

Maintaining Britishness in a Setting of their Own Design: The Troodos Hill Station in Cyprus during the Early British Occupation

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Britain occupied Cyprus by virtue of the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 4 June 1878, which ceded the occupation and administration (but not sovereignty) to Britain. The Lord Beaconsfield Government planned to convert Cyprus into a place of arms. The architects of this policy saw Cyprus as ideal for stationing troops, and sent there a 10,000 strong army of occupation. They saw Famagusta Harbour as the perfect naval and commercial station in the eastern Mediterranean. But within months of the occupation, uncertainties developed over the military and naval value of Cyprus. The decision to build the Troodos Hill Station stood in stark contrast to the uncertainties over the military and naval value of the island, and the uncertainties over whether to act as if Cyprus was a British or Ottoman territory.

The Decision on a Hill Station and the Choice of Troodos

The importance of hill stations to the British colonial system was already a feature of colonialism by 1878. The Sub-Continent and South-East Asia were famous for their hill stations in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Malaysia, with almost eighty hill stations in India alone.¹ Simla in the Himalayan foothills of northern India was officially recognised by Whitehall as the summer capital of the Raj in 1864.² By the early 1870s,

almost all of the local governments migrated to the highlands for the summer and their political importance was highlighted by the construction of government buildings, including grandiose official residences, beginning in the late 1870s.³

The occupation of Cyprus coincided with the rise in significance of hill stations to the British colonial system. Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, the first high commissioner of Cyprus, was well aware of the system of hill stations in India because in 1877 he served as a member of the Council of India. He decided that Cyprus needed a hill station within two months of his arrival on the island.

Uncertainties over Cyprus' military and naval value developed as the extremes of the Cypriot summer affected the British. While Whitehall and Wolseley denied that anything was wrong in or with Cyprus, the Liberal opposition questioned its value as a station for troops, as the reports about fever decimating the forces increased. The excessive heat and poor choice of camping grounds had resulted in fever and ague.⁴ The extremes of the Cyprus summer justified Wolseley's decision to found a hill station in September 1878, while uncertainties over Cyprus military and naval value remained unresolved.

Wolseley's uncertainty over where to establish his headquarters led to his decision on a hill station. British imperialism traditionally concentrated civilian and military establishments together. Wolseley wanted this continued in Cyprus, but found Nicosia, the capital during Ottoman times, unsuitable. He wrote to his wife on 31 June 1878 that Nicosia was 'one great cess-pit into which the filth of centuries has been poured'.⁵ Wolseley rejected the house selected for him in Nicosia in deference for the isolation of the Metochi of St. Prokopios, about a mile beyond the walls of Nicosia,

where he established his temporary headquarters.⁶ A few weeks later, he reiterated his views on Nicosia to Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury, revealing that men were examining sites for a military cantonment where he would establish the capital.⁷ On 3 September, he informed Salisbury that a summer station was a necessity.⁸ Wolseley sent men to Troodos and Kantara (in the Karpass Peninsula), and by October they had reported on suitable campsites.⁹ Clearly, if Cyprus was to be a military and naval stronghold, Famagusta was the best place for the garrison given that it was the only place for a naval station. Kantara held a commanding position over Famagusta and this and other reasons made it the sound choice for the summer base.

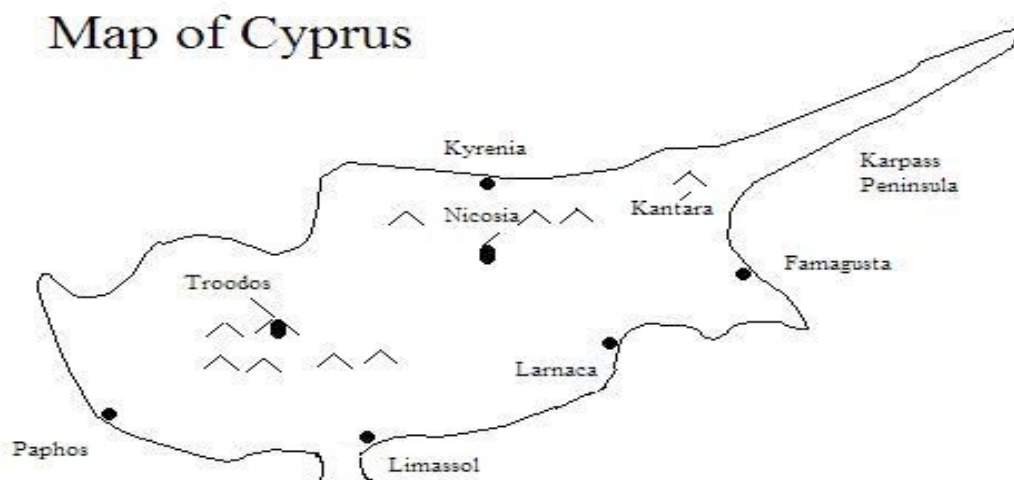


Figure 1: Map of Cyprus (not to scale)

In the meantime, London decided that Cyprus was unsuitable as military base and removed most of the troops. By October, the attacks by the Liberals and the press on the choice of Cyprus as a place of arms had become so acute¹⁰ that First Lord of the Admiralty W. H. Smith and War Secretary Colonel Stanley visited Cyprus to determine

its military value. The state of the troops alarmed them.¹¹ By December only a battalion and two companies of Royal Engineers remained.¹²

The end of the policy to use Cyprus as a military base did not alter the decision on a hill station. In December 1878, Wolseley decided on the southern spurs of the Troodos Range,¹³ and in January 1879 travelled there and chose the campsite where the government, garrison and married families were encamped in May 1879.¹⁴ A sketch of the encampment appeared in the supplement to the *Illustrated London News*, and this shows the use made of the overhanging branches to shade the tents.

