



## **Australian Hellenic Memorial being built.**

It all began in 1992 when a simple thought of establishing a Memorial to Commemorate the Battle of Crete in the confines of the Cretan Village in Wantirna South by several members of the Pancretan Association of Melbourne.

It wasn't until the Committee members headed by the Godfather of this project Mr. Pantelis Kalimnakis who was also the President of the Association at the time, approached the State President of the Returned Services League at the time Mr. Bruce Ruxton for his assistance.

Mr. Ruxton immediately proposed that this memorial be given a broader commemorative scope with the inclusion of the entire Greek Campaign and not only for the Battle of Crete. Furthermore he felt that it would not be justified to have it situated within the grounds of the Cretan Village, hence proposing its establishment somewhere near the shrine in the Domain Gardens.

In light of the above, and the acceptance of Mr. Ruxton's recommendations from the Pancretan Association of Melbourne an inaugural Open Forum was called at the Greek Community Building on Wednesday 24th February 1994 where over 60 representatives attended and expressed their support.

The organisations that attended included the : Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne & Victoria, Pancretan Association of Melbourne, State RSL, Hellenic Youth Federation of Victoria, Hellenic RSL Sub Branch, Lemnian Community of Melbourne, PanMacedonian Association of Melbourne, Cretan Federation of Australia, Greek Federal Ex Serviceman's Reserve, Rethimnian Association " ARKADI", Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne, Iraklion Association" MINOAS ", Hania Social Club, 39ers Association, HMAS Perth Association, Voyager Association, 2/5th Aus. Infantry Battalion, N Class Destroyer Association, 6th Division Association, 2/7th Aus. Infantry Battalion, Royal Australian Air force, Royal Australian Navy, 2/2 Field Regiment Association,

SAE Oceania, Australian Greek Welfare Society, Panmessinian Federation of Australia, EEAMA, AHEPA, Hellenic Studies Forum, Panepirotic Federation of Australia, Federation of Greek Festivals, Alphington Grammar School, Oakleigh Greek Community, Aegean Islands Federation of Victoria, Association of Greek Elderly Citizens, Omiros College, Central Pontian Association "Pontiaki Estia", Eptanisian Federation of Victoria, Pontian Community of Melbourne, Cyprus Community of Victoria, Cultural Group of Melbourne, Organisational Committee Greek National Day and a plethora of individuals.

It was decided to embark on a project to erect a memorial to commemorate the involvement of the Australian Armed Forces during World War II commemorating the 841 Australians who died in Greece and in the Battle of Crete, many of whom came from Victoria and additionally the 3000 Australians that were captured and ended up as Prisoners of War.

It should be noted that simultaneously in 1993 the Foundation played a leading role in gathering support and funding on behalf of Melbourne's Greek Community for the restoration of the Shrine of Remembrance with Mr. Pantelis Kalimnakis chairing the committee, Anastasios Douvartzides, Secretary and George Paterakis as the Treasurer.

The total amount raised was well over \$30,000. The \$30,000 was raised as a direct result of the additional support provided by Warrant Officer Peter Adamis (Royal Australian Regiment) and Lt Michael Marley (Royal Australian Navy), who drew upon their Defence Force colleagues and resources. In addition Father Nicholas Moutafis (Oakleigh & Districts Greek Orthodox Community) was also heavily involved with supporting the project.

**(The above should also be included as the project would never had got off the ground if Michael Marley and I did not get involved. I don't want to see a falsehood of history or the good work and perseverance by Pantelis Kalimnakis and John Anagnostou)**

The Hellenic Community was one of the few Ethnic Groups that donated to this cause raising the praises of the Premier Jeff Kennett, Chairman of the Shrine Trustee Peter Isaacson and RSL Chief Bruce Ruxton. This proved to be a masterstroke in the eyes of the stakeholders for the establishment and the approval of the Australian Hellenic Memorial in the weeks to come.

In 1994 the Foundation was incorporated, and its constitution was registered hence becoming a legal entity having commenced it's fund raising activities.

