

# ANZAC DAY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AN AUSTRALIAN OF HELLENIC ORIGINS

INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE MANSFORD (Brigadier Ret)



The lone piper at Gallipoli on ANZAC DAY.



**Introduction.** Peter Adamis, or affectionately known by his old comrades in arms as "Pete the Greek" has written a brief summary on his feelings and views in regards to the ANZAC legacy. His immense pride in being an Aussie is also very evident which in years gone by was also demonstrated by his dedicated and loyal service as a professional soldier.

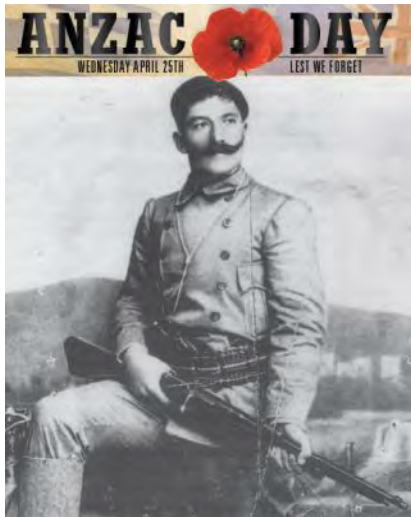
Reading between the lines there is another clear message in Peter's reflections and that is the wonderful contribution that so many migrants from the old world made after choosing Australia as their new home and nation. Such social history should also be a lesson to the government of the day in regards migrants. It is clearly obvious we need only those who are prepared to assimilate and be proud fair dinkum Aussies.

I am proud to say that in my time of soldiering there were a number of comrades in arms who had made Australia their home and although the accents were obvious they certainly embraced the spirit of ANZAC. It was my great honour to have served with them; some of whom paid the supreme sacrifice in serving their beloved Oz.

To Peter and all his bloody mates of Greek origin and other parts of the globe, my best wishes for a long and happy life under the Southern Cross.

George Mansford  
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# ANZAC DAY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AN AUSTRALIAN OF HELLENIC ORIGINS



Before embarking on a passionate subject such as ANZAC Day, a word that is close to my heart and what it means to me as an Australian of Hellenic origins, it's important that I begin with a disclaimer in order that my thoughts are not misrepresented.

I am fully cognizant with the Australian tall poppy syndrome that is always waiting in the shadows to pounce on the gullible and therefore beg forgiveness if my thoughts are misconstrued, have erred in any matter of historical interest or have forgotten a vital point relevant to the meaning of ANZAC Day.

It is after all my personal point of view, free of any political influences and much based on my personal experiences as an Australian of Hellenic origins, who has worn the uniform of Australia. I am also aware that there are many individuals whose origins are from a country other than Australian or New Zealand. who have served and/or are currently serving in the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces this day. I gladly accept any constructive criticism that will enhance the article in form or shape.

However, before I move on, it is important to mention that we must not forget what the letters **ANZAC** (always capitalised) stand for: **Australian New Zealand Army Corps** and that ANZAC Day is always commemorated on the 25th April of each calendar year. With due respect to our Kiwi brothers across the ocean and for the sake of this article, the words ANZAC Day are in relation to Australian experiences and I acknowledge that there are many migrant similarities.

Despite the odd person who may scoff at my point of view, I do not believe that ANZAC Day is about glorifying war, claiming battles were won or lost; be they, right or wrong, who wears the most medals and certainly it was not meant to be celebrated that War in itself is just. I am also mindful of the huge sacrifices that this nation (despite its small population) we call Australia, has made to global peace and continues to do so by contributing its fair share of manpower and resources to maintain a balance in the world of man.

I can only express my own thoughts which I hope are shared by others of the Hellenic race of people who have made Australia home. However having said that, one would expect that the same thoughts are felt by all those who were born in the mother country or whose origins are other than Australia. It is relevant to note that the reference to the mother country could infer Scotland, Italy, Wales, England, Ireland, Greece, and Germany, Baltic countries, Africa, Middle East, Asia, India, China, Russia, Indonesia, Turkey, America and a host of other countries that contributed to the fabric of the Australian society.

Having gone thus so far it is also worthy to note the indigenous population of Australia the aboriginal people with their many nations of tribes and those of the Torres Straits Islanders. Such tribes were here at the beginning of Dream Time and after the arrival of the First Fleet they have been very much part of the fabric weaved on the loom of Australian society.

This article is a but a random jumble of thoughts and threads (gathered in no certain order) covering over a period of forty years, containing the full version of my personal account of what ANZAC Day means to me as an Australian of Hellenic origins. A shorter condensed version is available for those wish to be spared the boredom of reading a lengthy account of one's experiences. However, despite its length, this article on ANZAC Day and its meaning to an Australian of Hellenic (Greek) heritage may be of significance to others who may encounter or have similar engagements and maybe worthwhile comparing those experiences at some future date.