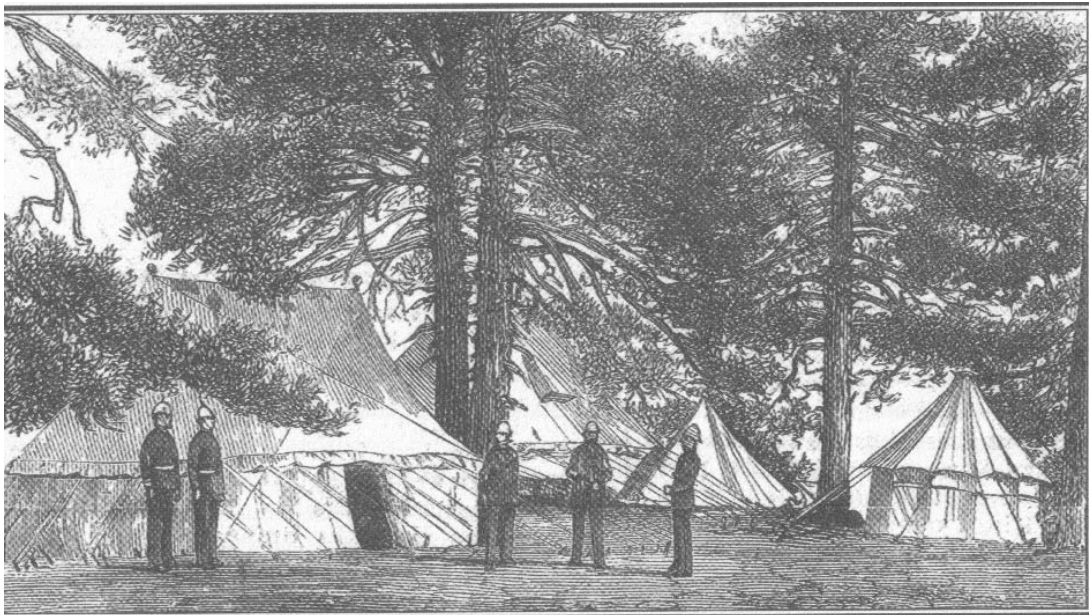


Figure 2: ‘Summer Encampment at Mt Troodos’, *Supplement to the Illustrated London News*, 18 October 1879.

Troodos was chosen before a decision was made on whether Famagusta Harbour was to be developed into a naval, commercial or coaling station. When Stanley and Smith

visited Cyprus, they had accompanied Wolseley to Famagusta where they entered and anchored in the outer harbour, joining Vice-Admiral Hornby, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. Stanley noted that a reef running from the old harbour parallel with the shore constituted a breakwater 'almost as good as Plymouth within which large ships can lie in perfect safety'.¹⁵ Wolseley believed that Famagusta would make a 'good coaling station for a fleet watching the northern end of the Suez Canal', but felt that it needed to be made healthy.¹⁶ Hornby opined that with dredging and a new pier Famagusta would make a fine coaling station for a fleet watching over Egypt.¹⁷ Even though some naval opinion favoured the development of Famagusta Harbour, others did not,¹⁸ and in March 1879, Lord Salisbury told the House of Lords that the Government could not afford the funds for the construction of a harbour, and would not do so before Famagusta was made salubrious.¹⁹ Thus, the question remained in ambience.

The choice of Troodos was obvious, however. The elevation of Troodos ranged between 4,000 and 6,400 feet, compared with 1,800 to 2,100 feet at Kantara. Although Kantara would have served British military aims better, the camp at Troodos was beside Mount Olympus, the highest peak on the island at 6,404 feet, proving perhaps that the symbolism of ruling from the highest peak outweighed practical factors.

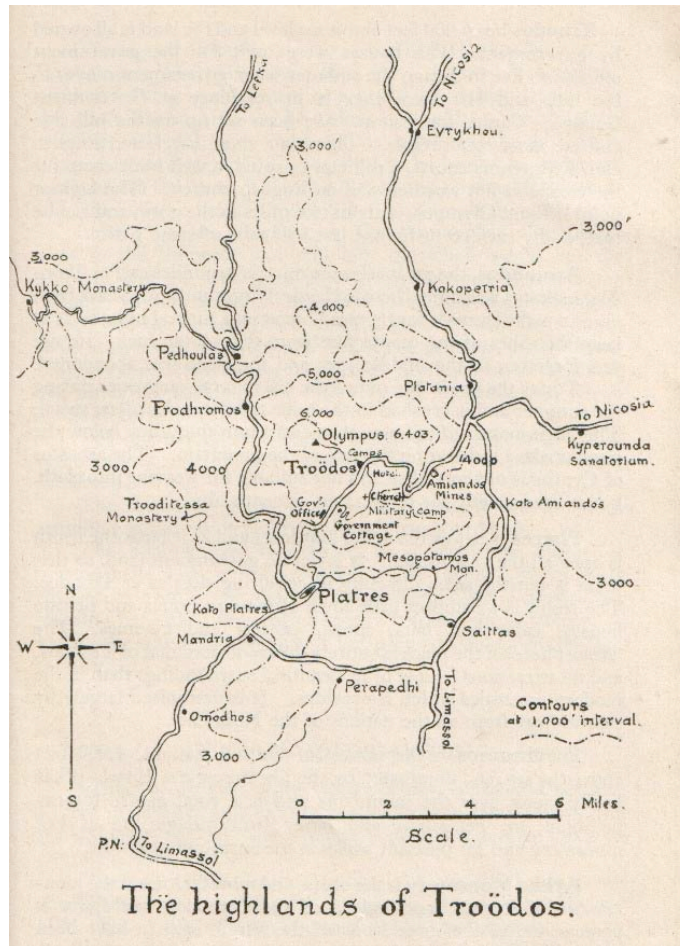


Figure 3: Map of 'The Highlands of Troodos', Philip Newman, *A Guide to Cyprus*, 1948, 97.

