

# Ariel

"I come to answer thy best pleasure." The Tempest Act 1 Sc.

The Journal of the Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association

Issue No 8 July 2004



Georgia's new President
The Georgian Studies Day
Jason & the Golden Fleece
.... and much, much more

Celebrating the cultural links between Kutaisi and

# ARIEL 8 July 2004

"I come to answer thy best pleasure." The Tempest Act 1 Sc.ii

#### **EDITORS**

Catherine Philpott
Mike Singleton
With acknowledgements to Is

With acknowledgements to lan Irving

Cover illustration by Catherine Philpott Medea and Jason fight the Dragon for the Golden Fleece.

# **New Face**



The NKTA welcomes the new President of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili - at the remarkably young age of 36. His triumph in the January 4<sup>th</sup> 2004 elections is widely seen as a great new start for Georgia and our twin city Kutaisi.

But who is this man and why has he come to the fore so early?

Saakashvili started his journey to the Presidency with a law degree in Kiev, thus he added Ukrainian to Russian and his native Georgian. He moved to America in 1992 to do postgraduate work, acquiring English too. One of

the senior partners at the American law firm where he worked said, 'He was clearly the outstanding candidate of the 20 or 30 we interviewed. He has great ability matched with energy and a sharp intellect.'

It was while he was in New York that he came to the attention of former President Eduard Shevardnadze. When he returned to Georgia in 1995 Saakashvili won a parliamentary seat for Shevardnadze's Union of Citizens of Georgia party. He was put in charge of reforming the Georgian judiciary at the age of 27; remarkably 60% of the judges appointed at this time were women. At 30 he was the Minister of Justice, the leader of the parliamentary majority and a vice-president of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. He is married to his Dutch wife, Sandra with whom he has a young son.

Although clearly at the centre of Shevardnadze's government, Saakashvili became sickened by the corruption and cronyism in the leadership. Accordingly, in 2002 he had the courage to resign - considering it immoral to remain in the government. He set up an opposition party, the National Movement. He was elected head of the city council of Tbilisi: here he started his career of fixing broken things and clearing up messes.

When the government tried to fix the result of this year's elections popular protest soon swept Saakashvili to the Presidency. In the so-called 'Rose Revolution' power changed hands without



Georgians on the streets of Tbilisi during the 'Rose Revolution'.

violence; for this Saakashvili wisely thanked his predecessor, Eduard Shevardnadze. Although he regrets Shevardnadze's failure to be the 'founding father of a new Georgian nation' he has sagaciously remarked of the former President: 'History will judge him kindly.'

Mikhail Saakashvili has a great deal to clean up in Georgia - we wish him all success for the sake of the people and their beautiful, ancient land.

MS

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# 16th ANNUAL GEORGIAN STUDIES DAY

12th December 2003

A report from Vera Brown:

I attended with the two Georgian students studying at UWN, David Megrelishvili and Maka Melkadze. It was held at the Georgian Embassy, Russell Gardens,



Kensington with the added interest, because it was so soon after the political events in Georgia with which mass demonstrations ended in the resignation of President Edward Shevardnadze.

Dr. Tamara Dragadze chaired the day, with the participation of Risto Talas as comoderator. It was opened by His Excellency the Georgian Ambassador to Britain, Teimuraz Mamatsashvili, with him giving an overview of the political situation. expressed gratitude for the sympathy shown by friends and ordinary people here during the recent upheavals in his country. By their demonstrations, Georgians had defended the right to vote but without losing the image of a civilised and democratic nation. So there were two victories. Shevardnadze had saved the country when he came to power as president but acted with honour by resigning when it was time to leave. New Presidential elections had been set for January 4th 2004.

Mrs. Sesili Gogiberidze, the former Minister of Culture gave a more personal account later in the day. She had resigned at the time of the troubles, together with her husband, the head of a TV channel. However, though tinged with sadness for Shevardnadze being unable to finish his term, there was a feeling of optimism so high that the revolution was now referred to as the 'Rose Revolution'. She was proud that the world community had supported leaders of the revolution and the ordinary people.

