

Scotland Yard recovers stolen Greek icon

SERRES, Greece, Nov. 7 (UPI) -- A Greek icon that dates back to the Byzantine Era has been returned to Greek authorities thanks to London's Scotland Yard, authorities say.

Authorities with the British law enforcement group handed the "Deposition of Christ from the Holy Cross" over to Greek authorities in

London 30 years after the icon was stolen from a Greek monastery, the Athens News Agency said Friday.

The icon from the 16th century was taken from the St. John the Baptist Monastery in the Greek city of Serres in 1978 and apparently was cut in half in order to be placed into a suitcase. *Sponsored Links*

Officials at the Greek culture ministry only learned of the icon's location more than a year ago after a Greek ship owner attempted to sell the historical treasure in Athens.

British authorities seized the artifact from the man, who died last year in London, and a court later supported the Greek claim to the lost icon, the news agency said.

Dried fruit producers fight against cheap Greek imports

Australian dried fruits producers have won the first stage of their case against the dumping of Greek currants on the Australian market. The Australian Dried Fruits Association and the processor Sunbeam mounted an anti-dumping case arguing Greek product was being sold in Australia at below the normal price in the home

country.

The association's Phil Chidzey says Australian Customs has delivered its interim findings, and has found Australian producers suffered price suppression and loss of sales volumes as a result of the Greek imports.

"That's led Customs in its paper to indicate that they're going to rec-

ommend that measures be imposed which means a duty applied to imported currants," he said.

"What it will do is lift the price, increase the price of imported product." There are now 20 days for submissions on the interim findings before Australian Customs makes its recommendations to the Federal Government.

Waste units pollute Thermaic Gulf

"Streams of pollution" are gushing into the Thermaic Gulf daily due to the inadequate operation of biological wastewater treatment plants in the Thessaloniki area, a study by the northern city's Aristotle University has revealed.

According to the 600-page study, which took experts at the university's pollution-monitoring laboratory two years to complete, the Thermaic Gulf is being polluted by seven key sources.

Among the main offenders are local wastewater treatment plants, whose purpose, ironically, is to cleanse water.

The results of the study, commissioned by the government, were made public at a joint press conference yesterday by Macedonia-Thrace Minister Margaritis Tzimas and by Constantinos Fytianos, the chemist who led the research project.

The study mentions more than 30 proposals for improving the operation of local wastewater management and cleansing the polluted gulf.

According to Fytianos and his fellow researchers, action must be taken immediately to upgrade the operation of processing plants in Angelohori, on the east coast, and the city's main sewage processing plant, on the west coast near the Gallikos River. The sewage unit alone processes some 160,000 cubic meters of waste every day. This is "theoretically a full second-stage biological processing procedure," according to the report, which noted concern "at the presence of phosphoric acid in the processed sewage as well as high levels of bacteria."

This toxic waste was found to be particularly concentrated around the area of Kalohori. Tests revealed high traces of heavy metals, including lead, chromium and copper. They also discovered traces of pesticides that have been banned in Greece for years.

Last month, the Environment and Public Works Ministry heralded a project for the reuse of hundreds of tons of wastewater that is discharged daily from a sewage processing unit on the islet of Psyttaleia, off Piraeus. The water would be purified before being used for irrigation, the ministry said.

On location in Greece

Can Greece lure more movies to be filmed on its shores? High profile recent wins include *Mama Mia!* and *My Life in Ruins* (the sequel to *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*) have the Hellenic Film Commission wanting more.

The H.F.C.O. (Hellenic Film Commission Office) was founded in 2007 as the result of an initiative by the Greek Film Centre. Though the commission is still overseen by the GFC, it will soon be operated independently. The goal of the Commission is to provide official information and support for foreign producers desiring to film either a part or their whole film in Greece.

Greece, like most countries in the region, offers VAT refunds for non-European companies, which can help knock 19% off the goods-and-services tab.

Six foreign features have been shot in Greece since the commission's founding.

There's been a plethora of Greek films recently too -- 29 features finished this year, up from an annual average of 20.

Soldatos Retrospective wins fans while supporting charity

If you ever wanted a clue as to how things have changed on the social whirl, you need only look at the inside labels on the frocks that socialites wear at the soirees we cover.

While a decade ago, this column was littered with the Norman Callans, your Marc & Michaels and the Julians of the world, these days we write about a Rajah, Tlale or Sun Goddess original.

So it was a bit of a Back to the Future escapade I found myself at on Wednesday night at the Soldatos in Retrospect show in aid of Choc and charities linked to the Lyceum Club of Greek Women.

Pint-sized couturier Peter Soldatos first came to fame for crafting an extravagant wedding gown at the age of 19, going on to build a reputation for razor-cut pieces often furnished in the most decadent of fabrics. And the show, at the Wanderers Club hall, was a perfect capsule of that journey.

This was a mostly Greek affair, from the tzatziki dips and the spanakopitas to the cans of hairspray that kept together the coils of the guests who turned up en masse to ooh and aah over the rokke from this Greek boykie from Krugersdorp.

And cultural melting-pot references were a dime a dozen, with Amor Vittone (who's recovered from me calling her a pop poppie a couple of years ago) as the night's MC saying: "I might be half Italian and half Afrikaans, part pizza, part potjiekos, but I feel like a Greek princess tonight."

I enjoyed meeting Dominique Souros, president of the Lyceum Club; caught up with Ruda Landman (who doesn't miss sitting in front of that Carte Blanche desk) and met a few of the Soldatos family.

So why did Peter decide to put on the retrospective? "I wanted to do this before I got to the departure lounge," is how he put it. Well, departure lounge or not, the night saw a few new converts, like singer Lira.