The Importance of the Troodos Hill Station to the Cyprus Government

The Troodos Hill Station had a unique political significance because of the strange organisation of the Cyprus Government. The tradition of locating the civil and military establishments together was dispensed with in Cyprus during winter, because it was decided to settle the civil headquarters at Nicosia and the military headquarters at Polymedia, three miles from Limassol. Thus only at Troodos were the civilian and military establishments united, giving the hill station a greater symbolic power than Nicosia, a power unique for hill stations. The symbolism can be taken further since

Mount Troodos was one of the Olympi of antiquity and in British times, it was referred to as ‘the Cypriote Simla’²⁰ and ‘the Simla of Cyprus’.²¹

The local government wasted no time in establishing an official presence at Troodos. High Commissioner Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Biddulph commenced a summer residence in September 1879.²² Tradition has it that the young twenty-four-year-old French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud supervised its construction.²³ Rimbaud had landed at Larnaca in December 1878, and worked for £6 a month quarrying stone near the villages of Oroklini and Liopetri,²⁴ but contracted typhoid and returned home. He returned in March 1880 and obtained the £200 a month job to construct, what he called, ‘The Palace of the Governor’.²⁵ But Rimbaud did not oversee its completion, suddenly leaving Cyprus in June 1880. Rimbaud later claimed that he left because of ‘arguments with the paymaster’, but Ottorino Rosa, an Italian travelling with him in the late 1880s, heard Rimbaud say that he accidentally killed a native with a stone and from fear took refuge on a vessel bound for Egypt.²⁶ Nevertheless, Governor Lord Winster (1946-1949), formerly a Labour MP, affixed on the front door a plaque in French, which reads:

Arthur Rimbaud, French poet and genius, despite his fame contributed with his own hands to the construction of this house, 1881.²⁷

Given that Rimbaud was not famous then, built nothing with his own hands, and did not even oversee the project’s completion, Winster’s choice of words were a prime example of a colonial governor (even a Socialist) inventing an identity for the colonisers.

Sir Harry Luke, who served in Cyprus between 1911 and 1920, described Government House Troodos as ‘an unpretentious affair’.²⁸ Although Government House Troodos was not an opulent building, it was a more fitting residence for a high

commissioner than Government House Nicosia. The latter was a wooden prefabricated structure designed for the subcontinent and sent to Wolseley by the War Office (WO). Wolseley sketched a plan of it for his wife, showing the single-story structure arranged like a barrack block to form three sides of a square.²⁹ The design was a standard military type, quickly thrown together by unimaginative army barrack draughtsmen.³⁰ Although Government House Nicosia was also put together by a famous figure, Sir Basil Zaharoff, a later Governor, Sir Ronald Storrs, quipped that it was put together 'like a child's box'.³¹ When Wolseley arrived to move in on Christmas Eve 1878, a wind during the night had smashed most of the windows.³² In 1889, William Mallock, traveller, novelist, and political and social philosopher, predicted that it would not last.

It is not only entirely modern, but it will never become old. It will never become old, for it will have fallen to pieces first.³³

The fact that it was rarely photographed, let alone painted, reflected the British embarrassment with it. A photograph by John P. Foscolo, a French-Levantine photographer enticed to Cyprus from Smyrna by the British and appointed official photographer of the army, shows the building and grounds from a distance.³⁴ The sky dominates the photo, a feature of Foscolo's panoramic photographic style, minimising the importance of Government House. Moreover, the fact that the native trees imported from Britain and Australia hide much of the building also adds to the perception that Government House Nicosia embarrasses the British. A photograph by Theodoulos Toufexis, published as a post card in 1907, focuses on the attractive aspect the beautifully manicured courtyard.³⁵ In 1898, Ann Villiers, daughter of High Commissioner William Haynes-Smith (1897-1904), made a rare painting of Government House, and her focus on

the garden, admired for its collection of plants imported from Britain, reflects the British view of the building.³⁶ Only a corner of the building enters the frame of her painting. Almost thirty years later, in 1926, when Storrs arrived to start his term as Governor, his wife commented upon sighting the building: ‘the stables look good’.³⁷ Ironically, it was only when five years later when the Cypriots, under Storrs, burned down Government House that *The Illustrated London News* published the first pictures of it: before and after shots. Government House Nicosia may not have fallen to pieces as Mallock had predicted, but it suffered a far more humiliating fate in burning to the ground.

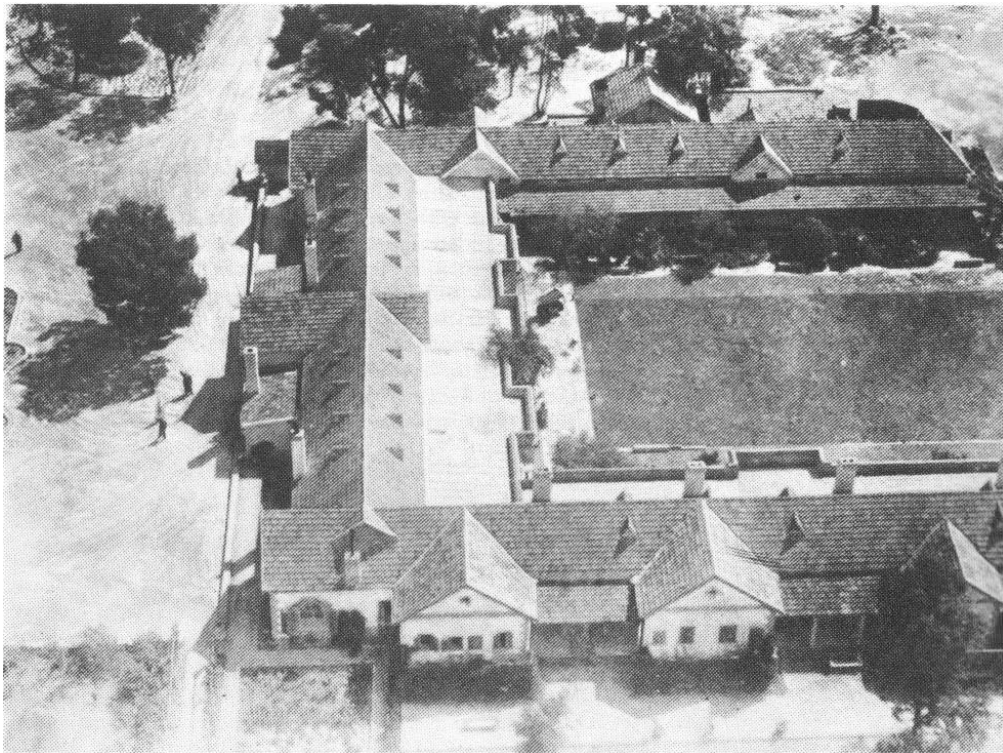


Figure 4: ‘Aerial Photograph of Government House Nicosia’, *The Illustrated London News*, 7 November 1931.