The next speaker was Raphael Ibrahimov, the Azerbaijan Ambassador. Economic cooperation has started with the oil pipeline, trade turnover is between \$100 - 200m and there are proposals to reconstruct the Silk Road for transport of goods from East to West.

Yuri Polyneev, EBRD director for Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, then spoke. There was economic growth but the financial sector had not been addressed. For example only 15% of revenues due to the State were collected. Mike Bilbo from BP and Mr. Pirani, the Vice-President of CBI John Brown Ltd. spoke about the oil pipeline construction.

Stephen Nash, former British Ambassador gave a short report. He was currently involved in a project - The South Caucasus Parliamentary Initiative, to bring together the Caucasus' parliaments. This will be a year of elections, so there is current unpredictability about affairs.

The day included twinning reports from Bristol and Newport. Henry Parry of Bristol Tbilisi Association spoke, among other matters, of the provision of medical equipment for the Tbilisi Children's Hospital, and refuse trucks for the city. Newport's activities were also reported, for example, hosting a group of visitors in 2002 to coincide with the Queen's visit, the proposed involvement in the Local Development Agency and above all the increasing personal links, facilitated by email and individual visits. There was a special pleasure in the presence at the Studies Day of the UWN students, David and Maka, and a special mention for the first Newport Kutaisi marriage of Andrew and Katie Rock.

The day concluded with thanks to all those involved in the organisation of what was a very informative day on Georgia at an important time in its history.

**VB** 

# Jason and the Golden Fleece



hen the early contacts between Newport and Kutaisi were established there was fascination in the thought that we were to visit the land to which Jason voyaged to find the Golden Fleece. En route, we stopped at a Georgian hotel in Moscow and were greatly impressed by a large mosaic in the hotel foyer representing the Argonauts on their journey to our destination, the fabled land of the Colchi. Though the story is mythical it clearly has great significance to the Georgian people who remember with pride the long told tale.



Mel Harris

In Greek mythology Jason was the son of Aeson King of Iolcus in the Greek territory of Thessaly. When Aeson was deposed by his half-brother Pelias, Jason was spirited away to safety with the centaur Ghiron. There, in the company of other later heroes such as Hercules, Castor and Pollux he was reared in safety until manhood.

Pelias had two children Phrixus and Helle by his first wife Nephele, the cloud goddess. Later Pelias married Ino who hated her stepchildren and persuaded her husband to sacrifice Phrixus so as to alleviate a great famine in Thessaly.

Before the sacrifice the shade of Nephele appeared to Phrixus bringing to him a ram with a golden fleece. On the back of the ram be escaped over the sea with his sister Helle. Sadly his sister fell off the ram and was drowned in what was later called the Hellespont and now the Dardanelles.

Phrixus remained on the ram and finally reached the shore and made his way to Colchis on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. There he sacrificed the ram and hung the Golden Fleece in a sacred tree grove and placed a sleepless firebreathing dragon to guard it.

Years later, when he had reached manhood, Jason returned to lolcus to demand his rightful inheritance as King. This was promised to him by Pelias provided he could bring the Golden Fleece back to lolcus – a seemingly impossible task.

In preparation for the journey in the rowing galley Argos Jason gathered a crew of his native people the Manyants strengthened by a number of heroes with whom he had grown up. As well as Heracles, Castor and Pollux there was Tiphys, the pilot, Argos the shipbuilders and Orpheus the musician.

They set off from lolcus (now Volos) but soon came to the island of Lesbos occupied only by women. Little is said of this episode but they stayed there for several months. Later they moved on into the Hellespont and the Bosphorus and so into the Black Sea.

The first difficulty arose in the land of the Bepryces where King Amycus, a great boxer, challenged all visitors to box with him. The challenge was accepted by Pollux who fought and killed the King so they could sail on.

They next met with Phineus a blind king whose food was polluted by the Harpies, huge birds with the faces of women. With the help of Calais and Zetes, the violent sons of Boreas, god of the north wind, they overcame the Harpies and freed

the King.In gratitude,
Phineus told
Jason how to get to the site of the Golden
Fleece at
Colchis. He also told him how to pass through the
Cynean Rocks, two cliffs that moved and crushed



whatever tried to pass between them.



