



Life in a Small House in Crete

A Small House in Crete - (Amazon books 2020) told the story of finding and the renovation, or more accurately, the rebuilding of our small stone house in a Cretan village. The narrative ended when we eventually moved into the house but this happened a few years ago and I wanted to continue to record events as we started to live in the house. This book is more a series of experiences rather than a sequential narrative. Strangely, I am writing this in the midst of a lockdown on international travel as a result of the outbreak of the Covid 19 virus. So the reminiscing of life there is an antidote to the grim stories at this time both here and all around the world. The small village house is quietly sitting in the village now enjoying the warm Crete spring awaiting our return. There will come a time for rediscovering it, the Cretan welcomes that we always enjoy and a parallel life to that in northern Europe with the differences and contrasts that first made the island attractive to us and made us want to spend some of our time there.

I am very grateful to the people of Crete for their warm welcome to strangers. I also can't express enough thanks for the energy, imagination, enthusiasm and love given to us in this project by my life partner S.

The colour images of the pictures in the book are available to view at <https://www.pinterest.es/geoffdendle/life-in-a-small-house-in-crete/>

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1 Questions

Once we had moved in there was the new responsibility of satisfying local curiosities about us. This ranged from enquiries on how long we were planning to stay in the house at a time to where we would shop. This was accompanied by recommendations, often conflicting ones.

There were also the direct questions such as 'How old are you? Are you rich? How many houses do you have?' All asked without a trace of embarrassment.

Any purchase, however small would often have to pass a local informal inspection committee that usually sat opposite one of the kafenions at the top of the steps that led down to our house. The shopping was scrutinised by at least three of the 'yia-yias' and sometimes as many as five on a busy day. These were the same village ladies I had encountered some years before when clearing the house and had a similar mirror image scrutiny over what we were discarding. Acquisitions appeared to inspire similar levels of curiosity. Of course we didn't mind and both reflected how this was a much healthier way for the elderly to spend their later years rather than the 'shut in' ladies of a similar age in northern Europe. It also helped our slow acquisition of spoken greek although the vocabulary was mainly limited to listing the names of the various foodstuffs in our shopping bags. I have to confess there were days when I walked back to the house by another route which by-passed the 'committee' which involved walking down the main street and back up the alleyway below the house. But in the main the exchanges were enjoyable and helped establish us as new members, albeit temporary ones, of the village community. It was also in part through these exchanges that we learnt the limitations of our greek language classes back in Sussex. We had been warned by George, our Athens educated greek Cypriot language student that Cretans were different. We realised this when answering how we had travelled somewhere we answered 'by car' using the greek noun aftokinito - this was met with blank stares - I repeated the phrase this time aided by a mime of steering. 'AFTOCHINITO!' I was loudly instructed -the hard 'k' sound is sounded locally as a 'ch' softer sound.

This had led us into trouble earlier when hearing the word 'CHE' - like the legendary Cuban revolutionary. Our innocent request of a Cretan friend 'what is this word we are hearing CHE?' I thought you were learning greek ! It means 'AND' - we had been pronouncing it 'KAI' as mainland greeks did - so after four years of lessons we were could't say AND !!

The other way we thought to satisfy the ladies curiosity was to invite them to the house. This was offered on several occasions as we passed them sitting on their chairs at the top of the steps leading down to us, a distance of some thirty metres or so. The offer was always met with a shrug or a reply on '*avrio*' meaning tomorrow and often used colloquially for 'not now but some point in the future, possibly.' At the end of a month's stay we had virtually given up and had packed for leaving the following day and put the bed out for the night and had walked up the steps to go into town for a last evening meal. The ladies or three of them were out on their chairs at the top of the steps ready for chatting with passers by and possibly some intense interrogation opportunities. They stopped us and in greek asked us where are you going ? To eat, in town.

When are you flying home. I was able to smugly reply '*avrio*.' This caused some consternation and from what we could gather they were coming to see the house - now!

