



RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch
**RETURNED SOLDIER –
“APOSTRATOS”**



Memorial Hall, 14A Ferrars Place South Melbourne Vic 3205

Phone (03) 9699 9844

June 2018

Dear Veterans, Members and Friends of the RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch

As you can see from our full newsletter, we have been very busy commemorating many events. I would like to thank all that attended our Christmas Dance last December. Congratulations to the winners of our Annual Christmas raffle and to the recipients of the RSL plaque awarded to Tom Zandes, Terry Kanellos and Manny Karvelas for their many years of service to the Sub-Branch. A warm welcome to our three newest members - Paul Oikonomidis, Antonis Ntatanis and Kostas Doukelis.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Returned Soldier “Apostratos” Newsletter

Steve Kyritsis OAM, President



Standing at the rear of the Moari Paka Haka group, New Zealand's High Commissioner to Australia Chris Seed (Left) with The Greek Consul General Dimitrios Mihalopoulos (Right) at the Australian Hellenic Memorial.

See the complete article on page 6

Date	Milestones and Past Events
16 th December 2017	Hellenic Sub branch Christmas function.
4 th February 2018	Hellenic Sub branch visit to the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial
4 th March 2018	Commemoration of the New Zealand Servicemen during the WW2 Greek Campaign
25 th March 2018	Greek National Day
25 th April 2018	Anzac Day
6 th May 2018	Mother's Day at the Hellenic Sub-Branch.
26 th May 2018	Commemoration - 77th Anniversary of The 1941 Battle of Crete

Date	Future Events
1:00pm Sunday 24 th June 2018	Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch - 40th Anniversary Celebration to occur at the sub branch
1:00pm Sunday 9 th September 2018	Father's Day at the Hellenic Sub Branch
Saturday 27 th October 2018	OHI Day at the Australian Hellenic Memorial & Shrine of Remembrance

Sub branch visits Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat

On Sunday 4th February 2018, a busload of our members and friends attended a commemoration service at The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat Victoria. The Memorial acknowledges the hardship, deprivation, brutality, starvation and disease endured by Prisoners of War during their capture and the scars many continued to endure upon their repatriation to Australia. The Memorial lists 27 Greek-Australians Prisoners from World War Two, including 9 who died as prisoners. Following the service, we had our picnic at the magnificent Ballarat Botanical Gardens located on the shore of Lake Wendourie.



2017 Christmas Raffle Winners

Congratulations to the following winners of the raffle which was drawn at our Christmas function:-

- 1st prize - Peter Stratigis (#0761)
- 2nd prize - Angelo Yannacaros (#0888)
- 3rd prize - Kon Glekas (#0194)
- 4th Prize - Petros S (#0971)
- 5th prize - Vasilis Grambas (#0220)

Thank you to all that supported our raffle.

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Greek Independence Day - 24th March 2018

Despite rain, rain and more rain, the two wreath laying ceremonies at the Australian Hellenic Memorial and within the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance went according to plan.



Lieutenant General Grigorios Prezerakos attended the event, as did a contingent of the elite Evzone Greek Ceremonial Guard that guard Athens Sintagma (Constitution) Square and the Palace.

Front Row - Left to right – Major Pangiotis Rountos, Captain Paraskevi Sirmi, Warrant Officer Ken Tsirigotis, Captain Luke Haitas, Lieutenant General Grigorios Prezerakos, Greek Consul General Dimitris Mihalopoulos, Sub Branch President Steve Kyritsis, Father Dimitrios, MP Murray Thompson, Major Peter Mercoulias (Ret).

Rear Row Left to Right – Stan Kayialikos and two of the eight Evzones that came to Australia for the Greek Independence Day events.

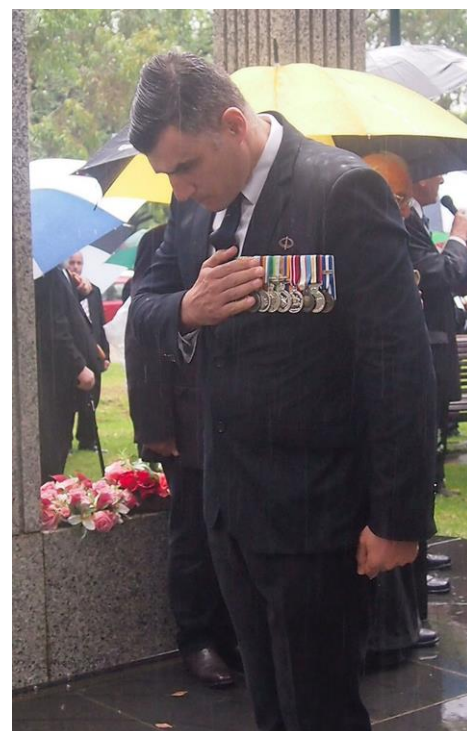
Below, Greek Consul General Dimitrios Mihalopoulos addresses the audience



