

“Remember the Greek and Armenian Refugee Children”: South Australian relief efforts in the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides

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Even the most sweeping mega-narratives are composed of collections of micro-narratives, the stories of actions and experiences of individuals. By blending the stories of individuals and organisations from South Australia with the events that swept the Hellenic world in the first part of the 20th century, the result is a powerful testament to the ability of individuals to enact change under any circumstance. When it is taken into account that these efforts to collect money, food and clothing occurred at a time when South Australia was endeavouring to recover from World War One, the story of the campaign to save lives on the other side of the globe becomes even more amazing. South Australian efforts on behalf of the genocide survivors — either through humanitarian relief or through active rescue — are one of the “lighter” aspects of the history of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian Genocides. Rev. James E. Cresswell, Ethel Cooper and their supporters serve as reminders that even amidst the darkest episodes of human existence, there are sparks of light. Despite being enveloped by inhumanity, some retained their humanity.

Every place and time deserves a history. According to Public Libraries South Australia, “local history is the study of history in a geographically local context”. Concentrating on local communities, this style of “micro-history” incorporates cultural and social aspects of history.¹ This paper presents one such “micro-history”: South Australia’s involvement in the humanitarian relief effort on behalf of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides (1914–24).

Arguing that people of every place and time deserve a history, Joseph A. Amato demonstrates in *Rethinking Home* “that contemporary local history provides a vital

¹ Public Libraries South Australia “Local History”. <http://www.libraries.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=53>. Date accessed: 25/03/2012.

link for understanding the relation between immediate experience and the metamorphosis of the world at large". In the spirit of Amato's advocacy of "the power of local history to revivify the individual, the concrete, and the particular";² this paper blends the stories of individuals and organisations from South Australia with the massive geopolitical events that swept the Hellenic world in the first part of the 20th century. The stories in this paper are a powerful testament to the ability of individuals to enact change under any circumstance.

From 1914 onwards, the authorities in the Ottoman Turkish Empire implemented a plan of unprecedented forced demographic change. Known today as the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides, the plan called for the physical elimination of the indigenous non-Muslim populations of the Empire as the only means of securing their state's territorial integrity. At the 1911 Congress of the governing Committee of Union and Progress, chaired by Talaat Pasha, one of the Party's chief ideologues, Dr Behaeddin Sakir declared that:

[t]he nations that remain from the old times in our empire are akin to foreign and harmful weeds that must be uprooted. To clear our land...³

International reaction was immediate to this "administrative holocaust" as Secretary of the Admiralty Winston Churchill labelled the unfolding slaughter.⁴ Relief committees sprang up all over the world. A Joint Allied Declaration, issued 24 May 1915, stated:

In view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly ... that they will hold personally responsible ... all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres.⁵

Anzacs and tens of thousands of other Allied servicemen, captured on the battlefields of the Near East, became eyewitnesses to the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides.⁶ South Australians Trooper John Hartley Angus, Imperial Camel Corps,⁷

² Joseph A. Amato (Author), Richard O. Davies (Foreword), *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History*: <http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520232938>. Date accessed: 25/03/2012.

³ "The Salonika Congress; The Young Turks and their Programme", *The Times* (London) 3 (Oct. 1911):3.

⁴ "As for the Turkish atrocities ... helpless Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts blotted out in one administrative holocaust — these were beyond human redress." Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* 1929:158. "In 1915 the Turkish government began and ruthlessly carried out the infamous general massacre and deportation of Armenians in Asia Minor... There is no reasonable doubt that the crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race." Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* 1929:405.

⁵ Matthew Lippman, "The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Fifty Years Later", *Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Literature* 15, (1998):415–416.

⁶ T.W. White, *Guests of the Unspeakable*, Little Hills Press, 1928; J. Brown, *Turkish Days and Ways*, Sydney, 1940; L.H. Luscombe, *The Story of Harold Earl*, Fortitude Valley, Qld, 1970; G. Kerr, *Lost Anzacs*, Melbourne, 1997.

⁷ John Hartley Angus. http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/person.asp?p=569068. Date accessed: 31/03/2012.

and Trooper Charles Daniel Patten, 9th Australian Light Horse Regiment, Australian Imperial Force (from Quorn),⁸ both died whilst prisoners-of-war. Another Australian POW, A. Tierney, later reported that the four men he was taken prisoner with all died at Bore (in south-central Anatolia) of malaria and dysentery. “They were buried by the Turks without any formality in the cemetery at Nigde and no-one was allowed to attend the funeral”. Angus lies today in gravesite XXI. U. 7. in the Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery, Iraq. Recorded as having died in February 1917, Trooper Patten’s gravesite has been lost. He is commemorated at Mem.129, Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery, Iraq.

