

Online interview with Mrs Koula Mousoulou and Andrea Mousoulou on Sunday 13th September 2020.

*[Due to technical difficulties, the beginning of the interview (introduction of the interviewees, description of the topic and mentions of information that has already been collected) is missing.]*

KM: I knew many people who were working on the ships...we had Kallinicos, of course, who was also on the church committee.

SS: We've had testimonies regarding this name before, but I didn't know he had anything to do with the Greek church, I only knew about his business.

KM: Yes, he was running the church, together with our priest, Father Spyros, who was also from Corfu. He had warehouses with provisions for all the ships in the Docks.

SS: From other people's information, what we have gathered is that most Greek people working in the Docks came from the Ionian Islands.

KM: Yes, and it was these seamen who built our church, over 100 years ago...1906. That's why it is in that location, near the Docks, because they wanted to be able to go easily. This is how we still have this church to attend and support in the way that we can and we can be members of the Orthodox Church. We had celebrations for the centenary of our church a few years ago. When did you come here (to Cardiff)?

SS: I've only been here a few years, I came in 2013.

KM: I came in 1960, just after getting married, aged 19. I remember we were (living) first in Bute Street, close to the church. Afterwards, we bought a house further away from the city centre. Now all the old houses (In Bute Street) have disappeared. They were demolished...around the 80s. I know they were next to Rabot, we used to live nearby, they didn't demolish Rabot, I know because when my husband came (to this country) we used to rent at Rabot's for 4 pounds a week, it was very cheap. He couldn't buy the place, though, because we knew that sooner or later they were all going to be demolished. We lived there for years, since 1955-'56 when my husband came, we had the barber shop for 10 years, we then opened a cafe there, that was another 10 years and they (the buildings) were finally demolished in '81. Was it '81? When was it?

AM: In 1980.

SS: I remember when your husband passed away...

KM: Oh, you knew my husband?

SS: I knew his face...

KM: He was involved with the committee in church.

SS: Yes, and when he passed away Andrea gave me the obituary and I remember reading about all the things he had accomplished and there were some pictures of you all...

KM: We've got photos that were taken outside our shop in town, together with Pavlos, with Steve Lazarou, because my husband had them as trainees. Whoever (Cypriot) came here and needed help, my husband would take them. The Lazarou, who own all these hair salons now; my husband taught them. We had a big party within the greek society a couple of years ago, and these guys gave a speech and mentioned how much my husband had helped them and taught them. He even won a championship together with Constantinou...do you know the hair salon on Crwys Road? They used to work together with my husband, he was godfather to

our ...so, they won the Welsh Hairdressing Championship in ...was it in 1961?

AM: I think 1965.

(Talking from far away)

KM: That's my other daughter, can you hear her? She says it was in 1970. They had formed a team with the Constantinou Brothers.

AM: My mum also knows many stories about our first priest, father Spyros.

SS: Yes, sure, any stories you would like to share, if I'm not being too nosy!

AM: Tell her about father Spyros!

KM: Ah, we had a great time with father Spyros. We got married the same year as father Spyros married his wife, Tina and they also came here. They were very close with my husband, they had the same age. My husband taught father Spyros how to drive, we had been through a lot together. You may know Tina, his wife...

SS: I don't, I'm afraid.

KM: A lovely lady, she's in Corfu, she also lost her husband, sadly, about 10 years ago. We know many Greeks here, mostly people from Corfu, we have many acquaintances through our church.

SS: Another thing I'd like to ask is whether you could allow us to have a look at any photos from that period you may still have, or even make copies to use for our research.

KM: I've got lots of photos, of course you can see them.

SS: If you have any photos of special occasions, say a wedding or christening where we could see members of the Greek community...

AM: You have pictures from christenings with father Spyros. My mum has become godmother to many children. Anything else?

SS: Anything, really, maybe from a celebration or gathering, just to have some documents of how things were at that time, how Greeks of this area used to live...

KM: I'll show you a photo from my daughter's wedding...

AM: What about the one he's coming out of the ship?

KM: I don't know where that is; we can look for it. Look, my husband came here back then in order to avoid having to go to the army in Cyprus. When he arrived here, though, they sent him to the army. So, he worked on the ships for a couple of years. He couldn't get away with it in the end, because Cyprus was a British colony back then, so the moment he arrived he acquired British Citizenship. So, he needed to join the army and he went to the Navy; he went to places like South America, Brazil, all around the world.