Therefore, this article is one person's perspective (mine and mine alone) and it is dedicated it to all those men and women who have worn the uniform of Australia; with particular emphasis on my cobbles (mates) and those superb leaders who helped to develop me as an Australian.

The leaders were: Maurice Barwick, John Best, Jack Currie, Peter Phillips, Eddie (Jock) Bryson, Ron Lovelock, Bob Anderson, Brian Cooper, Dave Dalton (USMC), Ray Purdon, "Bluey" Peter Roberts, Tony "Harry the Hat" Hammett, "Warrie" George Mansford, Barry French, Bob Sayce, Eddie Black, Tony Kelly, Clinton Breeze, Doug Ball, "Yank" Bill Akell, Peter Thomas, David Lewin, "Pup" Elliot, Peter Alkemade, Ron Hill, Barry Tolly, Jock Smith, Barrie Daniels, Noel Greaves, Mick Hardless, Ross Thompson, Warren Payne, Neil (Lofty) Eiby, Bert Franks, Ron Lunt, Mick Driscoll, Mick Strong, Peter Rosemond, and many many others whose faces I remember but their names elude me.

IT is of relevance to note that the above list does not include my colleagues, acquaintances, friends, comrades in arms, mates, my best cobbles and/or the many Australian Defence civilians who are the subject of another story.

I have travelled across this wide and beautiful land of ours, admiring its beautiful sunsets and sunrises, crystal clear streams, harsh deserts, long and winding roads and the sandy beaches and felt the cool sea breezes and breathed the crisp cool mountain air. How could one forget the many towns, farms, remote and outback places and the busy sprawling cities? No matter the size or location of such habitation there is every chance you will find war memorials in varying forms, be it a towering cenotaph or a small modest statue of a digger.

Perhaps a wall with the names of those long gone, a highway or road lined on either sides with trees dedicated to past serving members of the Australian Defence Force. One cannot but stop and reflect for a moment at such monuments honouring past warriors. It's not until you begin to read the names and at times the ages of these men and women that it strikes you close to the heart at their relative youthfulness. You drive away from each town wondering how those who were left behind managed to find the courage and determination to pursue their tomorrow and beyond with a growing casualty list and so many of the youth who would never return.

During my military career, there have been times when I have laughed, joked, cried like a baby, almost given up under stress and/or duress, experienced grief and sorrow, howled like wounded animal, fought like a demon, drank like a fish, but in the end I always got on with the job and made sure that I never let my mates down. To let your mates down was a mortal sin in our book, followed closely by thieving from your own mates which was not the Australian way and certainly not in the spirit of the ANZAC legacy. As such, in a quiet moment, I have often reflected on my military career and wondered, what was the one thing that kept me going and not giving up?

Was it my faith in my God, my faith in the Royal Australian Regiment motto "Duty First", my ancestor's blood flowing through my veins and/or the ANZAC legacy that we who wore the uniform of Australia inherited? After much soul searching and talking it out with my closest mates, I finally came to the conclusion that it was all of the above.

When I travelled to Greece in 1991 for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Greece as a Warrant Officer of the Australian Regular Army, I was most moved by the reception the Hellenic Government gave to all the countries who had sent a contingent to commemorate the anniversary. I was most moved and became emotional to see my own country of origins playing the host to my adopted country Australia. Everywhere we went; we (the Australians) were greeted with much love and hospitality.

What was of interest to me was that I had served with some the successors to the Battalions who had fought during the Battle of Greece and Crete in WW2 and as such it became a personal matter to me. I am unabashedly ashamed to say that I was somewhat a little mischievous during our trip in Chania Crete. During one dark and warm evening with a slight breeze blowing, a friend and I were returning back from the seaside cafes after a few ales of wine, olives, fish, salad and possibly little ouzo. As we were walking through the town, I spied this Hellenic flag flying outside a building. I looked around and saw that no one was about and quick as a flash I scampered up the pole and liberated the flag. Stuffing it under my coat, we started to walk briskly towards our accommodation.

Suddenly a vehicle turned the corner with its lights on heading towards us. Geezers, I said to myself, there goes my military career, and we are in deep trouble now. Fortunately and luckily it was just a passing taxi and it travelled into another direction. I still have the Hellenic flag and when the time comes for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Greece and Crete, I believe it would be only just to return it back to its original owners. On a side note, it is of relevance to note that the German flag also went missing and it is believed to be in the possession of another soldier whose father had served during the battle for Greece and Crete (but that's another story)

During our travels throughout Greece and Crete, at no time were we made to feel like outsiders and it was reminiscent of the Australians who were fighting alongside the Greek nation in WW2, where Henry Joe Gullett whilst in the Battle of Greece and Crete said "that the Greeks made us (Australians) feel like their one of their own people". (Henry Joe Gullett – Soldier Officer Ambassador to Greece and Politician).

