

Cultural, Beautification, and Educational Association of Mallionta

In 2000, the association "Mallianta" was founded in Mesotopos, and the first Board of Directors, with progressive ideas and a desire to produce work, tries to revitalize the area. The primary goal is the restoration and operation of a traditional watermill, which would be a reference point for the area.

Each one of us can do a lot on our own, but together, united, we can do much more! This is known to all Mesotopites, and I believe it's one of the most important things we've learned from the actions of the Mesotopites Association "Anagennisi".

The principle of collectivity, responsibility, courteous cooperation, voluntary contribution, social interest, and active participation in the Association's Board of Directors and the "Branch" gave us the opportunity to dream, believe, and organize our forces, accomplishing wonderful projects, increasing self-confidence, and encouraging the next steps.

Michalis Goulis, Giorgos and Stratis Vasilas, by the river next to the Katachanas mill (2005). (photo caption) pg 213

Thus, it is justified that Mesotopos is one of the few villages with a thousand residents that has so many collective organs and bodies, not just on paper but with daily action and presence. Among these newly established bodies with significant action and many plans is the association "Mallionta". I spoke with the president of the Mallionta Association, Mr. Michalis Goulis, and visited his estate, which is located next to the riverbed. He took me through the gardens, and we met the farmer Panagiotis Voyatzis, who is responsible for water management, and Dimitris Tovas, who has a innovative-for-the-village cultivation of kiwi.

Together, we discussed what Mallionta was like in the past, when more than 60 families lived there permanently, about the picturesque watermills, the canal with running water, fishing eels in the river, and the gatherings.

(The rugged beauty of the rocks next to the sweet green of the ravine (photo by Stefanos Paraskevaidis...) photo caption pg 214

"We reminisced about the plane trees and the many fruit trees that used to thrive in the area but have since disappeared.

We envisioned how the area could evolve, meeting the modern needs of farmers and livestock breeders while highlighting the natural environment as the dominant element that could contribute to the region's economic growth.

I learned that the Association was founded in 2000 and has 67 members.

The Board of Directors consists of: President: Michalis Goulis, Vice President: Efthymios Skomboulis, Secretary: Dimitrios Vrachnos, fundraiser: Grigoris Vrachnos, and Cultural Events Coordinator: Georgios Iosefellis.

The purpose of establishing the Association is to highlight the natural environment, oversee and properly manage natural water resources, improve working conditions for farmers and livestock breeders in the area, develop cultural activities, and raise awareness among members about agritourism, so the area can come back to life.

Immediate goals include showcasing the remaining chapels in the area, creating access to all properties, and electrifying sheepfolds. The top priority is restoring and operating a traditional watermill, which would become a landmark for the area. Additionally, mapping the area, marking trails, and highlighting the rich fauna and flora are essential.

In recent years, fruit trees like cherry, apricot, peach, pomegranate, and quince trees, which were abundant in the area, have disappeared. These trees could be replanted in collaboration with the Women's Cooperative, which needs these fruits to produce spoon sweets and jams. The area is also suitable for kiwi and apple cultivation with proper care.

I'd like to share my personal experience with kiwi cultivation in our field in Mallionta. We planted them in 1986, with five female and one male root. Within three years, they started bearing fruit. My father watered them twice, three times a week in the summer. They adapted well and grew branches 3-4 meters long. Birds and other animals never bothered them, perhaps because harvesting occurs when they're still unripe. We built a large pergola, and within 10 years, we harvested up to 300-400 kilos. They produced well for 15 years, but then some worms started damaging the roots, and three of them dried out. Today, only two remain, but we've abandoned the orchard for three years. Others have tried planting kiwi, but they didn't bear fruit and dried out within a year or two.

There are many ideas, and I hope they will be turned into proposals, and we will work together again to make them a reality." (Aristos Tovas, "Mesotopos-Art-Culture" magazine, issue 6, December 2002)

This is what Aristos Tovas wrote in 2002. In the following years, the visitation to Mallionta increased! The activity of the Mallionta Association and the revival of the festival of Agios Konstantinos, with a divine service in the picturesque chapel and a celebration in the village square, contributed to this. Organized hiking excursions to Mallionta continued to grow. In the summer of 2013, I had an interesting conversation with Mr. Michalis Goulis, then president of the "Mallionta" Association, who mentioned, among other things:

"Our association has made a statutory amendment in view of the common goal with the 'Anagennisi' Association, for the restoration and operation of the 'Katachanas' mill, near the bridge of Mallianta. Our members are around 70-75, and the composition of the five-member council is as follows: Michalis Goulis - President, Loukas Vakalis -

Secretary, Efthymios Skomboulis - Vice President, Charalampos Voyatzis -fund raiser, and Dimitrios Konstantinidellis - Member."

In the spring of 2019, the composition of the Board of Directors of "Mallianta" is as follows: President: Andreas Pitsas, Vice President: Sterianos Ioannis, Secretary: Loukas Vakalis, Treasurer: Charalampos Voyatzis, and Member: Michalis Goulis.

("Katachanas" mill, as seen in a recent photo.)photo caption pg216

As I was informed by the president, Andreas Pitsas, the main goal is the restoration and operation of the "Katachanas" watermill, co-owned by the Mesotopos Association "Anagennisi" and the Cultural and Educational Association "Mallionta". There is also great concern among all members about the intense weather phenomena, which in recent years have caused major floods with consequent damage to farmers and livestock breeders in the area. There are many cases where their safety is threatened during their movements.

In September 2019, Michalis Goulis passed away.....

"Kyrios Michalis was from that generation of the 'War' that took life early in their hands. He left the village young and worked hard in Athens in construction. The village was his great love and passion. As soon as he had the opportunity, he returned to our place, with the desire to help and contribute. He founded the 'Mallionta' Association, of which he was president for many years. In this capacity, and with his persistent will to create and contribute, he was a pioneer in the goal of restoring the watermill. He donated his field next to the mill to the two Associations - 'Mallianta' and 'Anagennisi'. He convinced Artemis Katachanas to donate the mill. He contributed to overcoming ownership issues. He promoted cooperation between the two Associations and cultivated acceptance of the project, so it would become a matter for the people of our place. It's true that without him, the mill project might never have started and would still be an attractive utopia. (...) A man with an opinion, he didn't hesitate to take a stand and make tough decisions without worrying about the consequences.

Michalis Goulis, Yiota Plomaritou, Filippas Gougis, Christos Valilis at the Katachanas Mill.(photo caption)pg 217

"The wounds will still be felt. He paved roads that many walked on years later. Now that the projects are starting in Mallionta, his straightforward criticism, his visionary stance, and his faith in the youth will be missed. The discussions with him will be missed, which even when disagreements arose, were substantial because they led to overcoming and creation..."