After leaving Phineus, Jason took his advice and sent a dove between the rocks. They moved to crush the bird and as they rebounded, the Argo slipped through the open channel.

At last the Argo reached Phasis, a city at the mouth of the Rioni River, which flowed from the

Caucasus mountains through the city of Cytaea (now Kutaisi) and through much of the land of Colchis.

Here, in the land ruled by King Aeetes, the Golden Fleece still hung in the sacred grove of Arès (Mars), guarded day and night by a firebreathing dragon.

The king however would not surrender the Fleece until Jason had completed three tasks. First he had to yoke two fire-breathing oxen and plough the field of Arès. Then he had to sow the field with dragon's teeth from which armed men would arise and then Jason had to kill these warriors.

Faced with these seemingly impossible tasks, Jason sought the help of Medea, the king's daughter. She, a sorceress, had fallen in love with the 'severed eyed' Jason and told him how he could perform the tasks set by her father. She first gave him a salve, which would preserve him from the bull's fire and then said to throw stones amongst the newborn warriors who would then fight to the death amongst themselves.

Jason successfully completed the tasks but Aeetes still refused to surrender the fleece. Again Medea intervened, drugged the fire-breathing dragon so that Jason could cut down the fleece from the sacred grove and set off for home, taking Medea with him.

There are numerous versions of the route home taken by the Argo pursued by the fleet loyal to King Aeetes. One version says they followed the same route by which they had come; another says they sailed up the River Don to the Baltic, around Europe and through

Gibraltar; a third up the River Phasis and then around Africa to the Straits of Gibraltar, and

several other even more complicated routes. By whatever route, the Argonauts finally returned with their prize to lolcus and the Golden Fleece was placed in a grove sacred to Poseidon on the Isthmus of Corinth.

Though he was seen as a great hero, Jason never again attained great status in Greek myth. He married Medea but they soon left for Corinth.

There they lived together for 10 years but then Jason left Medea for Glauca, the daughter of King Creon. In revenge Medea killed the King, his daughter and her own children before fleeing to Athens.

Jason remained in Corinth and, as old man, died when the 'talking bowsprit' of the now rotting Argo fell on him as he lay under it!

or three millennia the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece has formed part of the mythology of classical, medieval and modern writing and belief without any clear account of what the fleece consisted. Various views now exist to explain its meaning. For some it is simply a folk memory of a long-haired golden coloured sheep native to the Georgian area. For others it was a memory of sheepskins being used to separate pieces of gold from sand washed down in streams from the Caucasus. A more mundane view is that it simply represents a parchment containing rules for mining gold in Colchis.

Whatever the true definition, gold has been obtained in Western Georgia (Colchis) for at least three thousand years and its lure has provided one of the most enduring stories of adventure, wonder and mystery in the world's store of mythology.

МН

We would like to thank Mel for his work in researching and writing up the mythological stories of Georgia and Greece for the last four issues of Ariel. He is always on time - we never have to remind him of his commitment to providing us with material to print. We look forward to more, when he has had a rest of course!

CP



# **Celf Caerleon Arts Festival**

Following the success of last year's Caerleon Arts Festival—see Ariel 7—we were very pleased to see that our local MP had publicised it in Parliament with an Early Day Motion.



Paul Flynn MP Newport West Constituency

### EDM 1582 July 14th 2003

Paul Flynn
Alan Howarth
Mr Huw Edwards
Mr Tony Banks
Kevin Brennan
Ian Lucas
Mr Harold Best
Mr Ronnie Campbell
Mr Martin Caton
Frank Cook
Mrs Ann Cryer
Mr Wayne David
Mr Nigel Jones

Dr Hywel Francis
Andrew George
Mr Mike Hancock
Lynne Jones
Mr John Lyons
Mr Kevin McNamara
Julie Morgan
Albert Owen
Mr Gordon Prentice
Alan Simpson
Dr Rudi Vis
Mr Roger Williams

26 signatures

That this House warmly congratulates the organisers and participants of the Celf Caerleon Arts Festival; agrees with Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister of the Welsh Assembly, that the 10 splendid wooden sculptures produced by the international artists will greatly enhance the growing reputation of Caerleon and the whole of Newport as the sculpture capital of Wales; and looks forward to the fulfilment of future plans to create more sculpture trails to celebrate the city's robust character and its rich Celtic-Roman history.













