



RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch
RETURNED SOLDIER –
“APOSTRATOS”

Memorial Hall, 14A Ferrars Place South Melbourne Vic 3205 Phone (03) 9699 9844

Mar 2017

Dear Members and Friends of the RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch

On behalf of our committee, I wish you all the very best of good health and happiness for the new 2017 year. There will be many commemorations this year, in particular the WW2 Kokoda-New Guinea Campaign. For Australia, the Kokoda-New Guinea Campaign will stand out amongst other battles because Australia was targeted to be invaded for the first time. In July this year, we will launch my new book “*Greek-Australians in the Australian Forces Kokoda Track-New Guinea WWIP*”. More details to follow.

I would like to congratulate the winners of our 2017 New Years Eve Raffle and all of you that supported it. Our Sub-Branch Membership is growing every year. A warm welcome to our newest members, Mr Mike Vallis and Mr Bill Papageorgiou.

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

Steve Kyritsis OAM, President



The media interview WW2 veteran “Bunny” Glover at the Ballarat Prisoner of War Memorial. The overhead TV screen in the background captures the wreath laid by the Hellenic Sub Branch.

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Date	Milestones and Past Events
31 st December 2016	New Years Eve function at the Hellenic Sub-Branch.
15 th February 2017	Hellenic Sub branch visits the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat.
19 th February 2017	Milestone - The bombing of Darwin that first occurred on the 19 th Feb 1942.

Date	Future Events
Saturday 25 th March 2017	Greek National Day
12:30pm Sunday 2 rd April 2017	Annual General Meeting of the Hellenic Sub Branch. 12:30pm refreshments will be served, AGM will commence at 1:15pm.
25 th April 2017	Anzac Day
Sunday 7 th May 2017	Mother's Day at the Hellenic Sub-Branch. All members and friends are invited.
Friday 21 st July 2017	Book Launch at Queens Hall - " <i>Greek-Australians in the Australian Forces Kokoda Track - New Guinea WWII</i> "
Saturday 22 st July 2017	Book Launch Function at St Kilda Town Hall - " <i>Greek-Australians in the Australian Forces Kokoda Track - New Guinea WWII</i> "

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<p style="text-align: center;">2017 New Years Eve Raffle Winners</p> <p>Congratulations to the following winners of the raffle which was drawn at our New Years Eve function:-</p> <p>1st prize - Mr C. Mingos (#0884) 2nd prize - Mr L. Katelis (#0516) 3rd prize - Mr A. Liolios (#0740) 4th Prize - Mrs E. Katsambanis (#0722) 5th prize – Mr V. Kosmas (#0622)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thank you to all that supported our raffle.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">ARIS SHOES Keycuts * Streching * Engraving * Shoes, Bags & Belts - Colouring * Shoe Care Products * Repairs to all Leather Goods</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3b Armstrong Street, Middle Park, Vic., 3206 Phone.: 9696 4898</p>
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2017 Greek National Day

The first Greek National Day service will begin 9:30am at St Eustathios Greek Church Dorcas St Sth Melbourne, then 12:00noon at the Australian Hellenic Memorial (Birdwood Avenue near the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance). At 1.00pm, wreaths will be laid by dignitaries within the Shrine of Remembrance. We conclude with a light lunch back at our club rooms. All members and friends are welcome.

 <p>MELBOURNE BAKEHOUSE Nick 0409 407 107 Phone 9646 0898 Fax 9645 4344 210 Bay Street Port Melbourne VIC 3207</p> 	 <p>Griffiths FINE COFFEE SINCE 1879</p> <p>OASIS PURE GREEK COFFEE</p> <p>10 Rosemary Court Mulgrave (03) 9561 5922</p>
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Final Reminder for the few people yet to pay:-

2017 RSL Membership fee (Service or Affiliate) - \$35

New Members are welcome to join our Sub-Branch.
Please contact Steve on 0418 571 800

Major General David Mc McLachlan Retires

In January this year, MajGen David Mc McLachlan announced his retirement as President of the RSL Victorian Branch after 14 years of service. The committee and members of our Hellenic Sub-Branch wish Major General McLaughlan all the very best and many thanks for his support.

Sub branch visits Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat – *Continued from page 1*

On Sunday 15th February 2017, a busload of our members and friends travelled to The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War (POW) Memorial in Ballarat Victoria to attend an emotional service commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore WW2. Singapore's fall was Britain's worst military defeat. On the 15th February 1942, more than 100,000 Allied soldiers were taken prisoner, among them some 15,000 Australians. They battled starvation, beatings, as they became slave labourers. A third of these died in captivity Four days later, the Japanese began bombing Darwin on the Australian mainland.

The book *Greek Australians in the Australian Armed Forces WWI & WWII* mentions a number of Greek Australians that were taken prisoner in Singapore, though the Hellenic Sub Branch does not know exactly how many. Of the thousands of names etched in walls of the Ballarat memorial, there are 27 Greek-Australians, 9 of which died as POW.