Again some 15 years later I revisited Greece and Crete with my lovely wife Yovanna and made a pilgrimage to some of the battles locations at Crete. At Souda Bay, I visited all of the Australian graves and silently wept when I read the inscriptions of the fallen that were lying beneath, clothed in Cretan soil and bathed by a Hellenic sun. I quietly walked away retracing my steps happy in the knowledge that these men were not resting in some foreign land but in a country they could call home.

In 1972, whilst training in Papua New Guinea with the 1st Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment, we were given the opportunity to visit the cemetery at Lae in the highlands and speak with the locals. The graves dedicated to Australians are quite visible alongside others of other nations.

The battalion exercise, Treble Change in Papua New Guinea was the toughest, hardest and most gruelling that I have ever had to experience in my 30 years as an Infantry man. As we trudged along the highlands with its many winding, muddy and quite often slippery tracks with our weapons, heavy packs containing bedding, water bottles, ammunition and rations. I wondered how the bloody hell did the young Aussies of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion (a Victorian Battalion) endure such hardship without the luxury of our modern equipment. I said to myself if the ANZACS of yesteryear could do it then how could I who had a heritage that went back in time for thousands of years let the ANZAC spirit die.

So it was for me trudging along these Papuan New Guinea mountain highlands keeping my courage and endurance up by the thoughts not letting the old ANZAC spirit down. At times we would sit amongst the shallows in the ground to rest from the heat and the millions of insects that hovered above us. Only when we lay down exhausted did we realise that we were lying on a grave of an Unknown Japanese soldier. This was often evidenced from the helmets and other equipment found protruding from their earthly resting places.

These shallow graves were always found to be quite still with nary a sound emanating from them as if they were silent guardians of those whom they held in their embrace below the surface. Many years later I would read of a Japanese soldier who returned back to Papua New Guinea and collected as many of the bones of his comrades to be returned back to Japan. He ended up being called the Bone Collector who left behind a monument to commemorate the Japanese soldiers who had also died there.

Many Australians' never forgave the Japanese because of how they treated their mates when they were prisoner of War and the atrocities that accompanied them. Others like Weary Dunlop found the courage to do the exact opposite and expressed his forgiveness even though he was a prisoner of war himself and knew firsthand what it was like to suffer at the hands of his captors. Still like his ANZAC forebears of the WW1 at Gallipoli who also fought a formidable and well entrenched foe, the Turkish soldier, found the time to forgive the Japanese.

It is this forgiveness of one's foe that makes the story of ANZAC Day have a greater meaning other than just one of remembrance. The nations of Australia and Turkey had buried their differences many years ago and there is now mutual respect of each other's fighting abilities.

Likewise recently the Japanese Government apologised to the Australian people for the atrocities caused by a nation embedded in the art of warfare and now the healing is becoming a reality.

ANZAC Day origins can be attributed to a Catholic Priest who conducted the first dawn service at Albany, WA. The priest is buried at Herberton North Queensland. From these small sparks, arose a huge bonfire of grief and relief for those who had lost their young ones in the prime of their life.

The simple ceremonies soon took ablaze and it was not long before to find that they were being duplicated on a massive scale across the Australian nation, healing the unseen wounds of grief and sorrow. On a personal note, ANZAC Day to me means a time to **Remember** those that have fallen to **Revere** their sacrifice, **Respect** their courage and valour and to **Reflect** that War is not something to celebrate.

*This is the true meaning of ANZAC Day to me, remembrance, for those who gave their all for a freedom they would never see. Loyalty, sharing the load, burdens of responsibility and hardship as cobbers can only understand as well as a respect and forgiveness for one's foe after the battle has been won or lost.*

*A legacy all ANZACS leave behind is that those they leave behind to carry on, a mateship that would test the challenges of life and time. It is not about glorifying war, about flying the flag or dying for it, but a true love of life and living according to ones code, beliefs and doing the right thing.*

Like the Ancient Hellenes (Greeks as the Romans called them) who created a legend some 2400 years ago at Thermopylae against overwhelming odds, the Persians; so is Gallipoli one place that is forever etched in the minds of all Australians', no matter what their origins are. All are in agreement that ANZAC Day holds a special place in the hearts and minds of all Australians. The legacy forged in blood in Gallipoli has never dimmed and generations of our military have carried the torch, be it World War One or Two and subsequent campaigns since 1945. In short, from ANZAC to the current operations in Afghanistan