**Early Day Motions.** 

An EDM is the colloquial term for a notice of motion given by a member of parliament for which no set date has been given for discussion. There is very little chance that it would ever be debated on the floor of the House - so why are they so popular since there is an average of 1,400 EDMs every parliamentary session?

The reason is because they give an MP the chance to express an opinion and ask fellow members for their support. Sometimes it is simply a chance for a member to congratulate somebody in their constituency, e.g. a local sports team wins a national competition. They are also useful because, depending on how many other MPs sign the motion, a member can see how much support the matter has in the House.

Because they are not tied to political parties sometimes members can get cross-party support, putting aside normal party differences and conflicts. EDMs must not criticise other MPs, Peers of the Realm or members of the Royal Family. They may not refer to matters before any court of law.



# What a SWOT!!

For some time members of the Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association have expressed the need for a review of the work carried out in recent years. There is also a need for some forward planning.



Bernard Tyson Chair NKTA

Meetings are very busy and often taken up deciding on the immediate issues facing us with little time found to discuss how we can build on our experiences of the last fifteen years of twinning.

With this in mind a special meeting was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004 at the Caerleon Campus of UWN. The aim was to take a broader look at the purpose of the Association and start to develop a strategy for the next few years.

The meeting, which was facilitated by Liz Larsson, Head of Marketing and External Affairs at the university, used a method of SWOT analysis. The group set out to identify the Association's **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats** with a view to formulating plans to deal with the various points raised.

Following a lengthy discussion in small groups we re-convened and were able to identify a considerable number of points.

#### Strengths included:

- •The presence of Georgians in Newport
- Finances
- Ariel

### Amongst the weaknesses were:

- Difficulty in recruiting new members
- •Sustaining the links we have set up in recent years with interested groups in Kutaisi, such as doctors, teachers, sporting clubs etc,

As had been planned, no decisions arising from the discussions were taken that evening. Each point was listed on a spreadsheet. The officers are preparing a response to each point with the intention of drawing up an action plan to enhance our strengths and try to deal with the weaknesses. We also need to work on the opportunities.

I would like to thank all who came to the meeting and contributed to the debate. Special thanks should go to Geoff Edge and the UWN for their kind hospitably and to Liz Larsson for her work in helping the participants to think clearly about our future.

Watch this space for further developments. Meanwhile we would welcome your thoughts and ideas on this review by contacting me:

Bernard Tyson Chair NKTA 2 Woodlands Drive Newport NP20 6QD, 01633 854648 or tysonfamily2@ukgateway.net

# Visit to Averys of Bristol.

The Association was delighted to be able to accept an invitation in March from the Bristol-Tbilisi Twinning Association to participate in a tasting of Georgian wines as part of their fund raising to send out vital equipment to Georgia. It was very pleasing to be able to support our sister organisation.

Catherine Philpott, Dr. Russell Rhys, his wife and I were equally interested in the fact that the tasting was to be held by Averys of Bristol. Bristol is one of the oldest ports in Britain and has been importing wine since Norman times (the 11th century). In 1793 John Avery purchased a small wine business and a pub in one of the most historic parts of Bristol. Shortly after he bought it he rebuilt it in the fine Georgian style it still possesses to day. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century superb brick-lined vaults were built. In this atmospheric location we sampled a number of Georgian wines, both red and white, supplied by Pernod Ricard. We were very lucky to be led in our tasting by 2 Masters of Wine (a rare and highly coveted appellation), John Avery the owner and Peter Carr of Pernod Ricard. I could say that this was a very serious, intellectual occasion, but for me it was an excuse to drink wine - and all for a good cause. **Cheers!** 









### A VERY EARLY VINTAGE

David Keys

Humans have been drinking vintage wines for longer than we think. Discoveries in Georgia are revealing that locals were making them 8,0000 years ago.

