Through my correspondence with the writer Fred (Alfred Perlès) I came to know much about Dr. Fraser and his predicament, and how insecure and unhappy he was, imprisoned by the Turkish army in Bellapais and, at Fred’s suggestion I wrote my first letter to him in an effort to cheer him up. I got an immediate reply...

We continued to correspond, until his release from the Turks after about six months, and his move to Nicosia where he lived until the end of his life.

I did visit him that summer of 1976 and a few more times whenever I returned to Cyprus. He gave me his book of poetry entitled "A few Rhymes-Mainly about Man", and a few pieces of stoneware pottery from his own hands which, I cherish and use, remembering him.

His letters illustrate his personality very vividly.

Marlene Pitta
More Bitter Lemons
From Bellapais
Dr. E. M. Fraser’s letters to Marlene Pitta

Edited by Rina Katselli
Cover, Stavrini Catselli.

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Foreword

The volume at hand is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Edward M. Fraser as a token of gratitude for the humanitarian services he offered to the Greek inhabitants of Bellapais during the two years that followed the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in July 1974.

Today, almost four decades later the same Turkish army is still occupying a part of the island.

The *Folk Lore Club of Keryneia* hopes to make known Dr. E. M. Fraser’s experiences and disclose the crime of Turkey against the Republic of Cyprus; a crime which we, the people of Keryneia, are not willing to accept. On the contrary we shall continue demanding that our human rights be restored.

We express our gratitude to Marlene Pitta, who gave permission to publish the letters of Dr. E. Fraser. Personally I am grateful to Niki Marangou and Irene Matheou for their well-aimed remarks and Stavrini Catselli for the cover of the book.

*Rina Katselli*
Photograph of Dr Fraser in the courtyard of Bellapais Abbey, shortly before the Turkish invasion (photo by Loren Jenkins).
The personality of Dr. Fraser

Although I personally have not witnessed Dr. Fraser’s good deeds I shall read to you an extract from an article by a witness Mr. Alfred Perlès,¹ a professional writer.

"...Dr. Edward Fraser, a short cocky Scotsman of Inverness where, I believe, most Frasers came from. He was already over seventy, nearly stone-deaf, but otherwise robust physically and as lively and restless as a young colt. He drove his car at excessive speeds, like a racing champion. And he was always busy. He had come to Cyprus a year or so before us (1968/1969) and lived in Bellapais, a small, picturesque village in the hills a few miles out of Keryneia, that had once been the home of Lawrence Durrell and was an all-Greek enclave in the Turkish occupied zone.

Edward was a man of some erudition, with a penchant for psychiatry and philosophy. His library was filled with volumes by Jung, Freud, Adler, Rank, Gurdjeff, Uspensky, Suzuky, Lao-Tsu, Chuang-Tsu, Allan Watts, Christmas Humphreys, Krisnamurti, Mme. Blavatsky and kindred works. The I-Ching he studied like a Bible. But he also had a passion for poetry and music. On his costly hifi machine, which eventually became a prey of the looters, he would often listen to recordings by Eliot, Yeasts, Dylan Thomas, etc. and he was no mean poet in his own right, having composed some lyrics that had been set to music. In his spare time he was a keen potter as well.

He had a horror of cocktail parties and idle gossip and though of exquisitely courteous nature usually

¹ Alfred Perlès (1897-1990), writer. See more on p. 57.
managed to stay aloof of the crowd. When inadvertently caught in a party of more than five or six people he felt ill at ease if not downright panicky. Then, in self-defense, he would switch off his hearing aid and take refuge in his deafness.

But he never switched off his hearing aid when listening to the palaver of his beloved villagers, though he couldn’t speak a word of Greek. He was so enamoured of Bellapais that at one time he seriously considered purchasing a plot in the churchyard where he wished to be buried. But that wasn’t easy. In order to be interred there he had first to be converted to the orthodox faith. Conversion was possible but the preparations for it took time. He was interviewed by a Bishop who loaded him with volumes of edifying literature which he had to study and digest before being admitted to the Cyprus Orthodox Church. Poor Edward never made it. He confessed to me that he just couldn’t swallow the doctrines set down in those books and the articles of faith. He simply had to give it up, which, having had a glimpse of the titles on his bookshelves, came as no great surprise to me.