The battle of the Kokoda Track during WW2 built on the glory of the original ANZACS (who fought against the formidable Turk) by delaying the indomitable Japanese soldier long enough to bring up reinforcements and drive them back to the sea and thus creating a legend of their own being called The Australian Thermopylae. While 2400 years ago, the Greeks with 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians at Thermopylae fought a struggle to the death, Australians of Hellenic Heritage also fought at Gallipoli alongside their Australian cobbers. The names of the Australians of Hellenic heritage that served at Gallipoli and became a part of the ANZAC legend are as follows:

Corporal Jack Mark – 3 Battalion (Kephallonia, Greece)

Lance Corporal John Zavitsanos -18 Battalion

Private Constantine Aroney - 24 Battalion – (Kythera, Greece)

Private George Cretan – 3 Battalion – (Crete, Greece)

Private Roy Ralph – 5 Battalion – (Ithake, Greece)

Private Anastasios Rebea - 27 Battalion - (Kogaga, Greece)

Private Robert Alexander Krokos (Crococ) - 10 Light Horse

Private Arthur Halkas - 27th Battalion

Private Leonidas Manus - 4th Battalion (Lesvos, Greece)

Private Georgios Pappas DCM, – 13 Battalion

Private Peter Rados - 3rd Battalion

(Source: [http://www.helleniccouncil.org.au/press/ahc\\_anzac\\_day\\_nsw.pdf](http://www.helleniccouncil.org.au/press/ahc_anzac_day_nsw.pdf))

During WW2 the number of Australians of Hellenic heritage who served in the Australian Defence Force was in excess of WW1 volunteers and while those who were unable to serve as servicemen and women, were placed in the volunteer battalions and employed in essential service areas that supported the war effort.

The number of Hellenic speakers serving in the armed forces increased when Greece took on the Axis powers and was the first nation to defeat the enemy in Albania. Australians in Australia therefore looked upon Greece and all Hellenes with more than just sympathy and embraced them as their own; which was a far cry from the riots against the Greeks of Kalgoorlie in West Australia and other similar townships and cities. After the Greeks heroic stand against the Axis powers, to be Greek or a Hellene was "ok" in the eyes of the ordinary Australian and they became more acceptable to the Anglo Australians prevalent at that time.

Take for example, Corporal Angelo Barboutis who was born and educated in Far North Queensland. He died fighting the Japanese in Papua New Guinea during WW2. During his last battle with the Japanese, Corporal Angelo Barboutis stood up and gave covering fire to save his mates from annihilation.

He kept firing his machine gun until he ran out of ammunition and continued his attack with his grenades before a Japanese sniper killed him. His actions in the face of the enemy was a huge boost to the Australians of Hellenic heritage living in Australia and it certainly helped recruit others into the Australian Defence Force who were seeking additional manpower.

During the battle of Greece and Crete, many Australians were hidden from the Nazis and many did so at their own peril. These acts of courage by the Greeks were not forgotten by the Australian servicemen and many assisted Greeks to migrating to Australia and making it home.

There were numerous stories of Australians with a Hellenic background that joined the Australian Defence Force, but alas there were not many who have had their experiences recorded other than a name and number in the Official Defence Records. Hugh Gilchrist the author of three magnificent volumes of the early Greeks in Australia as well as Professor Tamis both brushed the surface of Australians of Hellenic heritage service in the Australian Armed Forces.

The Korean War being a conglomeration of United Nations also involved a battalion of Greeks serving alongside their Australian brothers in arms as well as those from other nations. The Hellenic nation was becoming acceptable to the Australian population as result of its continuous interaction on a global scale. When the Vietnam, War was in earnest and National service was introduced, many Australians of Hellenic heritage served voluntary or were called up. To be sure there were the odd conscientious objector but these were few and far in between.

A major setback for Australians of Hellenic origins was to read an article in one of the national newspapers depicting a few Greeks flying back to Greece. I was angry, I was mad and I was most upset to see and hear of my people leaving their adopted country at a time of crisis. Fortunately, although there were not many of them, their absence did not go down well with many of us who remained loyal to our adopted country.

Their departure left a sour taste in many of us of Hellenic origins who had made Australia home and I for one took it personally and it was a chink in my pride and ego for many years. On reflection, I guess that those who did go back to Greece did so as a result of their parent's influence that had already experienced the horrors of WW2 and the Greek Civil War.

However it was later demonstrated that the Greeks were not the only Australians evading their obligations but others were also doing the same but in more innovative and clever ways of evasion. Those who were unable to heed the call up call undertook full time study, some went on extended holidays overseas, others would enlist in the Citizens Military Forces and a few who were unable to escape were imprisoned. It was the only war in living memory that divided a nation and there were times where it attracted ugly scenarios.