The first inaugural Executive Committee consisted of the following : Pantelis Kalimnakis ( President), Steve Pontin ( A' Vice President ), Christos Polentas ( B' Vice President ), John Anagno-stou (Secretary ), Lakis Kayalikos ( Treasurer ), Galatia Samarias ( Assistant Secretary ), Peter Andrinopoulos ( Assistant Treasurer ), Michael Marley ( Public Relations –English ), Antonis Tsourdalakis ( Public Relations - Greek ), Angela Velos ( Public Officer ) and Peter Adamis ( Research Officer ). **(The above statement is absolute bullshit and not true. There were nowhere near that many in the original inaugural committee. This needs to be amended for the sake of history and respect to those who were there at the beginning. What utter rubbish.)**

In 1994 the Foundation gained the much needed support of the Victorian Returned Services League for the project and also the support of the Board of Directors of the

Shrine of Remembrance to erect the monument near the Shrine. Furthermore in 1994 the Foundation committee felt it was appropriate to seek the support for the memorial from key figures in the Community to become the Patrons of the project. The following people were proposed and accepted as the inaugural patrons :

- Sir John Holland A.C.
- His Excellency The Consul General of Greece Mr. George Veis
- Mr. Bruce C. Ruxton AM OBE, President, of the State Returned Services League
- The Hon. John Pandazopoulos MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs.
- The Hon. Murray Thompson MP, MLA Sandringham

It wasn't until further down the track as the years went by that Mr. David McLachlan was added on as the new State President of the RSL, The Consul Generals of Greece kept altering in this position including Dimitris Anninos, Eleftherios Kouvaritakis, Christos Salamanis and the current one being Ms. Eleni Lianidou.

In 1995 an agreement had been reached with the City of Melbourne's Community Arts and Heritage Department for the development of a proposal for a memorial that would be suitable as a public artwork to be located close to the Shrine. The visitor who would set eyes on the Memorial for the first time should be very impressed by such an imposing classical achievement, reflecting contemporary visual arts. Its construction had to consist of valuable marble, imported specifically for this purpose from Greece., therefore justifying its existence in the Parks of the Domain Garden.

In 1996 a special meeting was held by the Foundation including the Chief Commissioner Mr. Kevin Gosper, the RSL President Mr. Bruce Ruxton, Shrine Trustee's Chairman Mr. Peter Isaacson and Executive Members of the Foundation to discuss the project and formulate a course of action. Furthermore a subcommittee was formed to nominate a number of potential sites nearby the Shrine. This committee comprised of representatives from the City of Melbourne, the Shrine, the RSL and the Foundation.

The committee approved an implementation plan and selected a site for the Memorial in the Domain Gardens near the Shrine. After consultation with the Council Departments the proposed site was confirmed and accepted. On the 2nd December 1996 the official launch of the Media and Fundraising Campaign took place at the headquarters of the 39ers Association on the 2nd Floor at 108 Flinders St. Melbourne were a plethora of media representatives were present at the announcement of the first round of donations totalling close to \$40,000 dollars in the hope to reach the target of \$ 200,000 dollars required to complete the monument .

In 1997 the Project brief initialised by the City of Melbourne and the Foundation was finalised and artists were publically invited to submit proposals. A public Art Panel to select the winning monument was convened by the City of Melbourne, comprising of representatives from a Manager of Urban Design & Architecture, the Ministry of Arts, an RMIT University Academic, a curator from the Art Centre and a member from the

Community Arts & Heritage Department . Immediately the Foundation announced the competition for the Design of the Memorial. The Commissioned Art work had to be representative of the following :

- the 841 Australian servicemen and women that were killed in Greece during the World War 2.
- to encapsulate ideals that both nations hold dear; the ideals of democracy, liberty and peace.
- The monument is required to depict an eternal image of both Australia and Greece, keeping in mind that the monument will be there for the future generations.
- Greek & Australian text, motifs or symbols, if appropriate and generally understood by the broader community, may be incorporated into the design.
- Artistic interpretation shall be determined by the artists, however the intent is that any proposed works must reflect contemporary visual arts practise.
- The elements of water and marble will also be considered

As a significant milestone in Victoria's Greek Community there was a ceremony that was conducted aboard the Australian Navy ship HMAS TORRENS on Sunday 2nd November 1997, the winning design of artist Mr. Evangelos Sakaris was unveiled in front of over 200 prominent Greek and Australian dignitaries by the Consul General of Greece in Melbourne Mr. George Veis much to the delight of the Foundation committee who had worked tirelessly to this stage, thus gaining further donations to the tune of \$20,000 on the day.

