

# Alonissos – Island of Homeopathy

**Dr Gary Smyth** and pharmacist **Anne Smyth** experience the teaching of George Vithoulkas at the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy.

Professor George Vithoulkas requires no introduction to the readers of this newsletter. His contribution to homeopathy has been immense and he is recognised as the driving force behind the revival of homeopathy in recent times.

He is arguably one of the most significant figures in the global homeopathic community and has taught a majority of the other recognised leaders of our profession. In recent years he has also established an online Vithoulkas e-Learning course.

During his 55 years of dedication to homeopathy, he has accumulated multiple awards, academic distinctions and international accolades. In 1996 he received an award from the Right Livelihood Foundation "... for his outstanding contribution to the revival of homeopathic knowledge and the training of homeopaths to the highest standards". The award is bestowed in recognition of a group's or individual's work in developing practical solutions for global problems and is often referred to as the alternative Nobel Prize.

## Idyllic island

Originally based in Athens, in 1995 George Vithoulkas established the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy (IACH) on the idyllic Greek island of Alonissos. Every summer, groups of doctors and other healthcare professionals flock to this beautiful island to hear the academic teaching of homeopathic medicine by Professor Vithoulkas. Now over 20 years later, more than 15,000 medical doctors and practitioners from over 62 different countries have trained at the IACH, a number that is growing annually. Included in that number are of course many Faculty members, many of whom had spoken fondly to us about their experiences on Alonissos.

It was therefore not surprising that for many years we had an ambition to travel to Alonissos, to meet Professor Vithoulkas and to experience his teaching at first hand. We were delighted when the opportunity to do this arose in the summer of 2016. We were indebted to Andrew Ward RSHom, who for many years has been the main

point of contact for UK visitors to the island. He gave us plenty of advice and guidance on how to get to this little island which is only three miles across at its widest point and only 12 miles at its longest.

A flight to Athens and onwards to the neighbouring island of Skiathos was the route that we chose among several options. However, on arriving in Skiathos the only way to get to the island is by sea, so we enjoyed a short and pleasant cruise to Alonissos, known by many as the Island of Homeopathy.

## Academic days

The experience did not disappoint and we received a warm welcome from Professor Vithoulkas and his team, led by Maria Chorianopoulou, Director of Studies at the Academy. We had never met before, yet we were welcomed with the warmth of old friends.

Registration on the first day was at 8am, with the course starting on other days at 9.30am. The course comprised five days of teaching, with lectures starting at 9.30am and continuing until 1.00pm. After the lunch break,

the sessions start again at 5.00 pm and continue until 8.30 pm.

The course was built largely around live cases and we had the privilege of watching a live video feed of Professor Vithoukas consulting in an adjacent room. The patients were a mix of new and follow-up consultations. After each case, Professor Vithoukas joined us in the main auditorium and there followed one of the most valuable teaching sessions we have experienced to date.

### Master of homeopathy

We listened in awe as this Master of homeopathy analysed the case, covering issues including strategies for case taking, case analysis, pathology evaluation, rubric selection, repertorisation techniques, comparison of remedies and prescribing strategies. This was interspersed with homeopathic philosophy and Organon studies, with useful references from the classic works of Hahnemann, Kent, Hering, Boericke, Boenninghausen and others interweaved throughout. Professor Vithoukas was also able to share valuable lessons learned and

difficulties encountered in his wealth of 55 years' experience in homeopathic practice. There was also time set aside for questions from the floor and there was plenty of opportunity for interaction.

Professor Jorgos Kavouras, the Associate Professor of Integrative Medicine and Homeopathy in Bamberg, Germany, also taught some sessions during the week. He took us on a fascinating journey through issues such as suppression, levels of health, depth of pathology, miasms, antidotes and managing cases with certain allopathic co-medications.

Each day the main auditorium was filled with approximately 120 people. During the course we met homeopathic practitioners from many different backgrounds, including medical doctors, other healthcare professionals and scientists from all around the world. There were colleagues there from the UK, including other Faculty members. We also met colleagues from countries such as Germany, Russia, USA, Romania, India, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Greece, Peru,

Canada, Austria, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Croatia.