More fortunate was Able-Seaman John Harrison Wheat, a crewman of the *HMAS AE2* from New South Wales. In his diary of 18 August 1915, he wrote:

All the Armenians are driven from the town [of Akroinos, modern Afyonkarahissar, in western Anatolia]. The principle [sic] cause of this is the Armenians are Christians and all the business of the town is carried on by them. There is a very strong feeling against the Christians in this Country. At this time, thousands of Armenians were turned out of these big towns to starve and thousands were massacred.⁹

A small number of Anzacs became rescuers, saving the lives of those who had survived the massacres and deportations. Most famous of these are the men of the *Dunsterforce*. Australian officers in this unit, including Captains R.H. Hooper, Andre Judge and Stanley Savige have left a legacy of written and photographic records of their rescue of some 40,000 Assyrians and Armenians in the summer of 1918.¹⁰

South Australia’s major newspapers of the time — *The Register* (published in Adelaide between 1901 and 1929) and *The Advertiser* (published in Adelaide between 1889 and 1931) — kept their readers informed of the catastrophe engulfing the indigenous Christian population of Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the broader Near East. Some illustrative examples are:

Captain C.E. Bean, ‘The Peninsular War. Picnic down the coast. Massacre of the Greeks. Methods of the Turks.’ *The Advertiser*, 18 November 1915:12.

‘Little Human Targets’, *The Register*, Monday 15 May 1916:5 [mass killing of Armenian and Hellene children around Trapezounta (modern Trabzon), Pontos (north coast of Anatolia)].

‘Kemal and the Christians. The Tragedy of Asia Minor. The Refuge of Suffering Millions’, *The Register*, Wednesday 6 December 1922:10.

‘The Terror of Pontus. Slain as result of quarrel. Nemesis on Murderer’, *The Register*, Thursday 5 April 1923:8 [the death of Topal Osman].

⁸ Charles Daniel Patten. http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/person.asp?p=498763. Date accessed: 31/03/2012.

⁹ John Harrison Wheat, Australian War Memorial File 3DRL/2965. <http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/3DRL/2965>.

¹⁰ Major-General Lionel Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, London, 1920; C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, vol. V, Sydney, 1937; The Australian War Memorial in Canberra hold manuscripts and photographs of these three and other Australian members of the Dunsterforce.

The 1919 *Report of the Commission on Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on Enforcement of Penalties* concluded that the Ottoman Empire's treatment of Armenians in its territory contravened "the established laws and customs of war and the elementary laws of humanity", and declared that Ottoman officials accused of such acts were liable for prosecution.¹¹

In response to the needs of destitute survivors scattered across the Near East, the *Armenian Relief Fund* and *Save the Children Fund* emerged in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide between 1915 and 1919.¹² The first chairperson of this combined humanitarian agency was Professor Meredith Atkinson, previously director of tutorial classes at the University of Melbourne. His colleague, Professor of Classics Alexander Leeper, served as vice-chairman.¹³

Similar groups were emerging across the globe at the same time. In June 1916, the Lord Mayor of London wrote to his counterpart in Sydney "with the hope that you might support us by raising funds, in whichever way you consider best". The approach from London was inspired because "we have had so many individual donations from your town". The stated aim of the Fund was "for the Restoration of the Armenians to their lands, in towns and villages where the Russians have made it feasible and safe".¹⁴ The needs of the war were considered a priority and so the proposal was on hold until the successful conclusion of the conflict.

The Armistice came into force on 11 November 1918. Only weeks later, the Lord Mayor, J. Joynton Smith, called a public meeting in the vestibule of the Town Hall for Thursday 12 December.¹⁵ The purpose was to form "a Committee to raise Funds for the relief of the suffering Armenian", Hellenic and Assyrian Genocide survivors. The meeting was duly held and a resolution forming the committee under the patronage of the Lord Mayor was adopted. From the outset, the Fund's work was concentrated on the survivors scattered around Syria and Greece.¹⁶ From the outset, Australians were deeply involved in what may be described as the world's first international humanitarian relief effort.