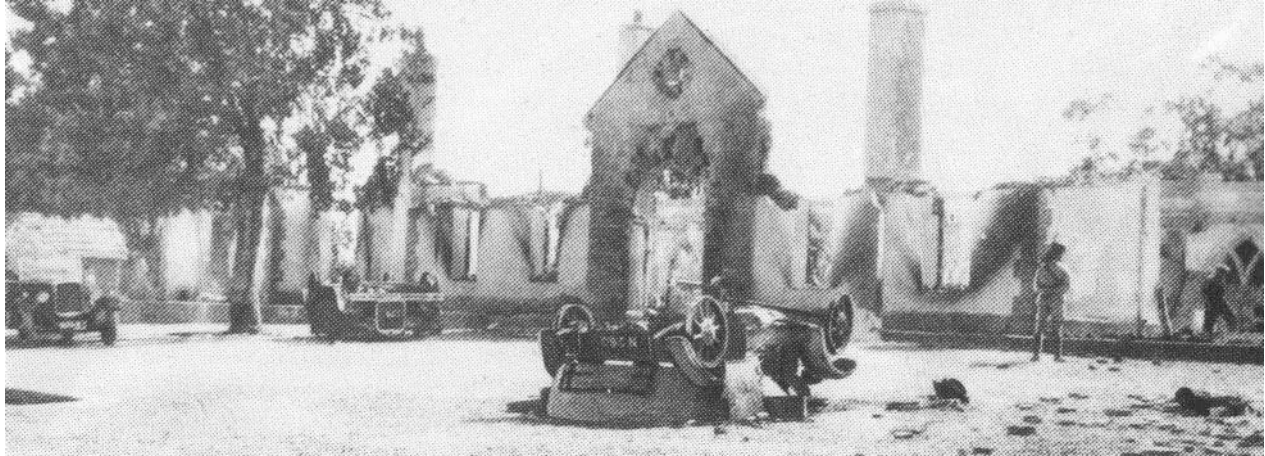


Figure 5: ‘Government House Nicosia after its Burning’, *The Illustrated London News*, 7 November 1931.

On the other hand, a man on the spot designed the summer residence, Lieutenant G. A. K. Wisely³⁸ of the Royal Engineers, and other men made alterations as the construction of the building progressed.³⁹ It was substantially constructed of local blue limestone, with rusticated freestone dressings and mouldings.⁴⁰ French tiles were used instead of local red tiles, while a cellar was also added.⁴¹ These and other additions and alterations resulted in an excess over the original estimate of £1,500 by 100 per cent.⁴² One traveller characterised its style as Cairngorm (a part of the Grampians of Scotland), which literally means ‘blue stone’.⁴³ No doubt the summer residence was designed like a Scottish lodge and is not inappropriate to the pinewoods of Troodos. William Forwood, travelling through Cyprus in the early 1970s, believed that the summer residence must have given the high commissioners a ‘comfortable sense of being at home’.⁴⁴

Government House Troodos was repeatedly photographed and painted reflecting the architectural appropriateness and its appealing natural scenery. Photographs by

Foscolo reveal the rustic, rural, cottage and pastoral atmosphere of the hill station and a setting dominated by the mountains and woods.⁴⁵ One of these photos shows that although the civil officers were at Troodos to work, the proximity of the (rather hastily constructed) tennis court to the summer residence must have made work less enticing.⁴⁶ Sport and government work went hand-in-hand. A painting by William Collyer in 1886 shows Government Cottage (renamed that year to distinguish it from Government House Nicosia)⁴⁷ from a height and includes the mountainous backdrop.⁴⁸ Importantly, however, Collyer includes the British flag (also visible in Foscolo's second photo)⁴⁹ emphasising the official British authority. Two years later, Captain Rudyerd painted Government Cottage, also from a height, capturing the fine old pines and the mountainous and cloud enshrined background. Rudyerd's painting includes an inactive Cypriot native.⁵⁰ The European myth of the lazy native, explored by Hussein Syed Alatas in the case of the Filipinos, Javanese and Malays, was very much apart of the British perception of the Cypriot — Orthodox and Muslim alike — and was reflected in this representation.⁵¹ In this painting, the native is clearly facing away from Government Cottage, reflecting perhaps the native indifference to the imperial ruler and the structures constructed by it and in its name. In 1898, Ann Villiers also painted Government Cottage and in contrast to her painting of Government House Nicosia, she does not shy from including the whole building in the frame.⁵² This perhaps reflects the British embarrassment at Government House Nicosia, rather than any particular pride in Government Cottage.

Troodos was equally important for the military establishment and the men of the garrison who arrived a few weeks (sometimes a month) before the civilian officials. Encamped under canvass, they formed the bulk of the community and given that the

garrison was changed from year to year, the constant flow of new men must have given the civil officials an added social incentive. The troops also provided much of the light entertainment. The sketches from *The Graphic* in November 1879 show them enthusiastically reading the mail, organising photo sessions, conducting plays, and loitering around the camp.