I went on ahead to tidy up and convert the bed back into a sofa, whilst the visiting party with a combined age likely to be in excess of 250 years slowly came down the steps. The windows were opened, seating arranged, glasses brought out and biscuits and crisps unwrapped. The visitors arrived and parked their walking sticks by the front door. Upon entering in unison they exclaimed '*orea*' the popular greek adjective used for approval, meaning beautiful or very nice. Our decoration, a mixture of the old wood, stones and niches with modern lighting and bright colourful accents seemed to meet with their approval. We offered them drinks and snacks suggesting juice, coffee, wine or beer. All met with polite shakes of their heads until I suggested Coca Cola - which was speedily meet with '*Nai*' and vigorous nods - yes, this was acceptable - perhaps the secret long life elixir for the elder ladies of the village. Once the drinks were consumed, quickly, there were curious glances cast upstairs and definite puzzlement over the glass

panel in the upstairs floor. They all followed me upstairs pausing on the edge of the glass floor panel. When S. walked across it the act was met with much religious crossing of chests and a certain amount of tutting and the shaking of heads. Not aware of the greek for perfectly safe we just shrugged. After the upstairs room had been examined and approved of, apart from the glass floor, fingers were pointed at the spiral staircase. As the glass roof hatch was closed I was able to demonstrate one of the more unusual new features in the house. Flourishing the remote control I started the two electric motors that pushed up the large plate glass to the roof terrace. As it slowly and noisily raised the hatch to the open position there was a second flurry of the ladies crossing themselves - clearly further work of the devil.

The spiral staircase is not actually the easiest of accesses to the roof as the metal treads are quite narrow and you have to bob your head under the glass hatch as you step out onto the terrace. Anxiously I considered whether i should lead the way up or follow behind to break their fall if such a disaster should occur. Fortunately one of the Marias admitted defeat, patted her knee and returned to the safety of the sofa. But her two friends were not to be deterred and followed me to the roof terrace whereupon they declared the view to the sea to be 'Orea' and 'kala'. Not forgetting their stranded companion I was sent back down to get a camera to take a photo of Zographia and Maria 2 on the roof to show to Maria 1. I was relieved when we all were safely back downstairs as I am sure some spiral staircase roof disaster to a village yia-yia could force us to leave town. Refusals of more drinks were given and we eventually locked up and went to town for a belated supper.



2 The High Life

We had been told that access to the sea was a right in Greece and although hotels could discourage non residents from their grounds and sea front loungers many were happy for you to use the facilities for the price of buying a coffee or a drink. One of these resort hotels was in the next town and contained pools, bars, a seafront restaurant and and sunbathing terraces allowing swimming in deeper water as well as a small sandy beaches. It also had the benefit in the grounds of a rather surreal sculpture garden. It had been established in the 1990's



apparently the legacy of an arts festival there. Artworks included sculptures sticking out of the sea, a maze building, a huge Ariadne's thread ball, ten foot high racks of metallic sardines - an eccentric art treasure trove all in beautiful gardens between white painted small villa buildings some with private pools. We brazenly left the hire car in the residents car park and sauntered through the luxurious reception area into the grounds. I imagined that the secret is to look as if you are meant to be there and have found this is a universal passport to the most exclusive places. We sat under a shady canopy on a comfortable upholstered sofa and enjoyed iced coffees and the view. When the waitress asked us for our

room number to settle the bill we asked if we could pay cash which was agreed and she confirmed the bar and restaurants were open to non residents as was the beach and facilities providing we were eating or ordering drinks - did we want towels for swimming? These were also available as were showers and bathroom facilities.

We agreed we had found a new dimension to our holidays. After a couple of hours lazing around we wandered up to the terraced restaurant overlooking the sea. Smartly dressed staff were bustling about and most tables were occupied although the diners were all fairly casually dressed as we were. One of the waiters approached, a smiling grey headed man who welcomed us and asked if we had just arrived. I explained that we were not hotel guests but could we still have table for lunch. The usual Cretan answer to many tentative questions was quickly given with a broad smile, "Of course!, but which hotel are you staying at?" -"Oh, no hotel, we have our own little house in a village nearby." He clapped his hands - "Fantastic, you have invested in our island - Bravo! Follow me." We were ushered by him to a table near the front overlooking the sea below behind the glass balustrade where he swiftly removed a reserved card -"will this suit you ?" Yes, very much -thanks you. The other diners to our



embarrassment were turning to look at these new arrivals who had been given the best table in the restaurant. Once we were served with wine and bread and olives our new friend returned with menus for our orders but was more interested in chatting, where was our village, how long had we had the house, how many times a year did we visit - did work in England limit our visits - why not stay longer if we were retired? He was retiring the coming winter what hints did we have for retirement - well I could hardly recommend a house on a greek island - he probably already lived in one! A good lunch of sea food salads followed by fresh fruit and ice cream was followed by a laze on sun-beds and a swim in the clear, deep water off the terrace. We had found a new favourite place for relaxing days and in subsequent visits to the island would often return.