The effort on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian Genocides was unique and unprecedented. It involved a coordinated effort by people and

¹¹ "Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on the Enforcement of Penalties", Report Presented to the Preliminary Peace Conference, 29 March 1919, reprinted in the *American Journal of International Law* 14, (1920):95, 112–117.

¹² See also Vicken Babkenian, "Edith May Glanville: Champion of the Armenian Relief Fund", *Journal of the Ashfield and District Historical Society* 17 (2008).

¹³ Vicken Babkenian, "An S.O.S From Beyond Gallipoli: Victoria and the Armenian Relief Fund", *Victorian Historical Journal* 81, 2, (2010):269.

¹⁴ "Armenian relief fund – requesting inauguration of", City of Sydney Archives, Town Clerk's Department Correspondence Files, Item Number 3460/16.

¹⁵ "Public Meeting" *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 1918; "Armenian Relief Fund", *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuesday 10 December 1918:5.

¹⁶ "Armenian relief fund – requesting inauguration of", City of Sydney Archives, Town Clerk's Department Correspondence Files, Item Number 3460/16.

organisations all over the globe; efforts in which Australia and Australians played pivotal roles. Writing in *The Story of Near East Relief*, James L. Barton¹⁷ recorded that the *Save the Children Fund*, the *League of Nations*, the *American Women's Hospitals*, the *Friends of Greece* and the *Fatherless Children of Greece Committee* were only a few of the diverse groups involved in humanitarian efforts in support of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides from as early as January 1914. This collaboration is summarised in a September 1923 League of Nations' report, in which the High Commissioner for Refugees, Dr Fridtjof Nansen, stated:

[...] once more paid a very warm tribute to the magnificent efforts made by the Near East Relief, the All-British Appeal and the 'Save the Children' Fund ... Slowly but surely the Near East Relief and the League of Nations' machinery under Mr Childs have surmounted this great task. His procedure has been admirable.

In October 1922, Mustafa Kemal decreed the expulsion of all "non-Muslims" from the territory under his control.¹⁸ The irony was that most of these people had already fled. In return, many multilingual Muslims were obliged to leave Hellas for Turkey. This was euphemistically named the "Compulsory Exchange of Greco-Turkish Populations". *The Register* reported soon after that Rev. Dr Loyal Lincoln Wirt, an American Congregational minister and the International Commissioner of the NER "informed a representative of the Australian Press Association that two shiploads of food and clothing had arrived from Australia". However,

appeals to continue ... because a further 1,000,000 Christian refugees will probably be rendered homeless during the coming winter, Kemal Pasha having decreed the evacuation of all Christians from Asia Minor ... before the end of the year.¹⁹

By the time of its conclusion in 1925, 1.4 million indigenous Christian Hellenes, Armenians and Assyrians — and a few anti-Kemal Ottoman Muslims — had flooded into an exhausted Hellas. Their needs overwhelmed the society, and the international community — including South Australia — responded to the appeal for aid.

The Australian merchant vessel *Hobson's Bay* was a key part of the "machinery" Nansen referred to. It made a number of voyages to the eastern Mediterranean, laden with relief supplies donated by Australians to the Near East Relief (NER). Rev. Wirt described one such shipment that held particular importance for him. With half the original cargo left with the Australasian Orphanage at Antelias, Syria (now in the northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon), the *Hobson's Bay* proceeded to Constantinople (modern Istanbul). They were immediately met by the local NER Director, Dr Jacquith.

¹⁷ James L. Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief (1915–1930): An Interpretation*. New York: 1930.

¹⁸ "Mustafa Kemal. The man as he is. Outlaw and Idol." *Cairns Post* (Queensland), Wednesday 1 November, 1922:7; "The Turkish Crisis Progress at Lausanne Conference. Problem of Migration", *Albany Advertiser* (WA), Saturday 16 December 1922:3; "Sick Man of Europe", *The Register* (Adelaide), Friday 15 January 1926:8.

¹⁹ *The Register* (Adelaide), 20 November 1922.

As Wirt later recalled, Jacquith said:

‘Do you remember St. Paul’s vision and the cry from Macedonia, “Come over and help us”? You are no saint and probably do not resemble St. Paul in the least — except perhaps in stature — but here is a message for you. It came in the same way St. Paul’s did — by wireless.’ And he handed me a radiogram. It was indeed the same cry.