Tony Tsourdalakis
Chairman Battle of Crete & Greece
Commemorative Council



Peter Andrionopoulos
President Messinian Association



Warrant Officer Ken Tsirigotis
Legacy Victoria

Mothers Day at the Hellenic Sub-Branch - 6th May 2018



Congratulations to the oldest Mother of the day, Mrs Efstathia Katsambanis and the youngest, Mrs Voula Kanellos. As well as a lovely bouquet of flowers, both received hand painted art work kindly donated by Aphrodite Masouras.

I met WW2 veteran Anthony Miller (Moulroudakis)..... By Steve Kyritsis



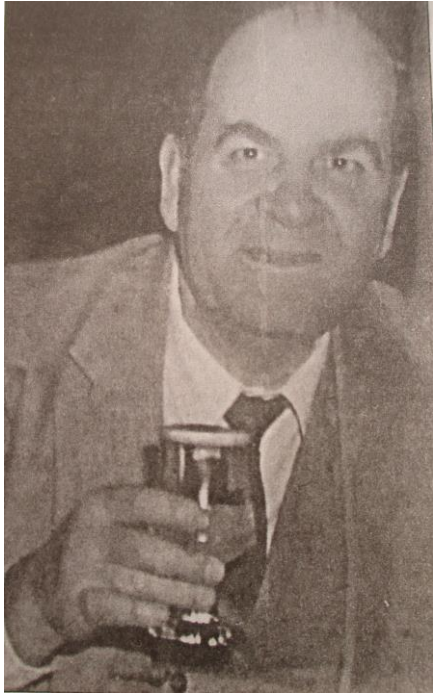
Left to Right – Steve, Tony and Vietnam Veteran Victor Patty

On the occasion of his Granddaughter's wedding, here in Melbourne, I had the great pleasure of meeting and talking to 96 year old World War 2 veteran Tony Miller from Brisbane.

Tony served in the Australian Army from 1943-46. He spoke to me about his experiences in New Guinea at Port Moresby, Lae, Wau and New Britain. Tony appears in my latest book – Greek Australians in the Australian Armed Forces Kokoda WW2.

At the Brisbane Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch, Tony served as President, Treasurer and Secretary for the last 25 years.

Vale



On the 22nd April 2018, we were saddened by the passing of Sub Branch member

Antonios Hronis

aged 86

He served on our committee as Assistant Treasurer from 1996 to 1999.

The RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch would like to pass on our condolences to the extended Hronis family.

Commemoration of the New Zealand Servicemen during the WW2 Greek Campaign



On the 4th March 2018, The Australian Hellenic Memorial Foundation conducted a commemoration service to honour the New Zealand service personnel that sacrificed their lives in Greece during World War Two. Of the 7,700 New Zealanders in Greece, 1,041 paid the supreme sacrifice and over 2,000 became interned as POWs. The New Zealand casualty rate was the highest of the Allied forces, mainly from their tenacity and willingness to defend Greece as they had come to think of the Greeks as their “brothers”.

Chris Seed, Dimitrios Michalopoulos and Steve Kyritsis place a scroll of the names of the NZ servicemen killed in action during the Greek Campaign into the crypt of the Australian Hellenic Memorial.

Already in the crypt are the names of all Australian servicemen who lost their lives in the same Campaign and those that are buried on the island of Lemnos during the WW1 Gallipoli campaign.



Seated Front Row (L-R) – Steve Kyritsis OAM, Dr Robert Webster OAM State President Victorian RSL, Dimitrios Mihalopoulos Greek Consul General, New Zealand’s High Commissioner to Australia Chris Seed, Danny Allen, President New Zealand RSL Sub-Branch, John O’Connor Whyte, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Colonel John-Paul Ouvrier, Wing Commander John Ward and Murray Thompson MP.

Anzac Day 25th April 2018



All 2018 Anzac Day photos courtesy of George Stratigis, John Mihanetsis, Maria Makris and Riki Kouskouris.

Following the Anzac Day Dawn service at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, thousands of people lined St Kilda Road to pay their respects to the men and women who served and continue to serve in the defence forces both in conflict and in peace. As always, the Hellenic Sub Branch was well represented. Our procession was led by Army Cadets from the 30th Army Cadet Unit Sunshine who proudly held the Australian and Greek flags, followed by students from St Johns and Oakleigh Grammar Greek schools.



Left to Right – Major Peter Mercoulias (Ret), Commander John Michanetzis (Ret),
Lieutenant Commander Filippos Tourkakis (Ret)



Above - George Verginis and Jim Colias in a parade car

Right – Looking Good. The Hellenic Sub Branch marches in perfect step.