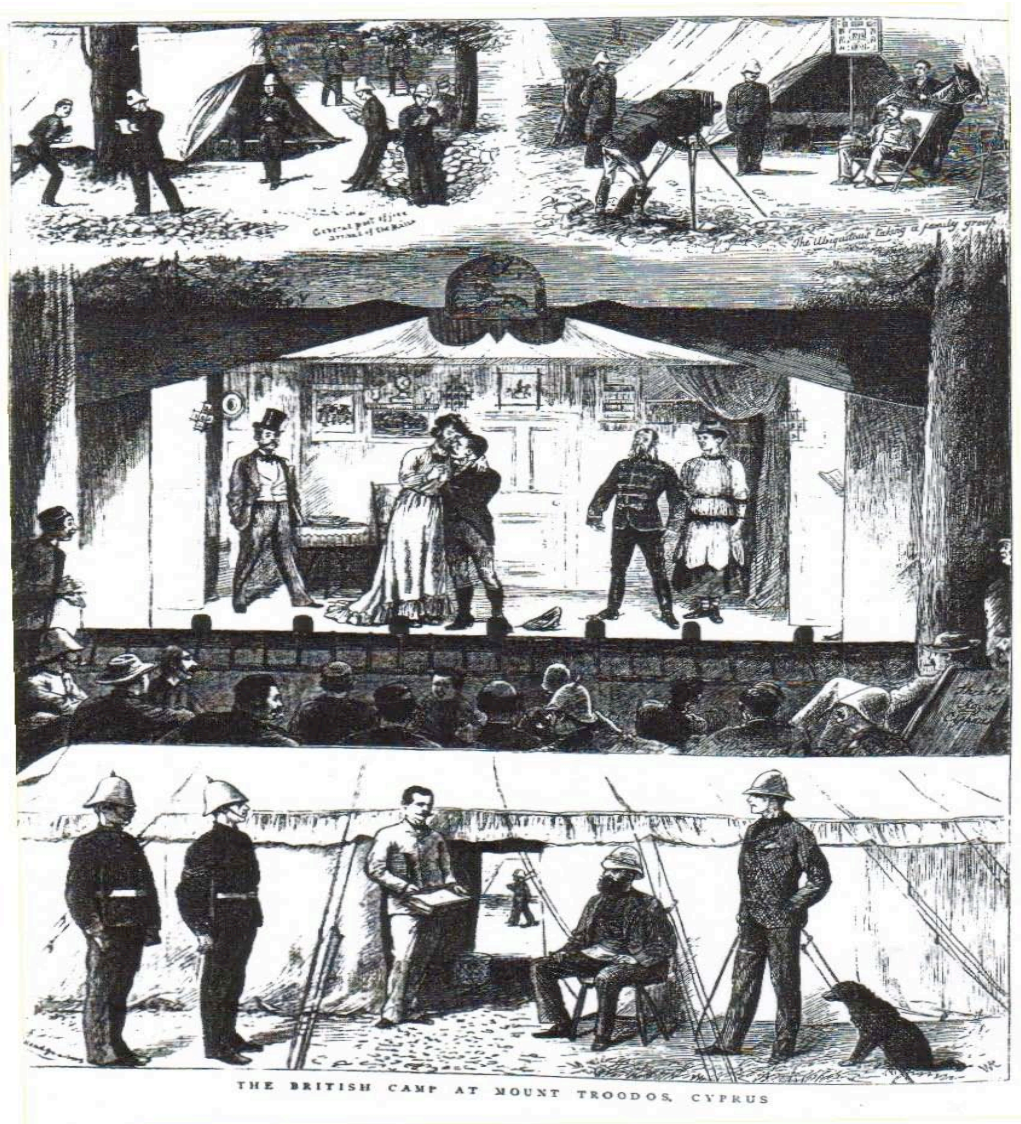


Figure 6: 'The British at Mount Troodos, Cyprus', *The Graphic*, 15 November 1879.

During the Egyptian Wars, Troodos became a base for troops and being away from the battle was a convenient place to sketch the forces for the public at home. In September 1882, *The Graphic* printed a sketch of a parading regimental transport corps at Troodos, which captured the sloping mountains and thick old pines.



Figure 7: ‘Parading a Regimental Transport Train for Egypt, Mount Troodos, Cyprus’,
The Graphic, 23 September 1882.

There are numerous photographs taken by Foscolo of the encampments and the forces. The photograph of the Connaught Regiment shows the troops playing polo on donkeys; indicating that sport figured prominently in the life at Troodos; and that even though there were not enough horses, the British were able to adapt to the conditions, because they wanted to play polo so much.⁵³ Another photograph parades the pristine tents of the 1st York Regiment encamped at Troodos. The photo reveals (as do others by Foscolo) that

trees were cleared in order for the camps to be established.⁵⁴ Some of the men were fine painters, including Colonel Hugh Montgomery Sinclair, of the Royal Engineers, who arrived in Cyprus in 1878 and became Biddulph's private secretary; Colonel Benjamin Donnistorpe Donne, who came to Cyprus with his Royal Sussex Regiment in October 1880 and became commandant of the Military Police for Limassol; and Captain Rudyerd.⁵⁵ In an 1888 watercolour, Rudyerd depicts the precisely ordered white tents of the 1st York Regiment.⁵⁶ He emphasises the surrounds; the sky and pines dwarf the soldiers organising the camp. In 1887, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment served in Cyprus,⁵⁷ and received from Colonel Simpson Hackett, the Officer Administering the Government (in the absence of the high commissioner), their Egyptian Medals at Troodos.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Cypriot muleteers that had served at Suakim were also informed to present themselves to the Commissariat at Troodos to collect their medals.⁵⁹ Troodos clearly served as the official summer-capital of British Cyprus, and indeed, seems to have been the preferred capital.

The Importance of the Hill Station in Maintaining Britishness

Dane Kennedy argues that the British 'established close communities of their own kind in a setting of their own design' at the Indian hill stations.⁶⁰ Therefore, the hill stations acquired a greater significance than the therapeutic attraction originally attached to them and from the political value officially credited to them. This was certainly the case with the Troodos Hill Station.