Tests on ancient pottery jars are showing that humans were deliberately adding anti-bacterial preservatives to grape juice to ensure that, after fermentation, the resulting wine could be kept for longer. The preservative used was tree resin – probably pine or terebinth – which contains several bacterial compounds, Professor Patrick McGovern, who has been leading research, says in a new book. The invention of pottery around 6,000 BC also played a role, able to preserve wines far better than plaster or leather containers. The study has also yielded evidence of wine's cultural – and probably religious - importance.



Born in Georgia? Michelangelo's Bacchus celebrates the vine

Examining Neolithic pottery jars; McGovern discovered tiny images of people celebrating the vine. He believes he may have stumbled upon the distant origins of what later evolved into wine cults like that of the Greek god Dionysus – the Roman Bacchus.

Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viticulture by Patrick E Mc Govern (Princeton).





PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

# 17th GEORGIAN STUDIES DAY



UNIVERSITY OF WALES, NEWPORT SOUTH WALES Caerleon Campus

## **TUESDAY NOVEMBER 16th 2004**

The day will be held under the aegis of the Georgian Embassy in London and organised by NKTA in collaboration with Dr Tamara Dragadze.

Theme: 'New Georgia: New Opportunities'

This yearly event is designed to bring speakers and delegates from governments together with those from business, academic and the arts communities. Also those from Georgian non-government organisations and representatives from other UK- Georgian twinning partnerships will be invited to attend. It provides a platform for participants to give information of a wide range of activities and how they are involved.

With the election of Mikheil Saakashvili as President in January 2004 and the political changes which have occurred, those attending will have an opportunity to hear of and discuss the new political, business, social and cultural issues now facing Georgia today.

A full programme with information on how to reserve a place will be published shortly. For this information contact:

Bernard Tyson Newport Kutaisi Association 2 Woodlands Drive Malpas Newport NP20 6QD 01633 854648 tysonfamily2@ukgateway.net

# **Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association**

### ESSAY COMPETITION FOR YOUNG WRITERS

# **Update**

We are delighted to report that a number of essays have been received so far for the Young Writers' Award. There is still time to send in more entries. Write in a really individual way - say what you want in the way you want to say it. Don't think you have to write the way published writers do or the way people on the internet express their work: be yourself, where you are now.

Further entries can be sent directly to Mike or Catherine at their e-mail addresses mike@singletonn.freeserve.co.uk or catherine@philpott9828.fsworld.co.uk

We want to thank everyone who submitted their essays for this competition and wish them all success.

# A NEW GOVERNOR FOR THE IMERETI REGION

With the new elections and the change in Georgia's central government there have been several new appointments.

The Imereti Region with Kutaisi and its 250k population as its principal city now has a new Governor.

We offer our warmest congratulations to Governor **David Mumladze** on his new appointment.

Mumladze was born on 24th August 1964 in Khoni to Helene Zuraidze and Nino Sharashenidze – Mumladze. He gained a law degree from Tbilisi State University, graduating 1986 and becoming an assistant professor on the staff.

Later in 1991-92 he was Head of the Judicial Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the following year Head of Security Services, Judicial Providing and International Relations Department till 1996. He became Head of Judicial Department in Parliament and till 2000 was secretary of the Justice Council of Georgia. He is the author of four scientific papers.

We were given one small, but rather interesting story to illustrate Mumladze's interest in the people of the region and the way he has been prepared to champion the cause of small entrepreneurs. It was a question of Parsley—considered by many westerners as simply an attractive garnish, it is much more to thousands of villagers of Imereti, who now harvest this symbol of economic development and survival.

On March 23rd, in the village of Geguti in Tskhaltubo district, the Association of Vegetable Exports of Imereti was founded, with the goal to facilitate the export of Georgia's greens.

The Association for the Protection of Landowners' Rights approached Mumladze to help them. He began a vigorous campaign on their behalf to assist them to overcome many local difficulties and help establish a thriving export market.

# New Ambassador of Georgia to Great Britain

Amiran Kavadze has been appointed to represent Georgia here in the United Kingdom. Previously he worked in the Embassy of Georgia in the Swiss Confederation and was in the Permanent Mission to the International Organizations at Geneva and the Holy See.