3 Shopping

Living in the village allowed us to experience a particular aspect of village life.

We had already found that local traders plied their wares at the various regular markets on the island and we had learnt the regular days for each town where the same traders set up for the mornings business. In our town it was on Friday and as well as a number of fruit and vegetable stalls there were other businesses selling everything from local cheeses and honey to pop-up hardware stores and linen and clothing sellers. The range was from smallholders selling vegetables from their land to suppliers who also had shops in the towns so it was often rather disconcerting to go into a smart shop in the next town to recognise a familiar face that you remembered had sold you some tea towels at an earlier market. Still it all made for good business and the vegetables and fruit were very fresh, cheap and of good quality. The regular markets had another advantage: I once bought a pair of cotton jeans without trying them on. At home there was a realisation that they were 'aspirational' and did not appear to be accurately labelled for size. The following day we went to the next town for their market and to track down 'Mr Trousers' as we had christened him who was happy to exchange them for a roomier size. Needless to say no receipt was required.

In the village during our first stay at the house we were surprised one morning to hear tannoy music moving through the narrow village streets, followed by shouting of repeated greek words that sounded like the words for shoes and socks. Sure enough when we followed the sound up to the top of our street there was a pick up van with a tannoy on the roof of the cab and a flat bed behind it full of boxed and unboxed pairs of shoes, boots and sandals. The van was already partly surrounded by a number of ladies of the village some already trying on the latest shoes, others with wrapped purchases handing over their euros. It was an advanced Cretan form of on-line shopping with the advantage of a 'try before you buy' offer. Over time we recognised the various offerings so we were able to buy kilos of oranges for pressing fresh orange juice at the end of our street as well as other goodies, We were

wrong footed on one occasion when a rush to the van after not recognising the loud, spoken offering to find the sales were limited to snails and raki, the local spirit. We resisted whilst acknowledging that to some this might constitute the ingredients for a 'good night in.'

The markets in town were also socially important and the bars and restaurants in town around the harbour near the site of the market always enjoyed the busiest morning of the week as the shoppers refreshed themselves with frappes, juices and coffee afterwards whilst exchanging details of successful purchases. Over the years the market moved location from one of the back streets one road back from the main square, the road narrow enough to have welcome shading by tarpaulins screens stretched between the stalls. A location popular with the restaurant owners nearby. Then some genius moved it some several hundred metres up the hill on the site of the unfinished by-pass road. This was short-lived, unpopular and at our next visit it had moved back down the hill for a few years until it was moved nearer the beach on the site of the old children's playground. It has stayed here with the old gravel strewn playground having been modernised and re-sited on soft artifice play surface next to the beach promenade. The resurfacing demonstrating some nod to modern health and safety sensibilities not always witnessed on the island (see Cretan scaffolding and driving discipline!)

We usually drive down to the market and search for a parking space as it's one of the busiest days in town. One of the best buys is a large bouquet of fresh vegetable, fronds of fennel, greens, kale and celery bundled together. The local hard and soft cheeses are always tempting particularly as the sales technique involves generous tasty samples. The shopping is followed by an iced coffee in our favourite bar which will be crowded with other shoppers before taking the precious supplies back to the house. Often the shopping would have to pass inspection by the village ladies from their chairs who we discovered went to the market themselves but at a much earlier time. We had discovered this fact accidentally one evening after innocently replying to a question from one of the Marias whether we would be going to the market the next day.

The 'Yes, of course -can we get you anything?'

The reply of -' No - I will come with you -meet me outside my house at seven.'

"SEVEN O'CLOCK?" - 'Yes -' she mentioned "kala" which seemed to indicate this was necessary so as not to miss "the good stuff"