SS: Another request would be - you have already mentioned Mr Pavlos, the chanter from church - if there is anyone else you would suggest that we could approach to find out about their life story.

KM: I've got a photo of Pavlos together with Dimitris Lazarou, taken outside our shop.

AM: Look, we've found one already! Take a picture of that...well we'll send it to you!

SS: OK, when we meet face to face I will get some photos of these with my camera. Or I can come by Andrea's hair salon to collect them.

KM: Andrea has a photo in her salon with Pavlos, Dimitris...

SS: Also, any photos from your barber shop, or afterwards when you turned it into a cafe...

KM and AM: Yeah, yeah, we've got plenty!

SS: Ok, thank you very much, we may need to talk to you again for more information once

we've started putting everything together...

KM: You know, near our church, where this bridge is, what road is it? There used to be lots of cafes there, but they were all demolished and now they have built skyscrapers.

SS: Yes, some other ladies from church have told me the same thing, that this road used to be all cafes and houses where people would rent rooms to the seamen.

KM: Yes, Evanthia, she was an old lady, I think from Chios, she used to rent rooms, especially to Cypriots. They preferred it because it was close to the church; there was also...a cafe where all the Cypriots would go to meet and play cards. Also, Marigo, again from Chios island, who owned a grocery store, by the bridge. She had a nice kid, He studied Law and he now lives in London...what's his name? I have forgotten. Nice lad, he used to help the priest in church when he was about 14-15 years old. His father, Costas, got married again after his mum died, but I can't remember her name. I've got lots of stories from that time! I was living in the area until I had my first daughter, and then we got a house further away, not too far, just a couple of miles further from the city-centre, on North Road.

AM: Tell her about Father Spyros, mum!

KM: After that, we bought a shop in Mackintosh Place, next to The George Hotel, my husband had a barber shop and when we started getting too tired to run it my brother-in-law took over the business and rented the building from us and we bought the shop next door, which was a groceries', and turned it into a cafe. My children went to Albany Road Primary School and I was busy mostly attending to them, caring for them. The school is close to where Andrea's hair salon is. After that, they went to Howardian School. When word spread that we have opened a cafe in Roath, we had loads of (Greek/Cypriot) people coming everyday, we were so busy you could hardly find space to sit. I had help from an old man, a retired seaman, because I couldn't handle such a busy place by myself. It was so busy I did not have time to wash dishes, and at closing time he would load the machine (dishwasher) and let it run throughout the night.

AM: (showing photos to KM) Is this the port? (asking the interviewer) Is this what you are after? Photos of the port?

SS: Yes, yes!

KM: Yeah, we'll find more. I've got so many!

SS: Thank you very much!

KM: Our life was hard, rich, tiring.

SS: You have tried a lot (in your life) and you have accomplished so much; that's what I can tell.

KM: We were also a bit lucky to be around at that time when things were cheaper and whenever we saved some money, we would buy some property...Nowadays, it's very hard for my children to buy anything.

SS: Times have changed, indeed!

[chatting to the interviewer about random things, mostly to do with their common Greek background and asking for more details regarding this research and the project about The Docks]

AM: All those people who lived back at that time must be dead now! If my dad was alive, he would have told you everything! He was one of the first to come here.

KM: The only one we knew of when we came here, who was Greek and had warehouses with provisions for the ships, was Kallinicos.

SS: Yes, this is the one name everyone I've spoken to keeps mentioning.

KM: Some time later, they left (the Kallinikos family), they went to...(London).

AM: You know what? Mum is right, Pavlos, probably he remembers a lot of things!

SS: I know that Konstantinos has already interviewed Mr Arakas (the other church canter),so I could arrange an interview with Mr Pavlos.

KM: When Pavlos arrived in Cardiff, my husband put him to work in his barber shop. After a few years, he opened his own barber shop in (mumbling) Road, I'm not sure what the name of the street is. We've got many stories, I came here at 19, so...

SS: Thank you very much for all this information, we'll try to put some pieces together and I may need to talk to you again if we have questions.

KM: You should come and we can talk face to face one day, I'm going to go to church tomorrow, it's a special day, celebrating the Holy Cross...

[chatting about church]

SS: Thank you once again for your time! We are gathering some information from Cardiff Libraries regarding listings of businesses of that time and we may need people like you to confirm some names.

KM: Most people who had businesses to do with The Docks left after a while, they went to London.

SS: Thank you very much! Many thanks to your granddaughter, Maria, for setting up this online meeting for us! Goodnight!