The hill station gave an official sanctioning to the English desire for the rural retreats and society, which Martin Weiner believed was at the heart of English society.⁶¹

Society life in Cyprus was very limited, beyond the few official gatherings and celebrations, compared to Egypt, where a season of balls and other entertainments gave women something to anticipate. The men had it better. They had English clubs in Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol, which provided relief from the natives and the latest news from home in a familiar, masculine and group environment. Troodos had an added significance in the early years since the English club in Nicosia was not established until 1884, and did not move into an acceptable place until 1896.⁶² While travelling on duty in the winter, men also had the opportunity to engage with nature, and pursue activities like climbing mountains and hunting (often together). But during the winter season these pursuits were much more personal and less communal. Troodos offered a cloistered natural and untamed environment for the British to recreate a familiar setting and pursue familiar pursuits together.

The annual trip to Troodos was an event that the British on the island looked-upon with much anticipation. The Hill Station was reached only by a long, gruelling, steep climb entirely by means of human and animal (mule and horse) exertion, after a thirty-five mile and six-hour trip from Limassol without stop on the military road specifically connecting Polymedia with Troodos,⁶³ or three times that from Nicosia. Unlike India, where Kennedy found the emotional resonance of a religious pilgrimage,⁶⁴ in Cyprus the theme resonating was the anticipation of travelling to a Shangri-La. Mrs E. A. M. Lewis regretted not having the chance to visit Troodos before leaving Cyprus in 1893 because she was told of its:

pleasant social footing when all, who are usually separated by long and difficult journeys, meet together from the various distant districts for once in the year: the impromptu tea-parties organised under the tree: the tennis-courts; the presence of the whole military staff, and their

excellent band playing at the afternoon receptions at Government Cottage; these, and many other pleasant things make the annual migration to Troodos a very cheery time, to be looked forward to with a good deal of enthusiasm.⁶⁵

A photo of one of the impromptu tea-parties taken in June 1882 reveals the women enjoying themselves in the company of a sizeable society, and the men figuring without any sign of military uniform.⁶⁶ A photo of a tennis scene by Foscolo shows the women and men enjoying a game of mixed doubles, surrounded by the pines of Troodos.⁶⁷ For women, the annual migration was exciting because the life created at Troodos provided the socio-cultural invigoration to counter their lives in the alien and lonely cities.

For men it was the invigoration offered by the rural environment that made Troodos enticing. Anton Bertram, the Puisne Judge of Cyprus (1907-1911), best captured this feeling in the October 1909 edition of *Travel and Exploration*.⁶⁸ He structured the article to create anticipation and excitement in the reader by continuously referring to Troodos but keeping the reader in suspense. When Bertram starts the section on Troodos he teases the reader by stating that he fears to have left himself no space, but goes on to write over three pages on it — a third of the article.⁶⁹ Bertram states that Troodos was the ‘culmination of Cyprus in more ways than one’, and twice refers to ‘the enchanting hill-tops of Troodos’.⁷⁰ The anticipation begins with the packing and sending of the luggage and furniture in mule-carts. Bertram emphasises the speed made across the Mesaoria plain, past the ‘humming threshing floors’, until the landscape changes and the sound of running water, and hills covered in poplars, rosy oleander blossoms and red tiled roofs, captivate the travellers. The escape from the trials and tribulations of the natives was reflected in the speed made across the plains to the isolation of the mountains, where a

‘new scene’ of pines and panoramas awaits.⁷¹ John Thomson, the famous Victorian age photographer, fabulously captured one of these scenes in 1878.⁷²

Hunting was pursued all-year-round and across the island, but more energetically during the Troodos season. With areas reminiscent of the Scottish highlands, the British hunted hare, mouflon (wild sheep indigenous to Cyprus), partridges, francolin, woodcock and bears. During the first few years of British rule, army officers imported packs of hounds for hunting.⁷³ One anonymous writer lamented in 1892 that the Cypriots had so taken to hunting and it was harder to find game.⁷⁴ The British even built a rest house at Stavros tis Psokas in the Paphos Forest in the heart of mouflon hunting territory to facilitate this activity.⁷⁵ Hunting tends to be instilled with concepts of manliness, but even women visitors to Troodos favourably commented on the hunt.⁷⁶ Although the British did not need to hunt to survive, it had vital socio-cultural significance. The activity at Troodos provided the opportunity to re-engage with nature as a collective group. The hunts were also about proving a mastery over nature. Thus, when High Commissioner Hamilton Goold-Adams took his Private Secretary, Harry Luke (then Lukach) on a mouflon hunting expedition, Luke went, as all good British officers should, but later privately expressed happiness at missing his target.⁷⁷ His appreciation of the mouflon did not stretch to him refusing to shoot at it or go on the hunt. The hunt was vital as a way of reasserting British identity in an alien place and a power over nature and the foreign environment, by recreating a pastime that was an intrinsic component of British rural life.

Both sexes enjoyed the idleness and recreation offered by Troodos without worldly distraction. The principal pastime at Troodos was viewing the scenery and summit. The much-travelled Sir Harry Luke claimed that:

on their peaks and slopes and among their valleys there is scenery which, I maintain, cannot be surpassed elsewhere in colour, in romantic outline, in fragrance of vegetation.⁷⁸

Climbing Olympus became one of the binding social events. Major Benjamin Donne revealed that it was 'the favourite promenade of Troodos Society to walk to the Summit of an evening'.⁷⁹ William Butler, who accompanied Wolseley to the summit in 1879, basked at its immeasurable skyline and horizon;⁸⁰ Horatio Kitchener, who surveyed the island, adored it;⁸¹ and Esme Scott-Stevenson, the wife of an officer and government official, marvelled at it.⁸²

Early artists and photographers who visited Cyprus were enthralled by the view from the summit. Tristan Ellis sketched it (see blow) and Rudyard painted it.⁸³