Still, it took me many years of personal heartache, 200 scraps with mates (over a four year period), trying to reconcile my two cultures, marriage break up, raising four beautiful sons as a single Dad (whilst still in the Regular Army) before I realise that I was an Australian in my own right and did not have to feel a second rate citizen in my own adopted country. Suffice to say, I chuckle to myself whenever I meet with a few of my remaining military mates, (many have since gone to the big Jungle upstairs) when they see me, I am still "Pete the Greek" to them. What can I say they are my coppers after all?

Around 1969 at time when I was a young apprentice electrician I joined the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) as a 19 year old in order to prepare for the Regular Army when the time came to do my bit. I had started smoking at 18 years old, had my first tattoo (Death before dishonour), drank like a fish, I was wild, untameable and always in some punch up or another, but that's another story. When I completed the apprenticeship some two years later, I enlisted in the Australian Regular Army exactly seven days to the dot (much to the horror of my mother) and remained within its embrace for the next 30 years (27 years regular followed by three years Reserves).

Our family had already made Australia home and we as young men knew that we had to contribute to the Australian way of life. My young brother Phillip was in the Citizens Military Forces and later my younger brother Kon tried to enlist into the Regular Army and was not accepted on health related grounds. (Young Kon was devastated as he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his two elder brothers.



However, he ended up having a stint in the Taxation office, which was a known "battle ground" in itself!) Our family had a military background through our ancestors, Grandfather, uncles and our father and it was only natural that we did the same.

Steve Kyritsis to the best of my knowledge is the only known author to have dug a little further into a fertile, virgin uncultivated soil of academia to delve on the subject of Australians of Hellenic heritage, service during the Vietnam War. His book is a compilation of a number of Hellenic Australians who served in Vietnam in one capacity or another.

It is of relevance to note that when Steve Kyritsis was collecting material for his book; he found that many of those who had served, were reluctant to discuss their experiences other than to provide a brief summary of their time. I am also led to believe that with the success of his first book, Steve Kyritsis is currently working on writing another book, bridging the gap between where Hugh Gilchrist left off and that of the Vietnam War.

In 1992 during a function held by the 39 Niners (located at the top end of Russel Street, Melbourne) in conjunction with the Hellenic RSL sub branch Bruce Ruxton advised his audience that presently there were approximately 280 to 300 Australians of Hellenic heritage serving in all three services within the Australian Armed Forces.

It is somewhat of a pity to find that there is insufficient material on Australians of Hellenic origins who have worn the uniform of Australian. One hopes that future generations become conscious of the absence of material on Australians of Hellenic origins and make inroads in what may prove an interesting topic worth pursuing. With due respect to our indigenous brothers, one may ask, why should Australians of Hellenic origins be any different to all other Australians whose ancestors came from another part of the world?

In 1992 while I was still a serving as a Warrant officer of the 5/6<sup>th</sup> Royal Victoria Regiment, I was asked to give an oral history of Australians of Hellenic heritage serving in the Australian Defence Force to an audience that comprised a wide section of the community. (My mate Bruce Ruxton amongst many other guest speakers was also in attendance).

On a side note regarding Bruce Ruxton, for all his faults that others may think he had, I for one always found him to a huge supporter of the Hellenic people and the Australian Hellenic Community loved and revered him. During the oral lectures I came across other members like myself who had served in WW2 and had the same Hellenic heritage as myself.

Even though I had been spared the horrors of war, I felt somehow strangely at home amongst these warriors of old and no longer felt alone and isolated after having met others of my own ilk. I also had the pleasure of meeting with Alex Jackomos, a fine man who had married a beautiful Aboriginal lass many years ago and we swapped stories together. Alas Alex has since departed and left for a heavenly paradise. I had the pleasure of meeting with his wife when I was employed as the Operations manager for the Welfare arm of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia in Northcote and I must admit it was an emotional one for me.

One lecture that caught my attention was an elderly gentleman talking about a RAAF airman (Gunner) who was shot down over Europe and that he had landed in a minefield. This airman Constantine George had held his mothers wooden cross to his chest and put his faith in his God and walked unscathed across the mine field.

The interest to me was that this same man was my Brother Phillip's father in law who had served as an air gunner over the skies of Europe. Suffice to say, my own contribution to the oral history began by stating that "There are no Greeks serving in the Australian Defence Force". I chuckle to myself when I look back as it was supposed to create a stir and get my audience's attention. I then followed it up with "The reason being is that we are all Australians and yes there are Australians of Hellenic heritage serving in the Australian Armed forces this day". This explanation went down well with all the audience, but I still could not stifle a chuckle within myself.

In 2003, my wife and I travelled to Canberra for a conference on government welfare programs. Whilst we were there, we made a lengthy stop at the War Memorial which we both wanted to see. On entering my wife and I were overawed by what we encountered and we stayed longer than we had intended. I took numerous photographs of the displays, panoramas, various weapons and equipment on display in order that I create an album for the Veterans website. (I am ashamed and embarrassed to say that the project is still in the pipeline.)