CP



# Newport's University gets a change of name and status



Professor James Lusty, Vicc Chancellor

The University of Wales College, Newport changed its name to the University of Wales, Newport in May 2004. Official approval was granted by the Privy Council for the change.

The University's Vice Chancellor, Professor James Lusty, said: "It was decided last year that Newport's University should become a full Constituent Institution of the University of Wales, and the new name is the next stage in that process. This enhanced status is clear recognition of the University's long-standing role in higher education in Wales, and takes us a step closer to realising our vision of making Newport a world class university." The new name comes at a time of expansion for the university which has unveiled plans for an exciting new £60 million city centre campus, which could effectively double the number of students and enable it to play a key role in the regeneration of the area.



Window in the Board Room

The University has achieved an enviable list of accolades in recent months The latest figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) reveal that more people are applying to study at the university. According to UCAS statistics, 17% more people are submitting full time undergraduate applications to Newport than last year,

rising from 2025 to 2366. This is the biggest rise of any university in Wales.

For the second year running, the university has been rated the best in Wales for entrepreneurship education. A report published by the Knowledge Exploitation Fund (KEF) revealed that Newport scored 28 out of a possible 30, giving it the highest ranking out of 37 HE and FE institutions in Wales. In addition, the business, management and accountancy courses on offer at the Newport Business School have been given top marks by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education.



Sculpture from the 2003 Caerleon Arts Festival on UWN site as part of the town's sculpture trail.

The institution was also the top university across England, Wales, and Scotland, and the second HEI (higher education institution) in Wales for the number of students enrolling from state schools (98%), according to

figures published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). These latest performance indicators show that Newport's university is among the leaders in the UK and Wales for increasing the percentage of students who come from areas which have not traditionally taken part in higher education.

# ....and so finally!

# SOROPTIMISTS SEND EQUIPMENT TO TWIN CITY

The professional women's organisation Soroptimist International combined with the Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association to send equipment to the Kutaisi City Hospital No 1.

Founded in 1890, the hospital is the oldest in the Georgian city and has a good reputation for its clinical standards. Christine Collingbourne, president-elect of Newport Soroptimists is a director of Monex, a Tredegar based international logistics company. She arranged for one of the company's trucks to take the equipment to Heathrow for the flight to Georgia. She received e-mail thanks from Kutaisi, which said 'The equipment is an invaluable gift for us and a great contribution to the development of the Newport-Kutaisi Twinning'.

Thanks were sent to another Soroptimist, Sonia Fisher, also one of our members who had made the suggestion that NKTA should ask Monex for help.



Georgia-bound: Christine Collingbourne with the truck which took medical supplies to Heathrow

### **Our Youngest Member**



On the 21st November 2003 Katie and Andrew Rock became the proud parents of Luca who weighed in at 9 lbs 2 oz. Recently he was christened in St Mark's Church in Newport. In the picture above he is seen being held by his godmother, Maka Melkadze. Andrew's brother Chris was godfather.



Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association.
Officers for 2004—2005

Chair Bernard Tyson

Vice-Chair: Catherine Philpott

Secretary: Vera Brown
Treasurer: Sonia Fisher
Press Officer: Mike Singleton

Journal Editors: Catherine Philpott & Mike Singleton

**News of Forthcoming visit to Newport** 

As we were putting the final pages of Ariel together so the news came that Newport City Council had offered an invitation to Governor David Mumladze, the Mayor of Kutaisi and our very good friend Professor Madonna Megrelishvili to come to join in the Eisteddfod Festival celebrations. We are delighted to learn that the invitation has been accepted.

Following this news NKTA has extended an invitation for a further three members of KNITA to come at the same time. So it is with great interest that we learn that Rezo Robakidze, manager of the National Bank, Levan Shenelia, a composer and pianist and Natia Zviadadze, senior teacher with the English Studies Dept. of KSU will be making up the group of six delegates. They arrive on 31st July 2004 and we are looking forward hugely to meeting them and hope that their visit will be a memorable one.

Please contact us with news: catherine@philpott9828.fsworld.co.uk mike@singletonn.freeserve.co.uk