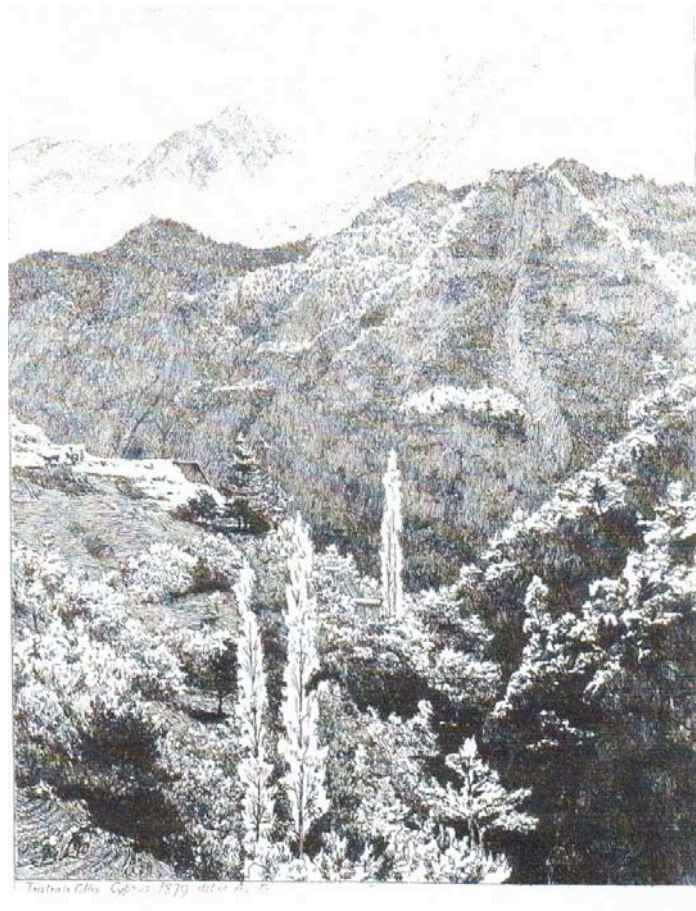


Figure 8: ‘Troodos Summit’, Tristan Ellis, Sketch, *Twelve Etchings of Principle Views and Places of Interest in Cyprus*, London, 1879.

Both capture and emphasise the extraordinary panoramic view. The exception was the photograph of John Thomson. His summit is flat, rocky and overgrown with shrubs.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he still managed to describe its brilliance in words.

... enveloped in gloom, drenched with rain, and benumbed with cold, the scene around us was weird and foreboding rather than extensive. Far down beneath our feet, clouds in grey masses hung over the glens, pierced here and there by the dark pine tops, and lit up at intervals into dazzling brilliancy by the lightning as it flashed.⁸⁵

The summit had spellbound even Thomson, and he seems to have endeavoured to make-up for his failure to capture it with his brilliant photo of the forest and fine sketch of the sloping mountains.



Figure 9: 'Troodos', Engraving from John Thomson Sketch, *The Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1878.

Troodos provided the social, cultural and rural invigoration that both men and women craved after the bustle, alien and lonely life in the cities and towns. The creation of Troodos was therefore about retaining the socio-cultural identity of British rural life back home, as a way of preserving ‘Britishness’ in a foreign colonial setting.

The march from Troodos to the plains for the winter season was unmentioned in accounts, but there was one representation, a sketch in *The Graphic* in 1880.



Figure 10: ‘Marching from Mt Troodos to Winter Quarters’, *The Graphic*, 2 October 1880.

The march seems a rather slow, methodical and gloomy departure. Paradoxically, the people do not look very invigorated, and their despondent appearance gives the impression of the sadness at the end of a holiday.

The desire for a haven was a major attraction of Troodos for the British. In 1879, the first summer the British encamped at Troodos, the famous explorer, traveller and engineer Sir Samuel White Baker and his wife spent more than three months at Trooditissa Monastery, five miles from the British camp.⁸⁶ Baker and his wife developed a close attachment to the monks and the sole native family.⁸⁷ The seclusion offered them the peaceful life that many English families experienced in rural Britain, but in a setting not of their own design. Baker wrote of his time there:

It was a very peaceful existence. I shall often look back with pleasure to our hermitage by the walls of the old monastery, which afforded a moral haven from all the storms and troubles that embitter life.⁸⁸

The retreat from ‘the storms and troubles’ of life was a major attraction of Troodos, but unlike Baker, who preferred to stay with natives away from the British encampment, the colonial and military officials retreated from the natives. Kennedy argued that the British headed for the hills in India ‘for seasonal relief not merely from the physical toll of a harsh climate but from the social and psychological toll of an alien culture’.⁸⁹ Hill stations have two aspects in common: they are a retreat to something, and a retreat from something. The ‘retreat from’ was from the heat and disease of the plains, the bustle and disease of the cities, and, whether intended or not, from the natives. Edward Said’s phrase ‘imaginative geography’, refers to the minds of the colonisers intensifying and reinforcing the importance of their own sense of identity by dramatising the distance and difference between it and the native.⁹⁰ The reinforcing of difference results in the ‘retreat to’ being a retreat to a community space created to preserve British identity.

The creation of a space conducive to retaining British socio-cultural identity could be achieved only in an untamed setting, away from the natives on what Butler called a ‘lonely Troodos’.⁹¹ William Hawkins captured the loneliness in an oil painting, but the pines seem to take on a human form, thus Troodos’ emptiness was enticing.⁹² This is why a hill station was established at a place without inhabitants and without dwellings. Forwood remarked that ‘it was the British who ‘discovered’ Troodos’.⁹³ Indeed, although Troodos became a resort, it never became a village. The British needed a blank canvass to recreate home.