In 1998 the town planning Application was lodged with the City of Melbourne hence commencing the advertising period for the application with a total of 4 objections been lodged. Eventually after considerable time town Planning was approved and a planning permit was issued.

On the 20th May 1999 more than 100 members of the Australian 6th Division, the 39ers Association and the Greek Community gathered at the site of the proposed Australian Hellenic Memorial as a special ceremony took place to mark the commencement of works and the announcement of the Australian, Hellenic and Victorian Government funding for this project.

In the presence of the Minister for Veterans Affairs Bruce Scott he announced a pledge of \$ 5000, the Consul General for Greece in Melbourne Mr. Dimitris Anninos announcing a further \$ 11,000 from the Hellenic Republic and finally the Hon. John Pandazopoulos MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs announcing a further \$ 50,000 on behalf of the Premier of Victoria Mr. Steve Bracks and the Victorian Government.

Prior to the annual march to the Shrine of Remembrance on the Anniversary of the 20th May 1941 attack on Crete, Young women in traditional Cretan costumes presented the ex-serviceman with a corsage made from olive branches in a gesture of the special friendship that developed when Greeks sheltered Australian soldiers in their homes during the war.

On May 20th 2000 as part of the 60th Anniversary for the Battle of Crete the Foundation was represented by its Greek Public Relations Officer Mr. Antonis Tsourdalakis at the unveiling of the Hellenic Australian Memorial in the City of Rethymnon, Crete. This monument which was a gift to the Cretan people by the Australian Government was unveiled by the Minister for Veterans Affairs Mr. Bruce Scott.

Finally on the 2nd September 2001 the Australian Hellenic Memorial was unveiled and dedicated by the Minister for Veteran Affairs Mr. Bruce Scott and Major General Christos Tzaferos of the Hellenic Armed Forces in a very unique moving ceremony hosted by the Department for Veteran Affairs.

The ceremony featured the placement of rolls of parchment with the names of those who lost their lives in a crypt in the middle of the memorial, wreath laying, national anthems, messages of appreciation from Captain Bob Donovan and Keith Rossi of the 2nd / 2nd Field Regiment. Also on the day the Royal Australian Artillery, the 2/10th Medium Regiment and the Hellenic Presidential Guard presented the Catafalque Party for the Ceremony.



It should be noted that after the unveiling of the Memorial a plethora of organisations began using the Memorial for their Commemorative activities including the 39 **Niners** Association, the 2nd / 2nd Field Regiment, the Pancretan Association of Melbourne, the Hellenic RSL Sub Branch, the Pontian Community of Melbourne, the Lemnian Community of Melbourne and many others attracting tens of visitors and high profile guests.

On Sunday 28th October 2007 the Foundation held another ceremony for the unveiling of the Interpretive Sign by the Consul General of Greece in Melbourne Mr. Christos Salamanis and the Olive Tree Planting together with the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Mr. John So and the former Lord Mayor Mr, William George Gardiner.

at the Domain Gardens next to the Australian Hellenic Memorial. The Australian Federal Government was represented by the Hon. Petro Georgiou MP and the Victorian Government was represented by the Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP at the ceremony whilst Mr

Milton Alexandrakis had the honours of playing the Last Post, Reveille and the National Anthems, and Brigadier Keith Rossi was the MC.

In 2010 the Australian Hellenic Memorial Foundation held its first State Student Competition drawing hundreds of entries across Victoria from a large range of Schools with poems, drawings, paintings, essays and interviews. The Children that won were awarded monetary prizes for themselves and their respective School throughout all year levels as well as Certificates of Appreciation for all participating students. Furthermore throughout 2010 the Monument underwent several restoration activities required for the up keeping.

On Sunday 25th September 2011, the Australian Hellenic Memorial Foundation will host its 10th Anniversary Ceremony since its opening in 2001 culminating in the first time the Crypt will be opened and the roll call will take place. The memorial will also be rededicated to include those Australian Men and Women that fell on Hellenic soil in World War I including the Island of Lemnos.

<http://www.australianhellenicmemorial.com/texts/t11.html>