Ex Sergeant Kostas Papakonstantinou did a great job in organising our procession into perfect lines. Major Peter Mercoulis gave the “Eyes Right” command when the procession marched past the VIP area in the forecourt of The Shrine of Remembrance.



The Legacy continues. As with every year, veteran families marched on Anzac Day in honour of their deceased Father, Husband, or Grandfather proudly wearing his medals.



The Doukelis brothers with mum.
From Left to Right – Con, Tony, Despina and Jim



Ignatios Doukelis - A Korean War Veteran who served with the Greek Expeditionary Force in 1953.



Top Left - Grandson John Makris with Mum Maria Makris at this year's Anzac Day Parade.

Top Right - WW2 Veteran George Makris (Right) with fellow veteran Bill Mountgouris at the 2013 Anzac Day March.



Left - Grandson George Makris on Anzac Day 2015.

Anzac Day 2018 – Back at the Sub Branch



Left to Right – Kosta Papakostantino, his father served as a Lieutenant in the Korean war, Jim Sikavitsas, our Tullamarine Bus lines sponsor and the ever popular Captain Lionel Boxer with his bagpipes.

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The Sub branch would like to thank Steve Manos for his donation of the magnificent ANZAC picture showing a contingent of the Australian First Division, 11th Battalion before deployment to Gallipoli at Cheops Pyramid Egypt 10th January 1915.

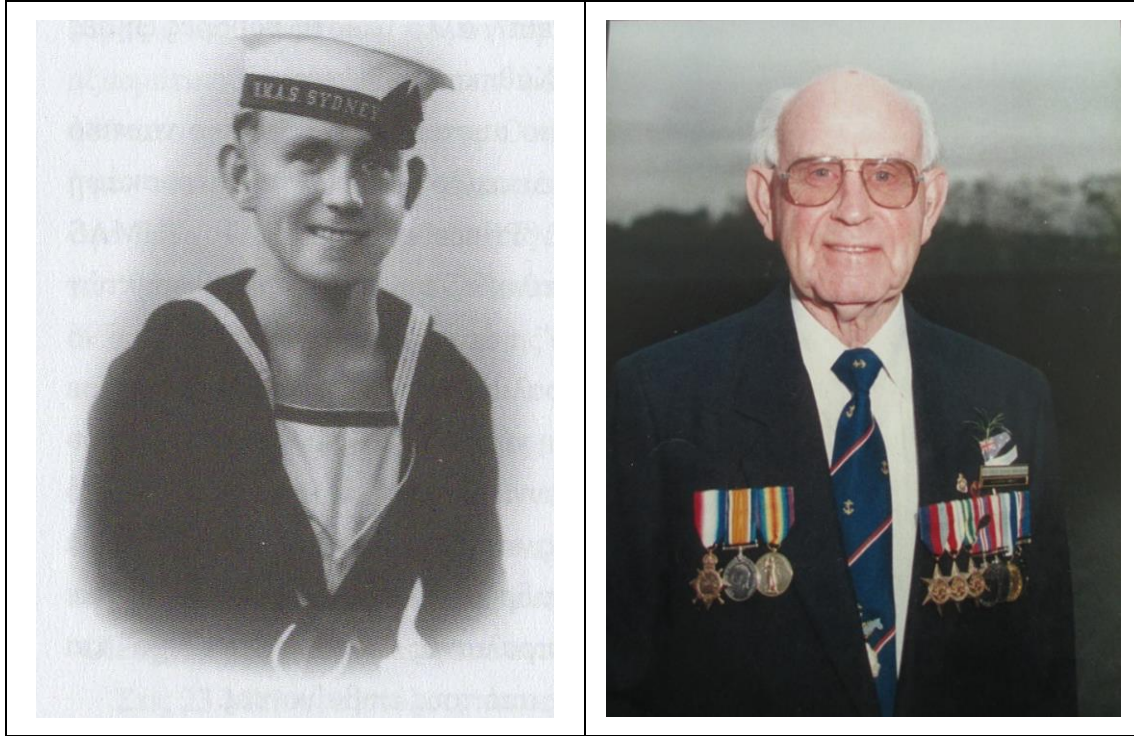
Standing in front of the picture, Left to Right – Steve Manos OAM, Jim Colias, Steve Kyritsis OAM and Major Peter Mercoulia (Ret).

Gordon Devereaux White

In the previous edition of Apostratos, we sadly advised the passing of World War II Navy Veteran Gordon White, aged 97. Because he served in the Greek Campaign 1940-41, Gordon was often seen at many Hellenic RSL Commemorative events.