The radiogram was from a NER post at Alexandroupolis in western Thrace: “Ten thousand people driven from Eastern Thrace are here, starving to death. They have been overlooked in the food distribution. Some are dead, many are dying. Can you send flour?” Jacquith informed his colleague that the local NER had already “stripped our warehouses and taken from our orphans to provide for the new outbreak at Smyrna. Have you brought anything that can be used in this emergency in Macedonia?”

Wirt responded positively, for the *Hobson’s Bay* still had 4,000 bags of Australian flour stowed away, “given for the express purpose of meeting some such emergency”. As Wirt later recorded: “Time was precious; moments meant lives”. Within a few hours, the flour had been transferred to a steamer and was on its way.

It passed tragic Gallipoli, where many brave Anzacs from Australia and New Zealand had laid down their young lives, face to the foe. And now the unhappy victims of this same foe were to be fed with bread from their homeland, as if to complete the work for which they died. Anzac bread!²⁰

This anecdote highlights two key factors of the story of the relief efforts on behalf of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides. First, the direct association with Gallipoli, something so pronounced that even Americans were commenting on the relationship between the Genocide survivors and the Anzacs. Secondly, the regular reference to the Christian faith, arguably the main element that bound the survivors and their rescuers.

These factors are also very pronounced in Australian media reports on the relief efforts, as well as on the cooperation between the various Australian agencies involved in Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian relief efforts. During a speech delivered at a League assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 1924, a Mrs Allen referred to “the women of Australia”,

as having started a fund for the women and children refugees of the Near East, are the members of the Lord Mayor’s Armenian Relief Fund, 279 George Street, Sydney. Lady David, Lady Sulman, Miss Jessie Webb, M.A., of Melbourne, and Mrs Ernest Bryce, are at the head of this movement, and are working in conjunction with members of the League of Nations Union.²¹

At the following year’s general assembly of the League of Nations, a substitute delegate, Mrs Eleanor Vokes Irby MacKinnon, was invited to speak from the tribune.

²⁰ Loyal Lincoln Wirt, *The world is my parish*, Los Angeles, 1951:219.

²¹ “Near and Far”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1924:4.

Better known as the foundation secretary of the Australian Red Cross Society, the subject of MacKinnon's address was her work in helping to found the Australasian Armenian Relief Fund in 1922.²²

A national conference of representatives of the relief committees from all over Australia was convened on 14 December 1922. It was decided to form a national executive committee, with Rev. James E. Cresswell, a Congregational minister from Adelaide, as National Secretary of the Australasian Armenian Relief fund.²³ During an epic voyage throughout the Near East in 1923, in which he visited Syria, Greece, Georgia and Armenia, Cresswell presented,

on behalf of the Australasian Fund, a complete ambulance, which he handed over to Dr Mabel Elliott, of the American Women's Hospital, which did the medical work of the Near East relief at Athens.²⁴

Caroline Ethel Cooper

Between May 1924 and 1928, Adelaide-born Caroline Ethel Cooper worked with the mission of the Society of Friends (Quakers) at the American Farm School, in the foothills of Mount Hortiatis, east of Thessalonike in central Macedonia. Within a year, her "initiative, powers of organisation and her knowledge of the Greek language" meant that Cooper was made head of the relief unit. She remained so until her departure in 1928.

Cooper named her pet donkey *Agamemnon*, and offered insects as sacrifice on her altar to Pan.²⁵ Her friend and colleague Dr Sydney Loch, remembered her in the following terms: "Cultured, humane, and always aware of the human being under the national, though never suffering fools gladly, only occasionally did one hear the creaks in the edifice of her Christianity".

Reverend J.E. Cresswell

The minister of the Congregational Church in Flinders Street, Adelaide,²⁶ became the single most important South Australian involved in the international rescue of

²² It was the sixth General Assembly of the League, held in 1925. Jacqueline Abbott, "MacKinnon, Eleanor Vokes Irby (1871–1936)", Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mackinnon-eleanor-vokes-irby-7398/text12863>. Date accessed: 24/12/2010.

²³ For a more detailed discussion of the relief efforts within Australia, see Vicken Babkenian, "An S.O.S From Beyond Gallipoli: Victoria and the Armenian Relief Fund", *Victorian Historical Journal* 8:22, November 2010, and Vicken Babkenian, "A Humanitarian Journey: the Reverend James Edwin Cresswell and the Armenian Relief Fund", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 37, (2009):61–75.