My wife knew that I loved Australian history and let me loose within the great halls of the War Memorial until my absence became a concern and she had to drag me out of the War Memorial. It is important to note that whilst were in Canberra the USA and its allies (Australia as well) had come to grips with the corrupt government of Iraq and the war was in full swing.

I am not one to normally record my service, but I am merely pointing out the various units that I served with to provide an in depth understanding of my exposure to the Australian environment and how I embraced the Australian personality and character without losing my personal identity. I have worn the uniform of Australia, my adopted country for 30 years; having served with the following units of which are in random order beginning with:

3 Base workshop Battalion, I Recruit Training Battalion, Infantry Centre Ingleburne, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment, Tropical Trials Establishment, The 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Australian Regiment, Central Army Records Office, 11 Independent Rifle Company, Royal West Australian Regiment, Soldier Career Management Agency, Deakin University Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Victoria Regiment, 8/7 Royal Victoria Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Recruiting Unit, Army History Unit, Australian Defence Force Recruiting Unit, 5/6<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Royal Victoria Regiment and Army Personnel Agency Melbourne.

During all that time I have been fortunate to have been led by superb leaders and managers of men who have had a huge part in developing my character into whom I am today. On ANZAC Day I would cross the road from my home and attend the ANZAC Day parades and the service at the Watsonia RSL sub branch located 75 paces directly across from our home. A parade consisting of those who had worn the uniform of Australia, serving members, the local scout groups, various affiliated organisations, the Police, and of course the traditional bag pipes and band.

What would please me the most was seeing the young mingle with the old and the bold who had come to pay their respects? After the service everyone would be invited in for light refreshments and to be reacquainted with mates.

When I was still serving as a Warrant Officer in Victoria, you would find me more often than not at the Dawn service at the Shrine of Remembrance. After the Dawn service was over, we would find ourselves down at Bruce Ruxton's South Melbourne office where he held court so to speak. On every occasion, we would find his personal secretary Helen (Love) preparing the food and refreshments for an ANZAC BBQ.

We who were idle, Helen soon found work for us and had us preparing food and cooking it throughout the morning. There were always the traditional sausages, bacon and eggs, followed by the "odd refreshment" which one would normally drink later in the day. How Helen coped every year is beyond me, but there on the dot, you would find Helen along with any helper she could find doing a magnificent job.

Bruce was a legend during his life time and to many of us who were fortunate to have known him, he will be sorely missed. Suffice to say; when the ANZAC Day Dawn breakfast was over we made our way towards St Kilda Road to either partake in the March or to watch it from the sidelines.

I can honestly say that apart from my military career, I only marched once and that was with the Hellenic RSL sub branch when I was a committee member. (But that's another story) It would be unforgivable of me if I forgot to mention the excellent work carried out by the Australian Defence Force who provided free of charge an ANZAC Day BBQ for those visitors who attended the Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance. After I was discharged in 1998, my four sons and I purchased a home in Watsonia and only on the odd occasion would I go to the dawn service at the Shrine. The Watsonia RSL sub branch was much closer to home and convenient.

In 2010, my wife and I travelled to Cairns for a Careers conference that my wife was involved in and whilst we were there we met a well known member of the Regiment, "Warrie" George Mansford, but that's another story yet to be told. We also attended the ANZAC Day Dawn service held on the shores of the ocean and close to the Cairns RSL sub branch. We waited alongside many others for the sun to rise and due to the darkness you could not see who was next to you.

It was one of the most moving Dawn services that I had ever experienced in my life. Except for the occasional insect, it was all very quiet and we stood silently waiting for the first rays of the sun to break free from its dark embrace. The air was muggy from the heat and the clothes on our backs were moist and the remains of the moisture trickling down our arms. Slowly our eyes became accustomed to the darkness and we could see who our silent companions were, they were serving soldiers, sailors, visitors in civilian clothes like ourselves and many parents with their children.

Still not a word or a whisper could be heard and everything was quiet as we waited for the sun to break free and rise above the ocean sky line in the distant horizon. The service began whilst the first rays of sunshine began to stream over the horizon, searching out the darkness and illuminating its hidden crevasses and eventually lighting up the sky. The guest speaker was the Commanding Officer of the local Army Reserve Battalion who spoke of the sacrifices of men and women of a bygone era.

The bugler played according to tradition and the National Anthem was sung, followed by the laying of wreaths and representation by other members of the RSL and local dignitaries. By the end of the service, the sun had risen higher in the sky, showing off its splendour of many colours and away from its embrace of the previous night. We looked around and took some photographs for memory's sake and slowly walked back to our hotel for an ANZAC breakfast.