In this article, Steve Kyritsis gives a brief and personal account of Gordon's WW2 experiences aboard the HMAS Sydney (II). The full story features in Steve Kyritsis' book:-

Greek-Australians in the Australian Armed Forces WW1 & WW2



Gordon joined the Australian light Cruiser HMAS Sydney (II) on 14th September 1938 as a 17 year old Ordinary Seaman Second Class. Gordon's thirty months on the Sydney were spent in the Gunnery section as the Gunnery Officer's Messenger, as he was said to have a sharp mind and a good eye. During late 1939 and early 1940, Sydney was based in Fremantle WA, was engaged in patrolling shipping routes and in convoy escort duties. Gordon sailed with HMAS Sydney to the Mediterranean in April 1940. He was promoted to Able Seaman in May of that year.

HMAS Sydney, with Gordon White in the Director Control Tower, was involved in many engagements in the Mediterranean. Perhaps the most famous of these were the actions involving the Italian cruisers Bartolomeo, Colleoni and Giovanni Delle Bande in the Battle of Cape Spada. The battle occurred when an Allied squadron, including the HMAS Sydney, were patrolling the Aegean Sea and encountered two Italian cruisers transferring from Tripoli to Leros, at that time an Italian colony in the Dodecanese Islands. The sinking of the Calleoni was a famous victory for The Sydney.

In November 1940, The Sydney departed from Alexandria harbour with British troops heading towards Suda Bay Crete Greece who were destined to fight in the Battle of Crete. Around the 8th December, from Suda Bay, The Sydney sailed to Piraeus, the port of Athens and then continued to operate in Mediterranean waters. Eventually, orders were given for it to return to Australia for repairs and maintenance.



HMAS Sydney (II)

On the 19th November 1941 The HMAS Sydney engaged and battled the German auxiliary cruiser Kormoran off the coast of Western Australia. Both ships were destroyed in the half-hour engagement.

From 24th November, after Sydney failed to return to port, air and sea searches were conducted. Boats and rafts carrying survivors from the Kormoran were recovered at sea, while others made landfall north of Carnarvon WA. 318 of the 399 personnel on Kormoran survived. While debris from Sydney was found, there were no survivors from the 645-strong complement. It was the largest loss of life in the history of the Royal Australian Navy, the largest Allied warship lost with all hands during World War II.

So how did Gordon White survive? Fate was on his side, he wasn't on the Sydney at the time, but in the local hospital recovering from a severe illness. Many years later, Gordon always told me, he kept thinking about the fellow who replaced him as Gunnery Officer's Messenger.

Twelve years ago, I had the great pleasure of meeting Gordon at our Hellenic RSL St Kilda Town Hall Function, to Commemorate the WW2 Greek Campaign and the Battle of Crete. Over the years, I would often drop by to visit him and we had many good conversations over a cup of tea.

The last time I saw Gordon, he was in hospital. I found him asleep. I sat in a chair for ten minutes, waiting for him to wake up so we could chat. But he kept sleeping. I quietly told him that I would drop by to see him another day. Gordon passed away two days later.



To all of Gordon's extended family, on behalf of the Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch Melbourne, our sincere condolences for your great loss.

Steve Kyritsis OAM

77th Anniversary of the 1941 Battle of Crete at the Hellenic Memorial



On Saturday 26th May 2018, The Battle of Crete & Greece Commemorative Council along with help from The Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne, Melbourne's Cretan Association and the Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand hosted the official parade and wreath laying ceremony at the forecourt of the Shrine of Remembrance and at the Australian Hellenic Memorial with hundreds of people turning out to pay their respects and over fifty wreaths laid. Some 17,000 Australians fought in mainland Greece and Crete and 646 were lost. More than half of these Anzacs were not found or their remains identified.



In attendance were The Chief of Staff of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff Lieutenant General Nikolaos Dimitrios Christopoulos (fourth from the right) and Major Nikolaos Gogousis (second from the right).



Lieutenant General Nikolaos Dimitrios Christopoulos presents Steve Kyritsis with a plaque.



10 Rosemary Court Mulgrave (03) 9561 5922



RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch Committee

The following members were voted into the committee at the 2018 AGM:-

Steve Kyritsis (President)
 Terry Kanellos (Secretary)
 Dennis Patisteas (Treasurer)
 Emanuel Karvelas (Senior Vice President)
 George Kaltzidis (Vice President)
 Athanasios Masouras
 Theo Papas
 Bill Koutras
 Peter Stathopoulos
 Peter Mercoulia
 Dimitris Varnas
 Kyriakos Papadopoulos
 Themis Sitzoukis
 Con Katsambanis
 Peter Stratigis



Hellenic Sub branch Christmas function - 16th December 2017