On the first day of the Turkish invasion Edward emerged from retirement and was at the disposal of all who needed a doctor. He had no political leanings whatever and it was a matter of indifference to him whether a sick or wounded person was a Greek, Turk or an Englishman. At any time of the day or night he was ready for any emergency. And there were many emergencies at the beginning of the invasion. He seldom got a full night’s sleep, which was pretty tough on a man of over 70. But he never flagged, his energies were boundless. He expended himself joyfully. He knew the people depended on him he was the one-man Health Service of the village.
But his service to Bellapais was not confined to medical care. Twice a week, he raced in his car to Nicosia, and came back laden with medical supplies, groceries, brandy, wine and cigarettes for the whole village. He even collected the villagers’ mail at the Greek post office in Nicosia, which was the worst offence he could commit from the Turkish point of view. He knew perfectly well that he was doing all this at his own risk and peril, especially after the Turkish law restricted the amount of permissible purchases, but he was lucky. He had charisma. There was something about his personality, a frankness and cocky self-assurance that inspired trust and confidence. He never looked guilty. Even the Turks were taken in by his perpetual air of cheerful innocence. Every now and then some Turkish official at the checkpoint would ask him a small favour, to get him a box of contraceptives, a bottle of shampoo or some such trifle, and Edward never refused. He was always willing to help people, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Of course, his luck could not last for ever, and one day he was copped. His car was stopped at the Turkish end of the Green Line and its content unloaded. Rumors had it that he was denounced by some informer who wanted to endear himself to the Turks, but it might just have been that a new customs inspector wanted to assert his authority. A matter of new brooms sweeping well. On that particular day Edward was carrying an exceptionally heavy load of supplies for his beloved village. There were several cases of forbidden brandy and cartons of cigarettes, apart from great quantities of groceries. Edward was subjected to a long, humiliating interrogation and the lot was confiscated. He might yet have got away with a fine had not a nosy police inspector discovered in a concealed compartment of the
car a stack of letters for the Bellapais Greeks. There was no fine for such a heinous crime, there was only jail.

But Edward was unrepentant. In his view a doctor’s task did not end with lancing an abscess, bandaging a wound, curing a stomach ache or prescribing pills. The fact that the people of Bellapais were cut off from the rest of the Island was the cause of widespread mental depression and enabling them to correspond with their friends and relatives on the other side and to receive their replies was therapeutically as necessary for their minds as the few goodies he brought back to the village were necessary for their physical well-being. And he, as a doctor and human being, felt it to be his duty to look after both.

Of course, the police took a different view of the matter. There was no getting around the fact that Edward by acting as a carrier of letters had laid himself wide open to prosecution. Some of those letters might well contain secret instructions from somebody on the other side which, if executed, might endanger the security of the Turkish Federated state of Cyprus. Edward was not arrested, but pending judicial proceedings he was deprived of the privilege to cross over the other side. At the time of writing, his case has not yet come up for trial.

Edward’s misfortune brought his usefulness to Bellapais to an end. It was a disaster, but the villagers took it calmly enough. They were prepared for the worst. For some time already, the Turks had begun squeezing them out of their homes, employing a rather diabolical method. A few people, at a time were allowed to take all their possessions along with them provided they signed a application requesting permission to leave on their ‘own free will’. If they refused to sign such a
document under duress they could still be kicked out, but in that case they had to go in just what they stood in. At the time of writing there are still some four hundred Greeks left in Bellapais, out of a total of 800.

Edward’s calamity did not deprive him of the villagers’ affection. They had taken him to their hearts; he was their benefactor, their Hero, almost their Patron Saint. They prayed for him had he died then and there he would no doubt have been given the village equivalent of a State funeral and been buried in their churchyard, even though he had never embraced the Orthodox faith”.

His punishment in the end was to become himself one more victim of the ‘Attila Peace Operation’ 2 and be enslaved together with his Greek friends in Bellapais and eventually he was forced together with the last Greeks to cross the Attila Line and come to the non occupied part of Cyprus.

(Extract from the "Address in honour of Doctor Edward Fraser" by the Mayor of Keryneia George Tsimon, 24th September 1979). 3

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2 ‘Attila Peace Operation’, was the official name that was given by the Turkish government of the Turkish invasion in Cyprus on 20th July 1974.
Dr. Fraser’s letters from Bellapais to Marlene Pitta

Introduction

This is a short introduction to explain how I became the receiving part, in the early summer of 1976, of the correspondence, reproduced in the following pages. Letters from Dr Fraser living in Bellapais sent to me, while I was in London.

I was born in Limassol and although I had visited Keryneia many times, it was only after 1970 that I came to know it better as I had moved to live in Nicosia. As everybody else in those days I would go to Keryneia to swim or visit friends. My visits were enriched by my acquaintance with the writer Alfred Perlès who was living there with his wife Anne. My meeting with Fred, as I soon came to call him, was totally accidental! A friend of mine, Amy Mims, also a writer, had sent a text of hers to Henry Miller, who wrote back and suggested that she should meet his good friend Perlès who was living in Keryneia in Archangelos Michael street. It was an afternoon that we arrived there unexpected, with my car and our children and the recommendation of Miller whom we both admired greatly. That meeting developed to a close friendship between Fred and me. From then onwards we met either in Nicosia or Keryneia, whenever possible or corresponded regularly if either of us was in a different country, until just before the death of Fred in England, on the 27th January 1990.

I left Cyprus in 1974 to for London. Fred and Anne were away during the invasion.

They tried to return to Keryneia after the occupation by Turkey in March 1975 and stayed in
Bellapais, with the Jowetts, friends from older times. It was then that they came to know befriend and admire Dr. Fraser. Fred and Anne eventually moved back to Keryneia as guests of the Jowetts, as their own house had been ransacked and boarded up and the authorities told them that it was allocated to a Turkish official. They only saved some of their books, which friends collected. They kept a close contact with Dr. Fraser, until they finally decided that Keryneia was no longer the place they had loved, and moved to England in March 1976, leaving behind Dr. Fraser, who by that time had run into serious trouble with the Turkish authorities.

