

“A Flash in the Pan – The Parthenon”

An article by **Bob Stevens**

Early in the 5th century BC the Athenians started a large building project. Unfortunately there was a war on at the time and the Persians burnt the neighbouring Acropolis. Building work stopped and all effort was directed into the fight. It was almost the middle of the 5th century when the work of building the Parthenon was finally completed.

What, I hear you ask, has the Parthenon got to do with black powder? Patience, dear reader, the Parthenon had to wait almost 21 Centuries to find out.

Standing through the centuries this religious temple survived the conquering of Greece by the Romans in the 2nd Century BC and the conversion to a Christian Temple of the virgin Saint Mary in the Middle Ages.

More centuries sped by, black powder was invented and the Turks came to Athens towards the end of the 16th Century and turned the Parthenon, which had remained almost unharmed till this time, into a Mosque.

In 1687 the Turks were at war with the Venetians. Despite the religious significance of the Parthenon/Mosque the Turks had decided that it provided excellent storage facilities for Black Powder. When the Venetians arrived at Athens they decided to bombard the Acropolis. One of their projectiles hit the Parthenon igniting the powder and the temple exploded blowing off the roof and doing other structural damage.

Almost four centuries later Lord Elgin came to the Parthenon and was given permission by the Sultan to take with him various objects. It was at this time he removed the now famous “Elgin Marbles” which have to this day remained a controversy since they are still housed in the British Museum despite Greek pleas for their return.

In spite of all that has happened to the Parthenon over the centuries the biggest threat to its continued existence is the pollution arising from the City of Athens. Efforts continue to find a solution.

Perhaps if Lord Elgin had not “rescued” the Marbles they would not be in the condition they are today.