²⁴ "Armenian Relief. Australia's help. Orphanage maintained", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1923:16.

²⁵ Decie Denholm, "Cooper, Caroline Ethel (1871–1961)", Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cooper-caroline-ethel-9819/text17361>. Date accessed: 25/03/2012.

²⁶ Consecrated in 1867, it is now known as the Pilgrim Church and belongs to the Uniting Church in Australia. <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1454&c=1717>. Date accessed: 20/03/2012.

the destitute genocide survivors. He led a truly remarkable life, travelling across the globe as a missionary as well as a humanitarian relief worker throughout the early decades of the century.

Following his appointment as National Secretary of the Armenian Relief Fund in January 1923,²⁷ Rev. Cresswell made three journeys to Hellas and the Near East in the 1920s. Each time he escorted tonnes of desperately needed supplies of food and clothing. He left a remarkable collection of writings and photographs which document in stark detail, his experiences amongst the genocide survivors.

During his brief time to Kemal's Turkey, he was invited by Lieutenant-Colonel Hughes of the Imperial Graves Commission,²⁸ to visit the Gallipoli Peninsula.²⁹ Rev. Cresswell did so, in part because of the ANZAC presence there, but also to see firsthand the towns and villages some of the people he was endeavouring to save had been forced to flee for their lives.

In the lead-up to Easter 1923, Rev. Cresswell wrote the following in his diary, a description of his visit to a refugee camp outside Aleppo, Syria:

Over 6000 are here. The sights within the caves are beyond words. No words seem adequate to describe the misery that must be the portion of these poor people. A few yards inside, the light was very dim, then failed altogether, and it was necessary to use a lantern. On either side of the cave were to be seen families, men, women and children, sitting on the ground. In some places, this was fairly dry, but for the most part, it was damp — the air was clammy and cold and in all respects it was depressing. Here were women, pale and emaciated, children with swollen abdomens, the result of starvation. Again, one saw little babes, pinched and pallid — further on, a little one just recently born, one tiny atom among thousands of the suffering children to be seen here.³⁰

The people he saw in that cave system were survivors of the Armenian and Hellenic Genocides, members of the once flourishing communities of the Cilicia region of southern Anatolia. They had endured forced deportation marches across hundreds of kilometres of desert and mountains during World War One, returned home once Cilicia was occupied by the French in 1918, then fled renewed massacres once Kemal's followers returned in 1920.³¹

A few days later, Rev. Cresswell arrived in Athens, via the Aegean island of Syros, where the Near East Relief maintained a large orphanage. His first stop was the magnificent Zappeion Building in central Athens, a short stroll from the former Royal Palace, "which now has been handed to the N.E.R. for orphanage work".

²⁷ "Feeding the Starving: Australians in Armenia – A Splendid Work", *The Argus* (Melbourne), 21 April 1923:6.

²⁸ Now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org).

²⁹ "The Reverend J.E. Cresswell. Clergyman-Journalist's visit to Hobart", *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), Thursday 4 January 1934:6.

³⁰ Rev. J.E. Cresswell (entry for Monday 2 April 1923, unpublished diary). Courtesy Vicken Babkenian.

³¹ "Dangerous complications in Syria. The Massacres at Marash", *Current History*, April 1920:108–112.

Mrs Bush is here in charge of 600 boys. They range from six to 13–14. Every one of them has some form of sickness, mostly induced by starvation and the trials of deportation. There are numbers for example of trachoma, others favus, others scabies.³²

The majority of these children were Armenian. Having lost their parents during the massacres and deportations of the Armenian Genocide, they were rescued by missionaries and workers of the Near East Relief from across the former Ottoman Empire.

One of the largest of these orphanages was at Antelias, now in the northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. For a decade, this institution was funded exclusively by Australians and New Zealanders; hence its name, the Australasian Orphanage. This complex became home to some 1,700 children, a number of whom — as adults — migrated to Australia.³³ Rev. Cresswell visited Antelias in March 1923.

