



Macedonian 'theme' and some of its great emperors include Basil I and Basil the Bulgar slayer. Other notable Byzantines to have been born in Macedonia include Justinian and Belisarius.

Slavic Migration

During the 500's AD the Slavs began the process of migration, continuing until the 700's AD, settling in areas such as the former republics of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and even Greece. None of these people have any direct connection to Greece and it is important that they have their own identities. The people of FYROM were invariably linked to Bulgaria and Serbia. It wasn't until early last century that they began agitating for the name Macedonia as a means to creating their own country. Before the coming of the Ottoman Turks, modern FYROM was a theme called Bulgaria and was at various times from the late 1200's AD ruled by the growing power of Bulgaria and Serbia.

Tito, that so called benevolent 'socialist' of

Yugoslavia, officially renamed southern Serbia, 'Macedonia' after World War II. The Greek government was either too busy drinking ouzo, or more realistically burdened by a civil war and the need to pander to Tito (the US wanted to placate Tito during the late 1940's to neutralise him against Russia, so Greece would not have been 'allowed' to stir up diplomatic tensions). The majority of the territory of FYROM is on the site of ancient Paionia. Perhaps a change to this name should be considered, but hey its not as sexy as being connected to a handsome Greek king such as Alexandros!

Modern Times

Many who know me will realise that I do not vote for conservative governments. However, I have to acknowledge a proud moment in Greek politics (well before the recent riots), when conservative Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis told the world that he is a Macedonian, born in that state. He promised that a 'false solution' to the modern ownership of the

name will never happen. Greece has given up so much over the years to placate its 'Allies,' but I know that they will stay true to history and protect the cultural heritage of Greece and that includes Macedonia, the premier state of Greece.

There are 2.7 million Greeks in Macedonia and a further 1.4 million worldwide. There are 2.04 million people in FYROM (a further 200 000 worldwide), however approximately 35% of the population is made up of Albanians, Serbians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Greeks. It is estimated that within 2 generations the Albanians will be the dominant group of that country due to their high birth rates.

I stress that Greece must be a leader in the region and a friend to FYROM, no matter what the circumstances. Let's hope there is a solution based on history, rather than name dropping - the Skopjan international airport is named after Megas Alexandros who has no Slavic connection whatsoever, hence causing offence to Greeks and historians alike. Surely they could have named it after one of their own!

So flying out from Macedonia Airport from the city that Casander had established in 316BC in honour of his wife, I realised that I had to present a case. I have chosen not to highlight the Greek ruins and churches, the fact that the people of ancient and medieval Macedon spoke Greek, were Greek, felt Greek and adhered to the Greek religion. I haven't told you about the myriad of Greek artists, poets, leaders, visionaries from the past until the present. I have simply provided you with a timeline of the Greek presence in the region and some of its most accomplished names. There is more to say, alas time restricts this activity. Your Honour, I remind you that Athens shone brightly for 2 centuries but it was the Macedonians who took the Greek culture and civilisation to a new level. Cultural preservation is what my ancestors want and that is what they will receive!

Billy Cotsis (in London)

*For more articles from the author: <http://www.herculean.wordpress.com/>
Roman provinces*

It's water torture

THE Sydney to Hobart masochism is on again this week.

In three days men - and perhaps some women - of questionable reason will set out from Sydney to travel to Hobart by boat.

Not one of those boats with indoor cabins, well-stocked smorgasbords and bars with a choice of entertainment lounges.

These boats are called yachts and imply luxury and regal comfort like the royal yacht Britannia, which does not enter the Sydney to Hobart even though Prince Phillip is of Greek sailing descent.

Instead of luxury, for the following five days after the Sydney to Hobart yachts take off - or whatever they call boats leaving the pier - those on board will be impaled by icy needles of Bass Strait water.

They will be soaked continually by spray, they will be hungry, irritable, unable to change clothes and sleep deprived.

On the odd occasion sleep is possible they will curl up in a space as big as small dog's blanket and try and close their eyes for sometimes as long as two or three minutes. They will concede control of their own destiny and surrender themselves to

vagabond winds and tides.

And when it is all over, when the last timber has been shivered, the last lubber has been landed and the last keel has been hauled, they will gather in bars and nightclubs in Hobart and tell each other what a bloody marvelous time they had.

It is sheer madness.

Experiences with the sea generate so many negative images. If you miss the boat (which would be my primary ambition at all times) you have missed a great opportunity. If a project has gone pear-shaped it is dead in the water.

People say don't rock the boat or the consequences will be severe. Especially pertinent in these troubled times is keep your head above water. Another one is rats leaving their dessert on a sinking ship.

I never quite grasped what rat cuisine had to do with anything but I pass it on.

The yacht race is far from being a highly publicised, national event that keeps Australia's adrenalin pumping wildly as boats vie for the lead. Really, the Sydney to Hobart is just stunningly lucky.

It is staged at a time of the year

when news generally is scarcer than beds in a Sydney hospital. So the yacht race provides wall-to-wall words and big pictures to fill a media hiatus because nothing of any real consequence is happening except the cricket Test.

If they staged the Sydney-Hobart in September when the football finals are being played you could sail a yacht down Martin Place and no one would care.

Quick quiz. When was the last time you were in a pub and heard a conversation like this: "Oh I see the giant maxi yacht Blooming Boring is now three miles east of Litany Point and should unfurl her spinnaker any moment now for the final upwind leg down the starboard side.

"Ahoy yes" says his mate. "I was surprised by that scuttlebutt. But I like the cut of its jib when its tacking."

Never that's when. Unless you're talking to Donald Duck, who never seems to be in the water. No one comes out of a story about the sea looking good or sane.

The ancient mariner went crazy and The Caine Mutiny's Captain Queeg became haunted by missing strawberries.

The only vaguely sensible one was



Fletcher Christian who led the mutiny on the Bounty and then sailed back to an island full of bare-breasted maidens. The list never ends.

Captain Ahab was morbidly obsessed with a white whale, Jaws ate a boat, the Poseidon capsised and Nelson died at Trafalgar - the battle not the pub.

Even the Skipper finished up marooned with Gilligan which is a cruel and unusual punishment. I am not anti-sea, provided it is surfing or fishing.

My idea of following poet John Masfield's advice to himself to "go down to the sea again" involves a prominent table at a harbourside restaurant. If mother nature wanted me any closer to the water she would have given me gills.

*Article by Ray Chesterton
The Daily Telegraph*