The buildings that enclose home and community life were pivotal in the formation of a comfortable and familiar environment. The British lived under canvas although the Cyprus Government built about a dozen huts for officials. Some government officers built two-floored houses at Platres (the village south of Troodos) with broad balconies that commanded picturesque views of the sea horizons.⁹⁴ A photograph of Platres by Foscolo shows one of these houses, possibly that built by Falkland Warren, the first Chief Secretary of the Cyprus Government (1879-1891). The house had a commanding position of surveillance over Platres, as does the camp of soldiers on the side of the mountain.⁹⁵ The British houses there were constructed outside the village in the northern environs close to Troodos. The British houses did not resemble the typical dwellings of the inhabitants of Platres, as was evident in Rudyard's watercolour of 1888.⁹⁶ Platres had 126 native inhabitants according to the census of 1881.⁹⁷ The 'part-time' homes of the British were evacuated and closed-up when it came time to leave the hill station for the winter season. Tourists, like Rider Haggard,⁹⁸ purchased tents from the 'Army and Navy'⁹⁹ and by the turn of the century a Miss T. Young from Nicosia operated a popular tent hotel at Troodos,¹⁰⁰ a feature that continued into the twentieth century.¹⁰¹ The huts built for use by officials were also hired to travellers.¹⁰² In 1905, an Egyptian, N. Hourri, opened a small hotel at Troodos to cater for Egyptian officials.¹⁰³ By 1908, the Olympus Hotel had opened at Troodos,¹⁰⁴ and the Platres Hotel at Platres,¹⁰⁵ both belonging to the Cyprus Hotel Company.¹⁰⁶ During and after the First World War there was a hotel boom with more hotels constructed at Troodos and Platres, and others at Pedhoulas and Prodromos.¹⁰⁷

Another requirement necessary to create the right socio-cultural setting was the imagined familiar location — both natural and architectural. This was the major difference between the Cyprus and India hill station experiences. In India, Dane Kennedy reveals that the dominant architectural motif for houses was the Swiss chalet style because the British wanted to re-create the physical appearance of their homeland.¹⁰⁸ Although this contention seems rather questionable, it is not the place of this article to question it, but rather to provide a comparison with Cyprus. In Cyprus, the British found the natural scenery, villages and monasteries familiar. In 1879, Sir Samuel Baker found that approaching Troodos was like entering ‘one of those picturesque vales for which Devonshire is famous’.¹⁰⁹ He described Trooditissa Monastery as ‘a family of English barns that had been crossed with a Swiss chalet’,¹¹⁰ providing apt words to Rudyard’s watercolour of 1888.¹¹¹ Wolseley wrote in his diary that the villages in the area had a ‘Swiss air about them’,¹¹² while Kitchener wrote that when approaching Troodos from the north, the villages of Pedhoulas and Prodromos resembled villages in Switzerland.¹¹³ A photograph by Foscolo of Pedhoulas shows that this observation does not seem to reflect the houses, given the thatched roofs of the houses, although the church of the village does resemble Swiss-style chalet architecture.¹¹⁴

Interestingly, once the hill station was created, some British saw other more exotic places in Troodos. At the turn of the century, Major D. G. Prinsep observed that the scenery from Platres to Troodos was ‘very like that on the road to Murree in the Himalayas’. Either he had fused in his mind the Indian and Cyprus hill stations, not being able to distinguish which from the other, or the British had created in Cyprus an imitation of the Indian hill station experience. Yet as he sat sipping tea on the grass with his party

at Platres, he was reminded of picnics in England.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, Harry Luke imagined that the view of the sunset over Paphos was 'like the sunset of a Japanese print'. The shapes created by the weight of the snow on the pines, together with their green, contrasted with deep crimson of the setting sun, combined to 'produce effects in colouring and design such as are seen in the works of [Ando] Hiroshige', the famous Japanese master painter.¹¹⁶ There was a strange fusion of the Far East and the Indian Sub-continent in the way the only Mediterranean hill station was described and characterised by the British once it was built.

The Cyprus Government Versus the War Office

The Cyprus Government's recognition of the importance of the Troodos Hill Station was reflected by its sensitive and protective attitude towards any granting of land rights to the WO to establish an exclusive sanatorium.

The War Department desire for land rights at Troodos to establish a sanatorium for the troops in Egypt brought to the fore the Cyprus Government's protective attitude over the hill station. Biddulph had advocated the potential of Troodos as a summer resort for Europeans wanting to avoid the Levantine heat,¹¹⁷ but the capitalists that formed a company in Alexandria to construct an establishment were crippled by the war of 1882.¹¹⁸ But when during the war Troodos became valuable as a base and the Mount Troodos Guards Base Hospital was established there,¹¹⁹ its therapeutic attraction increased. Regiments returning from the Suakim were invigorated by the climate.¹²⁰ In 1885, the WO decided to establish a military station there for the troops in Egypt and the Sudan, and requested rights over an area of land on Troodos.¹²¹

The Cyprus Government was reluctant to cede land rights to the WO. Chief Secretary Warren advised High Commissioner Henry Bulwer (Biddulph's successor) that the sites selected by the WO to build a hospital and bazaar would result in the contamination of the springs, which supplied water to the civil government, and civilian and garrison camps. Bulwer also wanted more camping ground for the civil administration.¹²² In April 1887, the WO proposed that if it had the exclusive right to occupy land, it would 'always be open to the Officer Commanding to allow civilians to camp within the lines, if feasible, but it ... considered [it] essential on sanitary and other grounds that no such right should exist'.¹²³ This incited Edward Fairfield, the Cyprus expert in the African and Mediterranean Department of the Colonial Office, to quip:

It looks to me as if the War Department wanted to take all the available camping land, and leave nothing for our officers, who it should be remembered go up on duty and for the restoration of their health.¹²⁴

It is evident that the local government was very reluctant to relinquish camping ground at Troodos to the WO. Troodos, as the summer capital, had become the political and military headquarters from which the local officials ruled in a socio-cultural environment that doubled as a haven from the alien society and culture of the cities.

Conclusion

The importance of the Troodos Hill Station to the preservation of Britishness outweighed its initial therapeutic attraction. Rita Severis argued that the British in Cyprus attempted to 'graft one culture upon another',¹²⁵ but it seems rather, that in the case of Troodos, the British grafted an image of their own society and culture onto a bare canvass. It was only

at the isolated confines of the hill station that a British community could be sustained, because only at such highlands could they replicate the socio-cultural world they left in Britain.¹²⁶ Thus, it came as no surprise that because the Troodos Hill Station was so important to the British on the island that the local government challenged the WO over its demands for land there.

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