The service was well attended, including, senior representatives of all services and local dignitaries



His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC gives his commemorative address



Only 16 surviving ex WWII POW's aged between 92 and 99 were able to attend the event



Vietnam Veterans
Dr Robert Webster and Steve Kyritsis

Photo top left - Dr Robert Webster, Senior Vice President of the Victorian Branch of the RSL lays a wreath. To the left is Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC who performed the Master of Ceremonies role.





Manny PANOURAKIS

Phone Number: (03) 9555 9475

Email Address: info@manvic.com.au

Street Address: L1, 346-348 Highett Rd Highett Vic 3190



Student Billy Kantharidis wins prize

In January 2017, President Steve Kyritsis met Billy at the Park Hyatt venue Melbourne during the Victorian Government Spirit of Anzac Competition Awards ceremony. Billy was one of 30 students that won. He attends Overnewton Anglican Community College in Keilor Victoria.

Billy will also be given a book "Greek Australians in the Australian Armed Forces WWI & WWII".

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ΒΡΥΤΩΝΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΙΔΗ

The story of WW2 Greek campaign Veteran Private Harry Haar

On 6th November 2016, families of Australian WWII veterans were presented by the Consul-General of Greece, Her Excellency Christina Simantiraki with the Greek Medal of honour for service during the WW2 Greek campaign.



Private Harry Haar VX5700



Paul Haar

Paul Harr received the medal on behalf of his late father Harry Haar. The sub branch would like to thank Paul for submitting his father's war time experiences in Greece.

My father Harry Haar landed in Greece on the 13th April 1941 with the 2/7 Battalion as part of the 6th Division deployment to defend Greece. Following a short and disastrous campaign, the decision was made withdraw all troops from Greece. During the withdrawal, much panic ensued, particularly during the frequent German aerial attacks. Most things didn't concern Dad, but the Stuka Dive bombers really bothered him. The Stuka was designed as a terror weapon: as they made their dive-bombing attacks their sirens screamed, striking fear into those on the ground. After various battles against well-supported airborne German troops and without any Allied aerial support, the Australians withdrew to Kalamata. Along with other Allied forces, they were evacuated to Crete aboard the ship "Costa Rica" on the 26th April. The Costa Rica was sunk before reaching Crete, but all personnel on board were rescued by supporting Allied Naval destroyers.

Some 380 personnel from various Allied units were left behind. This included one officer and 50 ordinary ranks from the 2/7 battalion transport brigade, which included Dad. Harry, along with several other drivers, had been sent back to collect stragglers and equipment. When they returned to Kalamata, they found the ship had sailed. They were trapped between the Mediterranean and a rapidly approaching superior German force. The decision was made to surrender all troops. Drivers were ordered to destroy trucks, weapons, ammunition and await the arrival of the Germans. Dad told me of throwing hundreds of rifle bolts into the sea. Engine sumps and radiators were drained, the trucks driven up and down the beach until the engines seized. Several Australians took off into the countryside to try find a way to get to Crete, including Harry. Some succeeded, but most were quickly captured.

Harry told how, whilst on the run, a Greek lady had hidden him in her barn. He was very grateful to her, because she would have been shot if discovered. Harry carried a photo of her right through his time as a POW, however the family have no idea who she was, or whether she even survived the war.

(Editor's Note – please contact the sub branch should you recognise this lady. Harry's family would be very interested to meet this lady, or her descendants, to show their appreciation).



Following capture and processing through Dulag 183 in Salonika, Harry spent two months at Stalag VIII B, located at Lamsdorf, (now called Łambinowice), Poland. On 8th December 1941, he was transferred to Stalag XX A in Thorn, now called Toruń, Poland.

In July 1944, Harry participated in a funeral for Private Wilbur David Trainor VX4458, of the 2/6 Battalion. Wilbur was shot by a German guard during an altercation over working conditions. The photos of the funeral were supplied to Harry by the Germans and kept by him until his death in 1993. Harry escaped twice more.

When prompted, Dad would talk about the time he escaped through the floorboards of a cattle truck from a stationary train. When he dropped to the ground, the train began to move. Dad had no option but to lie very low and hope that there was not a loco pushing at the rear. His biggest concern was to dodge the heavy swaying air brake couplings hanging down between the carriages. When the last truck passed over him, he got up and ran. The guard at the rear of the train spotted him and started shooting, a difficult task considering the rocking train. Harry got away, but he was eventually recaptured. Harry's third escape was in April 1945. One night, after three months on the run, the escapees bedded down in an empty barn. They awoke the next morning to the sound of tanks. When they nervously looked out of the barn, they saw the tanks had white stars. The Americans had moved in and they were free. Dad told me that moment was the greatest relief he had experienced in his whole life. Harry was flown to Britain for debriefing and recuperation. He arrived back home in Melbourne in June 1945. Harry Haar had been a POW from 26th April 1941 to 18th April 1945. Harry Haar passed away on 8th June 1993 at 79 years of age.

Next Edition Returned Soldier "Apostratos" – Due out June 2017