Not long ago there arrived at the Australian orphanage eleven little boys from the interior of Turkey. They arrived late at night, and were put to bed in rows on the floor of a large building, with several hundred other motherless lads. They were very frightened and tired, and later, when the directress of the orphanage went to see if all were well, she found the little fellows all huddled together like a lot of little puppies, sleeping all over each other, under the same blanket. Not a single one of these boys knew his name or whence he had come, and the N.E.R. has 13,000 similar cases in the Beyrout area.³⁴

While in Athens, Cresswell also visited the city's "large Municipal Theatre", only a few hundred metres away.³⁵ In a few short words, he eloquently illustrated the sheer scale of the need facing a Hellenic state impoverished by a decade of war. Nothing was adequate supply, especially housing, and yet room had to be found to shelter hundreds of thousands of people who had little more than the clothes on their backs.

What a sight it presented. Every available space in all the rooms was taken up by refugees ten or twelve feet square for each family. Here men, women and children had to live, day and night. The scene in the auditorium was beyond description.³⁶

³² (Entry for Easter Monday, 2 April 1923, from unpublished diary of Rev. Cresswell [p. 58].) Courtesy Vicken Babkenian. The Zappeion's construction was financed by expatriate cotton merchant Evangelos Zappas. The neoclassical mansion is inherent with the modern history of Greece and now is used for public and private exhibitions and ceremonies. In 1869 the Greek government donated 80,000 square meters of public land for the building of Zappeion in the area between the Royal Palace, the National Gardens and the ancient Temple of Zeus. The Parliament passed legislation on 30 November 1869 specifically for the construction of buildings for the Olympic Games in 1896. Hence, the Zappeion became the world's first building that was built exclusively for the modern Olympic Games. Designed by Danish architect T. Hansen, the official inauguration took place in 1888.

³³ While the original buildings are long gone, the site is now one of the holiest for Armenians, the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Vicken Babkenian "Armenia's angels", *The Australian*, 25 April 2008. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/armenias-angels/story-e6frg6ux-1111116156752>.

³⁴ "Feeding the Starving: Australians in Armenia – A Splendid Work", *The Argus* (Melbourne), 21 April 1923:6.

³⁵ Melville Chater, "History's Greatest Trek", *National Geographic*, 1925:533–583, has a photograph of a group of the boxes in the National Theatre, exactly as described by Rev. Cresswell.

³⁶ (Entry for Easter Tuesday, 3 April 1923, from unpublished diary of Rev. Cresswell.) Courtesy Vicken Babkenian. Also published in *The Congregationalist* 1923.

The shared Christian faith was a key element for why Australians became so heavily involved in the relief effort. For example, in one address in Melbourne in August 1923, Rev. Cresswell stated that:

Throughout untold hardships and persecutions the Armenians had remained loyal to the Christian faith. That, apart from the call of humanity, was sufficient to entitle them to the assistance of every other Christian country.

The appeal was not one for funds and supplies of food and clothing alone. At functions and offices across Australia and New Zealand, lace and needlework produced by Armenian Genocide survivors “was exhibited for sale”. In the truest pioneering traditions of Australia, the focus was on enabling the survivors in Hellas, Soviet Armenia, Lebanon, Syria and British Palestine to fend for themselves as rapidly as possible. Rev. Cresswell “urged the advisability of constructive work among the children, more than 60,000 of whom were being trained and educated in useful trades”.³⁷

Conclusions

These are just a handful of the Australian stories of humanity in the inter-war period that have been restored to the historical record of the Great Southern Land. In the words of Robert Manne: “In world history there is an intimate connection between the Dardanelles campaign and the Armenian [Hellenic and Assyrian] genocide[s]”.³⁸

The story of South Australian efforts on behalf of the genocide survivors — either through humanitarian relief or through active rescue — is one of the “lighter” aspects of the history of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian genocides. Rev. Cresswell, Ethel Cooper and their supporters (both anonymous and eponymous) serve as reminders that even amidst the darkest episodes of human existence, there are sparks of light. Despite being enveloped by inhumanity, some retained their humanity.

Amato explains how local historians shape their work around objects people can touch and institutions audiences have directly experienced. For them, theory always gives way to facts.³⁹ Through the examination of demographic, social, and cultural transformations such as those that accompanied the survivors of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian Genocides, the story of Australian assistance to the survivors becomes an integral part of contemporary Australian historiography.

³⁷ “Suffering in Armenia. Appeal for Australian Help”, *The Argus* (Melbourne), 15 August 1923.

³⁸ Robert Manne, “A Turkish Tale”, *The Monthly*, February 2007:28.

³⁹ Joseph A. Amato (Author), Richard O. Davies (Foreword), *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History*. <http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520232938>. Date accessed: 25/03/2012.

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