

Visit to Erenköy – August 2015

Report by Jewel Pearce

A group of 48 ATA members and friends braved the very early start to attend this annual Memorial Day trip. This year marked the 51st anniversary of the Erenköy resistance.

Three buses left Girne at 5.30am with some stops en route to make the journey to Erenköy. Our buses were part of a convoy of 112 buses.

The journey there was an event in itself, what with checks by the Police and Army wanting lists of passengers and driver details despite a comprehensive list been given prior to the day. We understood that the lists were for each bus to leave TRNC territory, one for the UN who escorted us through the buffer zone, and a third for the Greek Cypriot checkpoint.

Each bus was given a number by the police, and the buses had to organise themselves in numerical order before being allowed to move off!

We crossed into the GC territory at a village called Kalapirios, and were greeted by demonstrators lining both sides of the entry through the village with banners. One read something like, "44 years is enough. All we want is peace" which caused us much amusement. There were film cameras there too (On the return journey, the village street was lined at intervals with policemen!)

On leaving the Greek Cypriot village we crossed a UN buffer zone before reaching TRNC territory and travelling on to Erenköy village itself. The roads are very narrow and winding hence the need for small buses.

About half an hour's drive along the picturesque coastline dotted with beautiful small bays and beaches and we were at our destination.

The buses disgorged their passengers on the hill leading to the cemetery then drove off to park at the far end of the village. An Army stall at the side of the road gave out "snack packs" to passers-by.

Standing by the roadside, the view below was inspiring. To the right at the bottom of the hill was the little cemetery and area where the memorial ceremony would be held. To the left the road meandered into the distance, lined at intervals by soldiers, particularly in front of the several ruined houses that clung to the hillside.



Erenköy Veterans lining the road

Close to the shore to the left were the Officers' Mess and helicopter landing pads to which the President and his group were brought. Anchored nearby was a coastguard ship, dressed overall, and a little further out, a landing craft.

Despite the thousands of people milling about, the scene was so very tranquil and beautiful with the calm seas. It seemed so strange yet very moving.

The remembrance service started at 10am and was attended by President Akıncı, military heads as well as representatives of the Erenköy Veterans Association. Unfortunately the PA system was poor and the delivery in Turkish so it was impossible to hear or understand what was being said.

After the service the crowds headed along the coast road until they reached the area where there was a large feeding station. Buses were made available to take people who for whatever reason found it difficult to walk from the cemetery to the feeding station. It was an extremely hot day and that in itself was a big challenge. However, most people chose to walk.

Opposite the feeding station there was a large 'picnic' area which was set out with covered seating areas, and entertainment was provided by a DJ and a group of young folk dancers. Very large fans provided respite from the heat. In this area, too, was a long photographic display, and further along the road, a By 1pm our group was back on the buses and ready for the journey back to Girne.



People at Erenköy

Overall, it was a long, hot day and the journey was made longer and more tedious by the 'necessary' bureaucracy. It is not a trip which is advisable for anyone with health challenges in the August heat but a trip nonetheless which should be undertaken at least once.