We set the alarm for about two hours before we were usually breakfasting and called at the house for the drive down. En route we recognised Iorgi the church warden who doubled as the bellringer in the largest of the three small churches in the village. He stuck his his arm out and I just managed to avoid maiming him by slamming the brakes on. He opened the back door and got in the back next to Maria. After some good mornings Maria started some instructions to me which I interpreted as instructions to turn off the air conditioning. I recognised the greek for cold and as it was accompanied by a shivering mime I concluded this was for Iorgi's benefit as she had been happy until he got in. Iorgi was wearing his summer wardrobe of a tweed jacket, V neck jumper and collar and tie and as it was only in the low twenties we didn't want him to get a chill. We asked where we should take him - the market? No -the church which was on the way so it should be easy but a near accident almost occurred when our elderly hitchhiker opened the back door prematurely and seemed to be climbing out before I had stopped! No damage was done and with a wave Iorgo crossed the road to the church accompanied by honking from two motorcyclists he had totally disregarded in his ecumenical hurry. We tried to ask Maria whether he expected a lift back to the village but this was only met with a shrug of indifference. On a later market visit with Maria we learned first hand that these were not always seen to be return trips as we lost sight of Maria in the market and after a decent interval I drove up the hill expecting to see her but she was not en route or at home. So I drove back to town only to spot her sitting in the passenger seat of a neighbours car being driven up the hill. There was still much to learn about local customs.

The market was surprisingly busy, in all honesty we had not realised it started this early. We normally planned our weekly visit to end with elevenses coffees. Maria seemed to know



everyone which wasn't surprising as the customers mostly were contemporaries of hers but there were also a few faces we recognised as owners of the smaller restaurants and cafes presumably shopping before opening their businesses. Several on recognising us asked why we were out so early - 'just bringing down a neighbour' was my answer which was met with a knowing smile. This was another disadvantage- as they were out shopping they had not opened their cafes or bars yet so we couldn't have our second morning coffee out - at 7.30 ! Maria announced she had all her shopping and it was time to go home.

After driving her up the hill and arguing with her about me carrying her shopping - an argument which I lost, we said our goodbyes - thanking us she pressed a large chunk of wrapped cheese into my hand -it had been quite a morning and it wasn't yet 8 o'clock. Maria went off home and to open her one room kafenion next door - one of the many octogenarian cafe owners on the island.

4 Livestock

The village house was seen very much as a holiday home and we knew that because of the size limitations and commitments back home and for similar reasons we had not unreasonably assumed we would not have any pets or livestock at the village house. For good and bad reasons this turned out not to be the case. On one of the first days in the finished house I was trying to locate a strange metallic sound inside the house. I had reasonably assumed this was something to do with the architect's high tech installations. I examined in turn the motor for the roof hatch plus its UPS box (an uninterruptible power supply gadget with its constant eerie blue led and allegedly installed in case we entertained sufficient guests on the roof terrace to require the hatch to be closed and a simultaneous power cut would have stranded all 8 or 9 of us up there!) Then I listened to the fuse box near the front door - not that either. The water system had an electric pump but that was also silent so not that. Then I remembered that the led lighting strip that was one of the nicer features and lit the gap between the two floors was served by some high tech transformer resembling or possibly made from a chrome box style cheese grater- that wasn't the culprit either.

Suddenly the buzzing increased in volume as a huge flying beetle flew out of a large knot hole in one of the ceiling beams in the upstairs room, it orbited the room several times and thankfully exited the house through the open window. It was one of the largest insects I had ever seen and I spent the next half hour filling the hole and locating and filling similar ones in the other beams. Still the mystery of the source of the noise had been solved. I would like to say this was the scariest visitor to the house but that would not be true.

My next scare was on an early visit where I decided I needed to familiarise myself with the spaces under the metal hatches in the ground floor. One was the septic tank which I wisely left alone, the second was the reserve water tank which somehow magically provided us with water in the event of a mains water failure. The tanks had water in it and some complex pipe and float arrangement that was beyond my rudimentary plumbing expertise so I replaced the hatch. The last hatch covered a

fairly deep hole containing some electrics connected to a large cylindrical pump on top of which sat a tiny white insect that I recognised as a scorpion, I rapidly replaced the hatch. As with much of our experience in Crete we relied on local knowledge for information. This was always very readily given but often it did little to clarify things as within the space of minutes two people could confidently provide totally contradictory information. Unfortunately, in this case my casual request whether I should worry about a scorpion in the house -"it was only a tiny white one" was confidently and unanimously met with the sucking of teeth from several acquaintances and advice that it should be dealt with and that they were by far the most dangerous and would require medical attention for any sting. Somewhat chastened and armed with a hammer, torch and an insect spray the next morning found me cautiously removing the hatch. Of the scary but tiny monster there was no sign and thankfully in the years since we have never seen another one either in the house or anywhere else -quite a relief.