This brings me to the subject of Australians' of Hellenic Heritage on days that are dear also to their heart. On certain times of the year they commemorate Independence Day in March and the OHI Day in October of each year. In both cases it's synonymous with freedom and the remembrance of days when freedom was not taken for granted. Australians of Hellenic origins are just as passionate, enthusiastic and proud of their heritage just like their Anglo-Saxon, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Ottomans, Africans brothers and sisters to name but a few.

The similarities Australia and Greece of their battles during the wars against nations hostile to their interests and way of life are many. Therefore spare a moment before criticism is levelled at the Australians of Hellenic heritage for they are no different to Australians' of other Nations. We all want the same thing, a love Australia, its institutions and way of life, culture and the freedoms that go with it.

It's the Australian Hellenic way of expressing their admiration and love for their adopted country Australia, that they too have suffered and know the meaning of freedom is not conducted by politicians but by real people who love freedom to live a life according to ones beliefs without being disloyal to Australia. I remember another time when the Australian Hellenic Memorial was in its infancy and we were part of the executive chaired by its creator Peter Kalimnakis. Peter was having some minor difficulties in trying to raise support and funds for the project. The Executive at the time were Peter Kalimnakis, John Anagnostou (Hellenic RSL), Peter Adamis (Army), Mike Marley (Navy) and Father Moutafis (Sts Anargiri Church, Oakleigh).

It was with this small band of men that was able to raise the necessary funds to aid the group to bring about a successful conclusion in the implementation and erection of an Australian Hellenic war memorial located near the shrine of remembrance in Melbourne Australia. Peter Kalimnakis overcame many obstacles and was thus able to influence the appropriate members (Bruce Ruxton being one of them) that it was a project worth completing and Peter Kalimnakis should be commended for his struggle in completing the Australian Hellenic Memorial in Victoria.

This is not the only monument dedicated to Australia by Australians of Hellenic heritage as there are many other dedications in the form of monuments, trees of honour, statues, bronze plaques and certainly books, found throughout the width and breadth of the Australian as well as on the mainland of Greece and its islands. Beginning from Canberra which has the largest Hellenic War memorial to a statue of King Leonidas in downtown Brunswick, a suburb of Melbourne, representing Hellenic and Australia's Thermopylae stretching across the oceans to the land of the Hellenes.

This only one aspect of expression at how much the Hellenic race respects and values Australia and its people. There are many untold stories that better demonstrate or describe the passionate and embracing behaviour of Greeks than I could ever write or explain and its best for them to put pen to paper and tell it how it is.

Look around you and you will evidence of the two bipartisan cultures learning, developing and growing alongside each other in harmony. Gone are the days of ignorance and misunderstanding and gone are the days of intolerance in this age of technology. Don't take my word for it, book a flight to Greece and when you arrive, tell them that you are an Australian. You will certainly be looked after.

Today, Australia is made up of many cultures with a diversity that can only go to making Australia a strong and viable country. The people of today are building upon the foundations of those before them and treading upon the same tracks, drinking from the same waters, breathing the same air, sharing life's challenges, the miseries, joys, calamities and above all being united when faced with an aggressor or adversary that is not in the interests of the Australian people. That is the ANZAC way and that's the way it will continue in the years ahead of us and long after we have gone.

The relevance of ANZAC Day is not lost on the youth of today and we must remember that we must have faith in the abilities of the youth to carry on the traditions as we who grow old and pass on the torch for them to uphold. May future generations who come after we have gone, visit the memorials, statues, avenues of honour and shrines dedicated to the fallen; remember that they who died did not do so in vain but to give all Australians a life without fear and the freedom to enjoys life.

Next time we see Australians' of Hellenic heritage marching in the streets of any major city within Australian shores on any of the special days or festivals, proudly displaying their banners, along with the crowd of colourful costumes, music and accompanied a large and boisterous crowd of well wishers and onlookers, stop and think what it all means to them and to all Australians. It's all about having the freedom and that's where the many similarities are with ANZAC Day.

It is no accident of history that the Hellenic RSL sub Branch in each State of Australia proudly marches alongside their brothers in arms on ANZAC Day. It is also no accident that the Australians of Hellenic origins retain the right to have their own sub branch with the same authority as all other sub branches and with the support of the Central RSL.

It's not an accident either to see old soldiers from a number of wars proudly wearing their medals on ANZAC Day and partaking in the commemoration of what ANZAC Day means. It's the Australian and Hellenic way of saying we know what it's like to lose the flower of youth, the miseries that went with it and that it's our way of embracing the Australian way of life from a Hellenic point of view. ANZAC Day is for all Australians' no matter their origins. No one wants to go to war with their neighbour and certainly no one expects to be involved in a war that is not in the interests of Australia and its people. Therefore are not the anniversaries of ANZAC Day and the Greek Independence Day worth commemorating?