Through my correspondence with Fred I came to know much about Dr. Fraser and his predicament, and how insecure and unhappy he was, and, at Fred’s suggestion I wrote my first letter to him in an effort to cheer him up. I got an immediate reply and therein he expressed his craving for Stilton cheese. At that moment Stella Souliotis,⁴ who is a cousin of mine was in London and returning to Cyprus shortly, so I asked her if she could find the means to send a small parcel of Stilton via the United Nations forces to Dr. Fraser, who was a well loved and known personality, in Cyprus. She consented and I immediately bought and packed the cheese, which as mentioned in the second letter arrived safely in record time, and probably restored a little his morale. We continued to correspond, until his release from the Turks after about six months, and his move to Nicosia where he lived until the end of his life. I did visit him that summer and a few more times whenever I returned to

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⁴ Stella Souliotis (1920-2012), former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus. See more on p. 58.
Cyprus. He gave me his book of poetry entitled “A few Rhymes – Mainly about Man”, and a few pieces of stoneware pottery from his own hands which, I cherish and use, remembering him. His letters illustrate his personality very vividly.

Finally I would like to thank Niki Marangou who led me to Rina Katselli, with the hope that these documents, one more testament to the suffering of the people of Bellapais, are shared with more Cypriots and others. It is now more than thirty years after these events, but I think they are relevant, and should not be forgotten.

Marlene Pitta

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6 Marlene Pitta, born in 1936, was in Cyprus during the Turkish invasion, and moved to London in September 1974. See more on p. 57.
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Short biographical notes.

Marlene Pitta was born in Limassol, Cyprus in 1936. After finishing school she went to England and graduated from the Bartlett School of Architecture, with a diploma for “Interior Architecture and Design”. She then worked in Italy for sometime until she married the English painter, John Corbidge. They had two children and lived in Italy, Cyprus, and Greece until their divorce in 1971. She worked on Interior design and lived in Cyprus until 1974. After the Turkish Invasion she moved to London where she worked at a shipping administration office, partly doing some decoration work for big Cruise Liners in Miami, Florida. By 1977 she decided to leave England and moved to Greece. There she cultivated new interests and skills, had a diploma as a Hatha-Yoga Teacher by the French School, of Eva Ruchpaul, in Paris. Her interest in psychology led her to study and finally have a diploma in Dramatherapy, by the British Institute of Dramatherapy. She practiced teaching Ruhpaul’s “Hatha-Yoga, bien tempère “ from 1980 to 1996. This taught also Hatha-Yoga at “Margarita”, an institution for mentally handicapped children. She also practiced Dramatherapy for individuals and groups from 1994 to 1994. She is now retired and lives between Athens and Limassol.

Alfred Perlès (1897-1990), Austrian writer (in later life a British citizen), who was most famous for his association with Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, Anaïs Nin and Antonin Artaud. After the First World War he went to live in Paris where he stayed until 1939. (The character ‘Carl’ in Henry Miller’s the book Quiet Days in Clichy is based on Perlès). He went to England with the outbreak of the war where he later met and married his Scottish wife Anne Barrett. His most well known books are written in English. Fred and Miller remained friends to the end and most of his books are about this relationship. He stayed in England until his retirement and then went with Anne firstly to Chania, Crete and later to Keryneia until 1975. At the time of the invasion they were in England and they returned to find their house ransacked by the Turkish troops and the place no longer hospitable so they moved back to England, first in Dorset and later in Somerset in a modest house on a redbrick housing estate in the town of Wells.
He changed his name to Alfred Barret. He wrote many books, mostly in English.

**George Tsimon** (1916-1992), was born in Karavas, west of Keryneia. Very young he went to Uganda, Africa. During the Second World War he joined the British Army and served in the Royal Army Service Corps in Uganda, Kenya, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Erithrea and Madagascar, where he was wounded. After the war (1947), he married Agnes Wortham, and started a business in Taganiga. In 1967, he returned in Cyprus and settled in Keryneia with his wife. During the Turkish invasion his wife was maltreated and physically thrown out of their home and both lived as refugees in Limassol. He was appointed mayor of the displaced Keryneia Municipality (1978-1987). He left a considerable amount of money to Keryneia and Lapithos High Schools.

**Stella Souliotis** (1920-2012), was born in Limassol, Cyprus. She married Dr D. Souliotis a radiotherapist, and they had one daughter. She is a Barrister-at-Law and was the first woman to practise Law in Cyprus. She was the Minister of Justice for the Republic of Cyprus from 1960-1966, then Law Commissioner for the revision and consolidation of Cyprus Legislation until 1984, and then Attorney General for the Republic of Cyprus from 1984-1988. She was a member of the Executive Board of Unesco, and President of Cyprus Red Cross from 1981-2004. Author of "Fettered Independence: Cyprus 1878-1964" published 2006 by the University of Minnesota, US.A.
MORE BITTER LEMONS FROM BELLAPAIS

Dr. E. M. Fraser’s letters to Marlene Pitta

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