

BROADLY SPEAKING

Our man behind the gates, **Richard Jordan-Baker**, shares life living at Broadlands



I wrote this August edition on the Cycladic island of Paros in the Aegean Sea, a four-hour ferry voyage from Athens. It was 28°C and from the shaded bar of the child-free Mythic Hotel the view encompassed the infinity pools, a 180-degree panorama of the sea, near and distant islands, mountains in the misty beyond and the cloudless sky. The sea was the same dark blue as my new linen trousers and the sky was what can be best described as Californian Hockney. Bubbles rose regularly to the surface of my suitably cold Mythos local beer. In a break between finishing Johnny Marr's autobiography and beginning to listen to Jeremy Clarkson read *Diddly Squat*, I turned my attention to the demands of my editor and focused on some words.

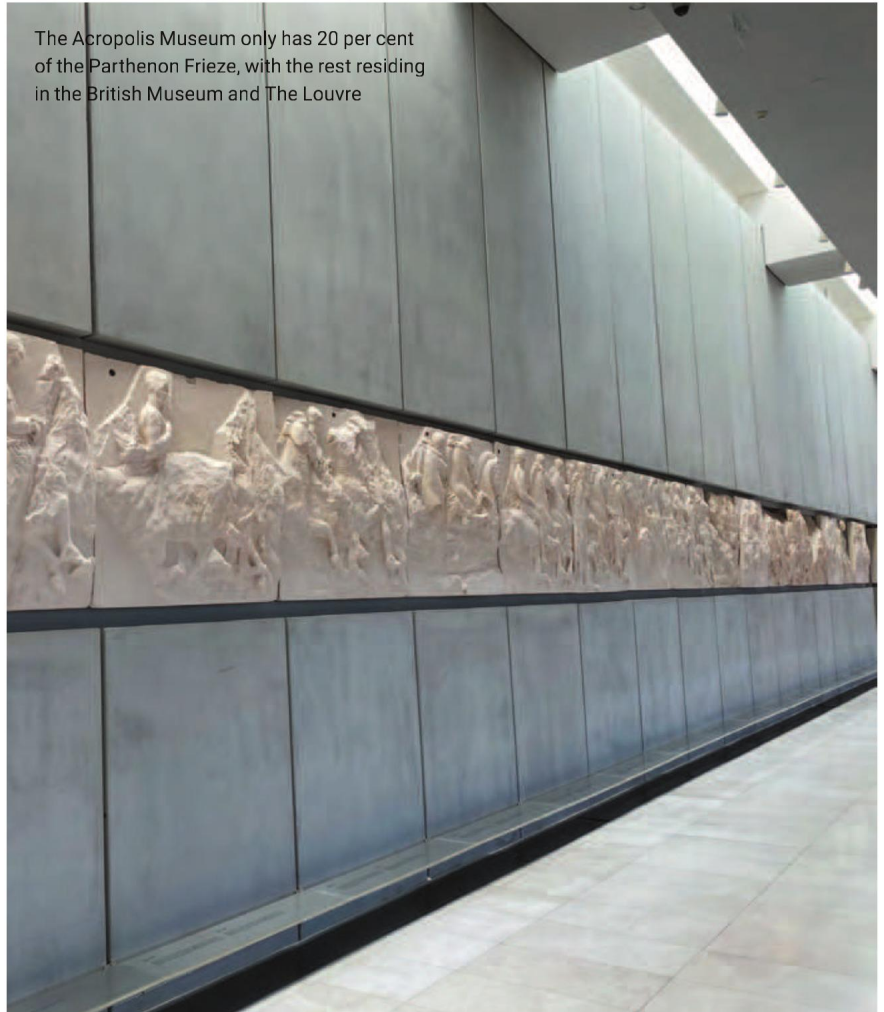
Athens was very, very hot. Thirty-five degrees of very, very hot. It is the most relaxed capital city I have ever visited. So calm and friendly and oh so clean. There is no litter and not the smog we have read about for so long. To be honest, and at the risk of insulting the Hellenes amongst readers, there is only one really important attraction, the Parthenon and that, with all its continuous restoration since the late-19th century, could be described as either Trigger's broom or, more historically, King Alfred's axe. How much I wonder does actually date from when it was finished in 432 BC?

Broadlands was brought to the top of my thoughts however on two occasions. The first, at the Acropolis Museum, where of course is approximately 20 per cent of the Parthenon Frieze. The famous frieze depicts a procession to the Acropolis to celebrate the birthday of the goddess Athena. Much to the chagrin of the Greeks approximately 80 per cent of the frieze is in the British Museum. One small section resides in the Louvre. In the Orangery at Broadlands there is a 50 or so foot copy of part of the frieze – a section with mounted soldiers. The story is that Lord Elgin had a legitimate license for the removal. The Greeks are less than convinced and rather repudiate this argument. Either way I doubt there is a statue of Lord Elgin in Athens!

For those going to Tennessee, there, there is a full-size replica of the Parthenon as it was when it was finished. The setting is somewhat different to that of the original but I am sure interesting to see nonetheless.

Purely by chance while visiting the famous gardens next door – as featured in *Monty Don's Adriatic Gardens* – we found the Stavros Niarchos Foundation where one can see the cup presented to Spyros Louis, the unexpected, and himself surprised, winner of the marathon the first time it was included

The Acropolis Museum only has 20 per cent of the Parthenon Frieze, with the rest residing in the British Museum and The Louvre



Broadlands connections

in the modern Olympic Games when it was held in 1896 in Greece.

This, my second Broadlands holiday thought. In May for the last 10 years, the Rotary Club of Romsey has organised the incredibly worthwhile Charity Relay Marathon whereby more than 100 or so teams of 10 agile souls each run just over two miles so that the whole team runs the equivalent of a marathon. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been raised over these years.

It was a messenger named Phaidippides who started the whole marathon running saga in 490 BC. He ran approximately the length of the modern marathon to announce the defeat of the Persians at the Battle of

Marathon. After he proclaimed his message he sadly passed out and died of exhaustion. For me this is a salutary lesson why running is for other people.

Only days after this August edition is on sale it is the Broadlands Garden Show. Previously this was in the early autumn – now on the last weekend in July. This is, as I think I have mentioned before, the antidote to Chelsea. Lots of room; free parking, lots to see, eat, drink and buy and you don't have to go on the tube to get there. ●

PS: BC is mentioned in this article. This means 'before Christ' and not, as in my house, 'before Claire' – ie anything that happened in my life before 2006!