The Hellenic people migrating to Australia overcame their initial anxieties of living in an environment whose customs and culture were alien to them and made the most of their new home. However despite the enormous distances from their place of birth they integrated well by adopting the best of both cultures and embedding themselves well within Australian society without losing their personal identity. It should therefore not come as a surprise to find these same people (The Hellenes) picking up the torch of the ANZAC spirit and ensuring that it remains alight for future generations. After all it's the Australian way.

On a side note before I conclude with the paragraph below, there are two matters which I find of concern. The first point that has come to my attention is that recently Australians have been criticised for waving the Australian flag out of their windows and being labelled as racists. This unwarranted criticism would not be tolerated in any other country as it would certainly attract a hostile reception by the people themselves. There is nothing wrong in my book about flying the Australian flag; in fact it shows a sense of belonging and a certain amount of pride in being called an Australian.

I challenge anyone to call me a racist just because I fly the Australian flag in my own back yard every day and even some times on special occasions, jointly with the Hellenic or Canadian Flag. We as Australians have matured as a people and we are a very tolerant and resilient race who is reticent to cast dispersions on another person no matter where they come from. "Racists we are not, Australians, yes, proud yes, misunderstood, yes, Racists, not guilty your honour.

The second point entails a recent article regarding a report that the Centenary of the ANZAC Day may be divisive to some multicultural communities. Having read the report I came to the conclusion that there was nothing to indicate any divisive issues with communities. I am of the opinion that the journalist responsible for reporting on the report may have misinterpreted its contents and unintentionally misled the Australian public.

After all I strongly believe that the word multiculturalism is merely another word for tolerance and a vehicle for integration into Australian society, to use the word in any other way is UnAustralian. A Copy of the research paper can be read by visiting the following link: [ANZAC DAY RESEARCH REPORT](#) and the public can make their own mind up.

So when we ask ourselves what is the relevance of ANZAC Day to Australians of Hellenic origins; I am of the belief that it's no different to Australians whose origins are from other nations and made Australia their home. ANZAC Day and its legacy will live long after we have gone.

As previously stated, ANZAC Day with all of its customs, traditions and ceremony can be thought of in terms of: a time to **Remember** those that have fallen to **Revere** their sacrifice, **Respect** their courage and valour and to **Reflect** that War is not something to celebrate. After all it is about keeping alive the spirit of a people who have gone before us and leaving behind a legacy that in essence best describes the Australian character. ***We shall remember them.** (I sincerely apologise to the many men and women who I have not mentioned and had helped me over the years during the good and the bad times.)* Peter Adamis "An Ordinary Aussie Bloke" Watsonia – Victoria 25 March 2012

***Post Script.** I would like to pay a special note of thanks to George Mansford who currently lives south of Cairns in Far North Queensland. Thanking him for his introduction, reading the draft article, advice and many helpful suggestions. George is known to many of us who served under his command as "Warrie" George Mansford. A great personality of a man who believes in a fair go for all Australians. **Peter Adamis.***

**George Mansford AO** George Mansford enlisted in the Australian Army in 1951. He served 40 years as an infantryman; most of that time in the Royal Australian Regiment. His service included Korea, the Malayan Emergency, Thai Border, Vietnam, New Guinea and Singapore. He was commissioned from the ranks in 1964. He raised and commanded the Army's Battle School (which is now used by foreign military units including USA, and UK); 11 Infantry Brigade; and the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Force in Far North Queensland. George was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1975 for outstanding services and retired in 1990 as a Brigadier. He is the author of two books; "Junior Leadership on the Battlefield" and the best-selling novel, "The Mad Galahs". Source: [http://iwvpa.net/mansford\\_g/index.php](http://iwvpa.net/mansford_g/index.php)

Acknowledgement: *I wrote the original article on the 23 March 2012 after receiving a telephone call from Nick Moraitis. Nick who has his own website named AUSGREEKNET.COM which can be visited at <http://www.ausgreeknet.com/index.htm> asked if I could write an article about ANZAC Day. I said to him ("asto se mena") meaning leave it to me. Three hours later the original work was written and the final draft completed during the day Sunday 25 March 2012 which ironically was the Greek Independence Day. The introduction by "Warrie George Mansford was received Monday Morning and the completed article later in the day. Any errors of fact, grammar, punctuation and thoughts are mine and mine alone and for that I apologise. Peter Adamis 26 March 2012.*



**The Voice from the Pavement** - Peter Adamis is a (not for profit) Journalist/Commentator. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Contact via Email: [abalinx@netspace.net.au](mailto:abalinx@netspace.net.au) or via Mobile: 0409965538