Our next encounter was quite early on in our occupation. One of our neighbours kept chickens which was nice to have a rural chorus of the hens and the occasional cockerel wake up call. Being a mediterranean creature his wake up call wasn't too early for us, certainly some time after dawn and the hens provided benefits to us via the mezes in the owners kafenion with small plates of sliced, hard boiled eggs provided when drinks were bought. The drawback though was that any fowl keeping is usually an attraction to mice after any spilt grain. We had spotted the occasional mouse dropping in the street but so far we hadn't experienced any small, furry uninvited guests in the house and we were very careful not to leave any unwrapped food around or unwashed crockery. The visit when it came was rather dramatic. A scratching in the ceiling above us in the corner of the room while we were sitting on the sofa was quickly followed by a large brown furry creature complete with a long tail running down the wall! It disappeared through the gap between the two floors and scurried on down into the wet room below the stairs. As I was the only member of the household not clutching my head between my knees and

shouting "It's a RAT - a RAT" I nervously went down stairs to investigate.

No sign of the rodent in the wet room - but some noise from the cupboard under the stairs where the water heater was. So nervously prodding the door open with a broom I quickly established that our new pet had returned upstairs and S's scream of "THE RAT !" seemed to definitely confirm this. It had returned, run up the wall and left through the corner he had arrived from.

We slept fitfully having placed a phone call to our favourite Albanian builder Ianni with a request for an urgent visit the next day.

Ianni arrived just after nine o'clock the next morning accompanied by one of his men who we had met before on an earlier building job they had completed for us. As Ianni didn't have his interpreter son Elvis with him the description of the work required was described by us with a mixture of poor Greek, English and mime. Our pointing out of the hole and mimed description of the intruder was met with amusement but also Iannis "No problem " verbal agreement. We had discovered there appeared to be no word for Rat in greek but the term 'Megalos pondecos' - large mouse was used somewhat euphemistically. We followed Ianni around the house as he carefully examined the house for all potential entrances for the pondecos - Megalos or micro. The house structure complicated things as the metal framework in each corner ran through the house from ground level to the roof on the first floor and seemed to be masking some holes through the stonework as well as in the roof where they met the ceiling. Ianni assured us it was "no problem" and after pointing out some other small gaps above one of the window lintels Ianni said his goodbyes after announcing 'Avrio" - tomorrow and indicated nine o'clock. The next morning Ianni and Polychroni arrived at nine and started mixing mortar in the street outside and after a few hours a smile and a thumbs up indicated the job was done. We drank coffees together and paid the agreed price in euros but Ianni said "tonight - at seven, Maritsa kafenion in town - beer!"

Thankfully, we have never seen a rat in the house again but we did meet Ianni that evening for beers in town. He was there

already and ordered beers for us, smiled and said "Elvis-here soon." This would make conversation easier as Elvis was fluent in Albanian, Greek and English but before he arrived we raised glasses and said "Yamas" -then he said "in Albania - Geezer" or that's what it sounded like as we repeated it. Then he asked "English?" - we said "Cheers" Ianni repeated "Cheese" with a broad smile - "no, Cheers!" Ianni raised his glass again - "Cheese."

Further conversation was rescued by the arrival of Elvis, Ianni's eighteen year old son and our interpreter. A bottle of beer was ordered for Elvis and he was proudly toasted by his Dad with a raised glass and an enthusiastic but somewhat bewildering to Elvis, cry of "Cheese!"

The celebrations continued with Ianni ordering food -Elvis explained they often shared a snack here after work. In short order a large platter arrive with a fork for each of us. It's an omelette explained Elvis. We asked what was in it - "Eggs and Chips" explained Elvis. I am sure the original Elvis would have approved. "Is it good?" asked Elvis -"Yes, thanks - let us pay." "No need - there will be no charge - I supply the eggs -I have sixty chickens."

So the Rat episode ended with a new experience - Chip omelette with Albanian friends. The island continued to surprise us.

5 More Livestock

When discussing the 'pondecos visit' with friends in the village whilst admitting the connection with chickens there was a more obscure and unexpected explanation. "More people are keeping dogs as pets in the village - this scares away the martens." This was news to us. These are pine martens and they come into the village - "yes - to steal eggs and eat the pondecos - they come at night" We were learning new things about village life daily.

