



XK Gazette

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Wings and wheels

Club Representative **Alex Holis** reports on the Greek area's latest meeting, which featured an aviation theme

March in Greece is the season of blossoming, during which people love to enjoy nature. Starting from the Carnival, with Dionysian rituals and fertility dances that are different all over the mainland and in each island, and continuing on Clean Monday, the first day of Lent – a celebrated public holiday with outdoor excursions, picnics, delicious fasting foods and the widespread custom of flying hexagon kites. Although no one knows where the kite tradition comes from, some say the ancient Greek mathematician Archytas of Tarentum designed and made the first kite to test aerodynamics, while others believe it started when people wrote wishes on the kites, wanting them as high as possible for the Gods to answer. It is now such a consolidated tradition throughout Greece that in the previous days the weather forecast for Clean Monday is the most followed programme in the media.

We also follow the weather forecast before our Jaguar XK and E-types excursions, hoping that, despite our British cars being used to the rain, they will not get wet but remain shining under the Greek sun and, thanks to the Olympus Gods, they usually are. We named our Spring meeting 'Wings and Wheels' because we had the honour and permission to drive the wired 'wheels' of our classic Jaguars into the Air Force military base of Tatoi and park them in front of 'wings' of the classic aeroplanes displayed in their open-air historical museum. The Jaguars entered the Hellenic Air Force training airfield leading to the museum. Our legendary troop formed

a squadron of nine E-types, three XKs, three Mk2s and one S-type – all standing as proud as colourful soldiers in front of the glorious flying warriors of the skies.

The Hellenic Air Force Academy is responsible for supplying the Hellenic Air Force with pilots and aeronautical engineers, but also air traffic and air defence controllers. It was founded in 1919 as the Military Academy of Aviation and renamed in 1967 as the Icarus School, in reference to the figure of Icarus in ancient Greek mythology. Icarus forms the centrepiece of the academy's badge, and in the Hellenic Air Force, all the pilots are still named Icarus.

For mythology lovers, in brief, this is the Icarus legend: Icarus's father was Daedalus, a very talented and remarkable Athenian craftsman. He built the labyrinth for King Minos of Crete near his palace at Knossos to imprison the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull monster born of his wife and the Cretan bull. Minos imprisoned Daedalus himself in the labyrinth because he gave Minos's daughter, Ariadne, a ball of string in order to help Theseus, the enemy of Minos, to survive the labyrinth and defeat the Minotaur.

Daedalus fashioned two pairs of wings out of wax and feathers for himself and his son. Daedalus tried his wings first, but before trying to escape the island, he warned his son not to fly too close to the sun, nor too close to the sea, but to follow his path of flight. Overcome by his folly, Icarus soared into the sky, but in the process he came too close to the sun, which, due to the heat, melted the wax. Icarus kept flapping his wings but soon realised that he had no feathers



left and that he was only flapping his bare arms, and so Icarus fell into the sea and drowned in the area that today bears his name, the Icarian Sea around Ikaria, a beautiful wild island south-west of Samos.

There is a strong connection between aircraft and our Jaguar cars: during the war, Malcolm Sayer was an aircraft engineer but later he became the automotive aerodynamicist responsible for the engineering body development of the Jaguar E-type. He spent the last 20 years of his life working at Jaguar Cars and was one of the first engineers worldwide to apply principles of 'aircraft streamline aero function' to improve air penetration by modelling the shape of cars.

Apart from the amazing outside display, we visited the indoor museum with very interesting and rare aeroplanes. Our British friend Yvonne and our Greek friend Melina, complete with the two flags, led our group in front of a De Havilland DH82 Tiger Moth – a famous British training aircraft that first flew in October 1931. One of the many fields where the museum's activities have been unique is the recovery of World War Two aircraft wreckage. This activity, internationally described under the term 'Aviation Archaeology', is conducted both by the museum and the private sector.

In May 1993, a mixed team composed of personnel from the museum and the Hellenic Air Force's special team of frogmen hauled up the remains of a British Blenheim MkI bomber from Lake Prespa, and in July 1996 the same team completed the spectacular hauling up of a British Blenheim MkIV F, which was shot down during the battle of Crete near the city



- Above: Jaguar squadron lines up to go into the Tatoi military base
- Left: Hellenic Air Force logo features the figure of Icarus – an interesting choice considering that his flight didn't end well...





● Left and above: the cars line up in front of a range of jet aircraft. The gathering comprised nine E-types, three XKs, three Mk2s and an S-type

of Rethymno. In restoring our Jaguars, we rescue and save glorious mechanical treasures rusted in forgotten barns. By giving them a second chance of life, we maintain in healthy condition this 'moving museum' for the next generations to come.

After our private guided visit, we thanked Colonel Miltiades Fakitsas for his kind hospitality and we switched on our engines to reach our next destination on top of the

mountain of Afidnes, north of Athens. The Lakkagini Country Restaurant is a wooden paradise for gourmet, flora and fauna lovers because inside their lush park they have also a large collection of animals – llama, kangaroos, goats, deer, birds and donkeys. A real treat for children of any age.

After parking our Jaguars under the pine trees, we moved to the panoramic Prive Hall, where we presented our new members to the rest of our club. The atmosphere was



friendly and relaxed and after a toast we sharpened our knives to attack and kill our hunger via the delicious creations of the chef!

Another successful and joyful meeting was over, and we said goodbye to each other, making an appointment for the next gathering before Easter. Meanwhile, we have organised a high tea gathering at the prestigious Yacht Club of Greece for the crews participating at the Mycenaean-Minoan Rally-Tour (see page 28) and some of our Greek crews will be present to welcome them to this friendly International joint-meeting. 🇬🇷



• Above left and left: everyone enjoyed another superb Greek club event – the gathered enthusiasts are shown in the air force museum, in front of the Tiger Moth, and (left) welcoming new members during the lunch stop at the superb Lakkagini Country Restaurant