, are being replaced. Lousie's daughter-in-law, who is Australian, has suggested that the roses are not stylish and should be replaced with a 'designed' hedge of Murraya. Now there are only a few feature roses near the front path. The rest of the front garden is a tropical delight. There are numerous urns and hanging baskets of ferns and succulents on the richly coloured tiled patio. Two tall palm trees are growing in the centre of the front lawn. Lousie loves her plants in the urns and baskets. She says *'Everyone thinks I am mad. I love them. When people ask for a cutting, I would rather give them the whole thing. I don't like to cut them.'*

At the sides of the front garden and in the back are the bountiful trees that Andy has planted. The non-fruiting olive graces one side in the front and a spectacular Prickly Pear commands the other corner. This Pear was brought from Stanhope which has another history associated with the Prickly Pear. For seven years the pear like the olive would not bear fruit but now it produces rich crops of fruit along the margins of the thick green paddles. Behind the olive is a handsome pomegranate tree, which also produces fruit, however the most productive trees are in the back garden.

At the back of the house, Andy has created a citrus orchard of lemon, orange and lime. He has also planted two types of fig - a red-black fig and a green fig - and a row of pawpaw trees along the back fence. All the trees produce bountiful crops of fruit. Lousie harvests the figs and dries them in the sun. These are a delicacy from the garden. Sometimes she prepares a dessert of figs in red wine.

Lousie's Fig Dessert.

*Pick the figs and place them in the sun for a week, after sprinkling them with bicarbonate of soda to prevent fungus.
After they have dried but are still soft, flatten them with the palm of your hand.
Put most of the figs in a jar.
Place the remaining figs in a small amount of red cooking wine and equal amount of water.
Add a little sugar to sweeten the wine.
Simmer gently until the water and wine cook down into syrup.
Serve with cream or ice-cream.*

Lousie and Andy established a vegetable garden in the back where they grow snake beans, broad beans, cucumber, zucchini and eggplant and also mint, parsley and taro. The taro has a large leaf rather like an elephant's ear. Lousie suggests that this plant is only grown in Cyprus and China but is very similar to the plants found in the Vietnamese gardens. She uses the tubers from this plant as a taro which she cooks with pork or spinach rolls.

Lousie's Taro and Spinach Rolls.

*Harvest the tubers of the taro plant.
Wash, peel and chop. Fry in a little oil.
Also fry some parsley, onions, celery, and chopped tomatoes.
Add freshly squeezed lemon juice.
Cover with a small amount of water, add salt and pepper.
Wash and clean spinach and blanch to soften the leaves.
Fill the leaves with a mixture of mince pork, rice, onions, parsley, cinnamon, finely chopped tomato, salt and pepper and plenty of lemon juice.
Roll up and place on top of taro mixture.
Put a plate on top of the rolls to prevent them unrolling.
Simmer, covered, for ½ hour*

The back garden is currently in a state of transition. Although Lousie and Andy do not have to allow for sheep and goats in their front garden in Australia, they have recently had to give their back garden to their dog.

Lousie and her husband were adopted by a stray dog a number of years ago. The dog decided that this was the family he wanted to protect and has never wavered from this role since he first moved in. Unfortunately he was over-protective one day and bit the dog inspector. As a result Lousie and Andy had to pay a large fine to bail the dog out of the pound and have had to construct a large wire cage for the dog in the back garden. Although Lousie and Andy love their garden, they love the dog more. The garden has been altered significantly because the large cage occupies half the space and the dog gives vent to its frustration by digging up most of the plants. It will be interesting to see what kind of a garden emerges when the dog, the family and the garden recover from the drama of recent events.

Epilogue

Greek gardens in Australia are similar to Italian and Lebanese gardens in Australia in that they have many Mediterranean features but they are also different in subtle ways. Greek gardens have a strong focus on citrus trees and there are particular vegetables that are favoured such as endive and Greek spinach. Greek gardens often have quirky and idiosyncratic features, which have come about through inventive pioneering in a strange and unfamiliar landscape. Jim's inventive possum control and Mick's 'guest' house and family garage are just some of the idiosyncratic features that are often found in Greek-Australian gardens. It is the pioneering spirit that is so characteristic of Homer's journey which is most evident in Greek communities outside their homeland.

Endnotes

1. The conversations about Greek houses in Sydney occurred with a group of elderly Greek migrants in Marrickville in 1992.
2. Despina came to Australia as a young woman in the 1950s and lived in Marrickville.
3. Rena and her husband came from the island of Lesbos in the 1960s and have lived in Marrickville ever since.
4. Greg came from Athens in the 1960s and has lived in Marrickville ever since.
5. Jim and Denise's garden was first described by Belinda Rollason, a student in Landscape Architecture, UNSW.
6. Federation houses have a particular architectural style. This is explained in Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. 1989. *Identifying Australian Architecture*. Angus & Robertson : Sydney.
7. Mick's garden was originally described by Sarah Braund , a student in Landscape Architecture, UNSW.
8. Lousie came from a family of ten, where four sisters and one brother migrated to Australia; her brother coming first. At the time, those who wished to migrate from Cyprus had to choose between England or Australia. Her parents stayed in Cyprus with the younger children, joining their older children later in Australia. Recently, Lousie's mother died at the age of 92 after making many trips between Cyprus and Australia.