One moonlit night returning to the village after supper out we spotted a creature jumping from roof to roof and its long bushy tail confirmed to our more knowledgeable friends that this was a marten. A few days later there was a scratching noise on our roof terrace and through the small roof light window we spotted a creature creeping across our terrace onto the roof. With its tail it looked to be over three foot long and seemed much larger than the village cats who were usually rather small but apparently co-existed with them. They still must be rare visitors to the village and normally nocturnal and those have been our only sightings of the marten.

Our next visitors are much more frequent and generally more welcome - these are the village cats. You are always aware of the cats in Greece and Crete is no different. The combination of a kind climate, livestock in the villages and generous humans putting out scraps seems to provide a secure livelihood. This certainly seemed to be the case in our village where a number of the same cats have lived for over ten years at least to our knowledge. The local cat charity also runs a sterilisation service so that the population levels seem more sustainable. Since before we actually occupied the house we had come to recognise a few of the feline residents and once we had occupied the house they made their presence known on our visits. If they hadn't arrived within half an hour of our arrival then the next day once we had placed our chairs in the alleyway outside they would appear and occupy the chairs at least several times a day for the period of our stay. The two most recognisable were Jazzy, a healthy looking mixed coloured tabby and ginger cat and Ginger a smaller, nervous



and scraggier specimen - so nervous that we can rarely touch him/her / it ? Jazzy was the less timid of the pair and would happily come in the house or jump up on a lap. We were convinced she lived with someone as she seemed well fed and healthy but local knowledge described her as being 'owned by the whole village' and the abundance of empty accessible buildings meant that shelter was not a problem. Ginger was often seen with minor wounds and eye problems but he seemed a survivor and we concluded he was a small tomcat and was sustaining fighting wounds. On returning to the village when we had been out we often had to walk with care as one or both of them weaved in front and behind us anxious for their next measure of hospitality. Initially it was only saucers of milk or some scrap of cheese or cold meat from a lunch but it wasn't long before cat food was added to any shopping expedition and if it was Maria in the town mini market who served us her "I see you have a cat now - are you moving here?" had to be met with - "no still holidays we have a share in the village cat." This was confirmed one evening when

walking out we passed our Jazzy and Ginger eating out of saucers on the terrace of one of the houses below us that we knew was owned by a French family. We laughed and said they were doing well as we had already fed them - " Yes", they explained "we call them Isabella and Isabella 2" - so the cats had aliases, as well as several suppers! Who knew.

Initially we thought this feeding was a northern European soft-heartedness and there was some discussion that the cats still need to be hungry some of the time to suppress the local "pondecos population" but sightings of some of the elderly village ladies putting out scraps for the cats confirmed they were of a similar mind to us. We once asked what happens in the winter - are they still fed? This was confirmed but it was also stated that the village cats had been known to make their way down to the harbour to be fed fish scraps from the fishing boats. It was less than a mile away so quite possible and all the more believable after a sight we saw in one of the nearby towns.

We were sitting one morning drinking iced coffees under the shade in one of Neapolis cafes in the wide road in the town centre. It was more of a square really as it was wide enough for double parking and still enough room for the local buses to execute a u-turn. Watching the double parking was one of the entertainments on offer here as a trapped driver would return, wait for a few minutes or longer before putting his hand on the horn to summon the owner of the offending vehicle trapping him. All of this was conducted in a good natured way and I guess the drivers were known to each other and later the trapper would become the entrapped. Opposite the cafe we noticed one piece of the road with a few cones in it which was being ignored by the double parkers and we also realised that between the cones in the road sat a couple of cats. In the next ten minutes they were joined by several other cats who didn't seem to interact with one another but just patiently sat and waited. The mystery was solved by the arrival of several lady shoppers carrying shopping bags shortly before at midday accompanied by hooting and loudspeaker calls of 'PSARI'-fish, fish - the pick up from the Nicos fish restaurant in our town arrived in the square. These Cretan cats could tell the time and

as we were told the fish sale was weekly; they also had



calendar knowledge - impressive!

Other livestock in the village were gecko lizards seen running up walls and often in houses but I can only recall seeing one in our house that came in through an open window and went out the same way in seconds. At times of the year one or more of



the crickets temporarily moved into the village from the olive

groves nearby but their chorus was fairly short lived as they were either picked off by a bird or became a temporary plaything for one of the cats. So far the sheep and goats grazing the hillside bordering the village had resisted the temptations of a more urban life, maybe the abundance of barbecues had dissuaded them from venturing nearer.