Each of the academic sessions was taught with the watchful eyes of the twin busts of Hahnemann and Boenninghausen looking down upon the assembled audience, with the image of Dr James Tyler Kent not far away either.

### Serene tranquillity

You may be wondering the reason for the lengthy lunch break, from 1.00pm – 5.00pm. I have no doubt the intention is to allow a siesta period during the heat of the day. While that would indeed have been a good idea – particularly in view of our Celtic complexions – the lure of local sights won the day. Some lunches were spent in quiet tavernas watching the rolling tide gently lapping on to the pebble shoreline. Some were spent under a parasol, sipping an ice-cold drink, watching the sun's rays dancing off the sea. Some were spent swimming in the crystal-clear waters of the Aegean Sea and some were spent enjoying a cool ice cream



L to R: Prof George Vithoukas, Ann Smyth, Dr Gary Smyth and Prof Jorgos Kavouras



Students at the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy

while exploring some of the island's untouched towns and villages.

Alonissos is certainly off the beaten track and thus far has escaped the hordes of tourists which invade some of the other Greek islands. Instead, there is a serene tranquillity and a pleasant, laid-back atmosphere to allow quiet reflection of the homeopathy learned earlier in the day. Many delegates at the academy hired a moped or scooter to explore further afield, but we hired a small car which meant we were able to see as much of the island as possible.

Although the island is not a popular destination for most tourists, it is nevertheless a major draw for homeopathic practitioners from around the world. Such has been the effect of George Vithoukas on tourism the Tourist Information Office for the island even mentions the academy! It is also the only place in the world where we have seen local hotels offering a 15% discount for homeopaths! It seems that a majority of visitors to the island in the summer months are probably visiting George Vithoukas. As Alonissos has avoided mass tourism, it is one of Greece's best kept secrets – a picturesque island of authentic and breath-taking beauty.

### **Building relationships**

After the second academic session of the day was over, it was time for an evening meal and the opportunity to sample some of the delicious local cuisine at the port or in any of the local villages. Choosing from a

range of seafood, Greek and other dining options, we enjoyed the sunset while listening to local musicians demonstrating their skills to the delight of the crowd. We met a great many like-minded colleagues during the week and dined with them on several evenings, as we soaked up the local atmosphere. The friendly and sociable atmosphere contributed to making both the holiday and the learning experience so memorable.

On the final Friday evening, a farewell dinner was held on the terrace of the academy so all the delegates and teachers could spend one last charming evening together. After a traditional local meal, there was plenty of music and beverages to mark the end of the course. A group of delegates from Serbia treated us all to an impromptu rendition of a Serbian folk song and we all had fun as we said our farewells. Although 84 years young George Vithoukas, along with his wife, joined in the socialising before wishing us all well on our travels home.

As we reluctantly left this magical island, we felt refreshed, re-energised and re-energised in our enthusiasm for homeopathy and its potential benefits for all of humanity. One of the inspirational components of the course was the emphasis on classical Hahnemannian homeopathy. It was so refreshing to hear Professor Vithoukas navigate the materia medica and accurately differentiate the various remedies with precision and clarity.

Another important feature of this

summer school was the opportunity to form links and build relationships with a range of international colleagues. We were particularly delighted to subsequently enjoy the generous sponsorship of the IACH at the recent Faculty of Homeopathy Congress in Belfast. We hope that a long lasting and mutually beneficial relationship can develop in the coming years. In addition, the association with other homeopathic groups around the world is an important aspect of the Faculty's developing strategy on internationalism.

### **A return trip**

We were so impressed by our first visit to Alonissos that we are planning a return trip in 2017. The week-long course we attended is repeated throughout the summer months, but most UK visitors seem to go during the last week of June. If you are looking for a refreshing and rejuvenating experience, that combines learning homeopathy from a Master of our profession with a holiday on a beautiful Greek island, then look no further! Join us from 26 to 30 June 2017. We would heartily encourage all Faculty members to consider a visit.

Bookings can be made directly with the Academy or via Andrew Ward, RSHom or e-mail us at [drgaryjsmyth@gmail.com](mailto:drgaryjsmyth@gmail.com) and let's all go on a Faculty field trip to Alonissos!

**Anne Smyth DFHom (Pharm)  
and Dr Gary Smyth MFHom**