

Australian Women in Macedonia

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Australians have had a relationship with Macedonia since the earliest days of European settlement. A little explored aspect of this is the activities of Australian women in Macedonia, before the days of cheap transport and mass tourism. These women were nurses with the Australian and British forces on the Macedonian Front of 1916–1918. Others were humanitarian relief workers, assisting survivors of the Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic Genocides (1914–1924) to rebuild their health and their lives. Virtually forgotten are Red Cross medical staff involved in repatriating refugees during the bloody Hellenic Civil War (1946–1949). All these remarkable individuals lived extraordinary lives in answering the “call from Macedonia”, as the Apostle Paul once expressed it. They also left us a unique collection of photographs, letters and other documents of their experiences: the people they met, the places they visited, the experiences they enjoyed and endured.

From the earliest references to Macedonia in Australian writing, the association of this territory with Hellenism was clear. The first time “Macedonia” appears in the Australian media was in *The Australian* newspaper in its 28 April 1825 edition. In “Population of Greece”, Macedonia was listed as having the largest population (700,000) of the regions of mainland Hellas.¹ This study examines the relationship between Australian women and the geographic region of Macedonia.

This particular study is part of broader project to document Australian legacies overseas related to Hellenism. It aims to catalogue details of the experiences, and particularly the motivations of Australian women in Macedonia in the last century: who, what, where, when, how and why. This paper is divided into four sections: (a) Australian nurses on the Macedonian Front during World War One; (b) Australian women as humanitarian relief workers during the 1920s and 1930s; (c) Australian women with the United Nations’ Refugee Relief during the Hellenic Civil War (1946–49); (d) Australian women as migrants and tourists in Macedonia.

¹ The regions recorded were Macedonia, Epirus, Attica, Thessaly, Etolia, Phocis, Biotia. In its Monday 22 December 1828 edition (page 2), *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* discussed the population of “European Turkey”, mentioning Macedonia as part of “Greece”.

Most Australian women who have spent time in Macedonia have done so as tourists and religious pilgrims. They have been drawn by the archaeological discoveries in that region which continue to feature in the Australian media. Above all, it is the religious association of Macedonia with Christianity that Australians are most familiar with. Roman Catholic and Protestant clergymen and educators both placed great emphasis on the visits of the Apostle Paul to Macedonia, and to the Epistles these visits produced. Until the late-twentieth century, with the advent of mass tourism, few Australians had little more than a vague idea about Macedonia, its people, their cultures, languages and histories. Amongst those few were a handful of Australian women who spent time in the land of Philip and Alexander, as nurses and as humanitarian relief workers.

Nurses

Australians were present on the frontlines of three wars in Macedonia during the twentieth century: the Balkans Wars (1912–1913), World War One (1914–1918) and World War Two (1939–1945). Men and women of the Great South Land served in the defence of the Hellenic state, for the common values of freedom and democracy. Australians served as soldiers, mechanics, pilots, doctors and nurses. Beyond their military service, their legacy included particularly valuable collections of written and visual memoirs of their time in Macedonia.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Eleutherios Venizelos, Thessalonike was occupied by three French Divisions and the 10th (Irish) Division from Gallipoli in October 1915. This came (at least partly) in response to the invasion of Serbia by the combined forces of Austria-Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria. Other French and Commonwealth forces landed during the year and in the summer of 1916, they were joined by Russian and Italian troops.

While initially designed to assist the beleaguered Serbian Army, the forces arrived too late to prevent the defeat (and subsequent retreat) of Serbian forces. The Allied troops under French Commander Sarrail withdrew to the vicinity of Thessalonike and established a strong defensive perimeter of near 110 kilometres in the face of threatening Bulgarian and German forces. The campaign, which drew in some 600,000 French, British and Serbian troops by early 1917, was fought in areas plagued with malaria carrying mosquitoes and illness affected the great majority of the troops serving there.

The presence of the Entente forces brought the clash between the pro-Entente Prime Minister and the pro-German King Konstantinos to a head. In August 1916, a revolution broke out at Thessalonike, with the result that the Hellenes entered the war on the Allied side and the King fled into exile. The port city became the base of the British Salonika Force and, over time, came to host eighteen general and stationary hospitals. Three of these hospitals were Canadian, although there were no other Canadian units in the force.

Following the failure of the 1915 Dardanelles Campaign, the forces of the Triple Entente endeavoured to break the deadlock on the Western Front by pouring troops

into the war against Bulgaria. The aim was to break the land-bridge between Germany and the Ottoman Turkish Empire at what was deemed to be the weakest link of the Central Powers. Although the Allies achieved a significant breakthrough, forcing Bulgaria's surrender in September 1918, the campaign received much criticism as a wasteful distraction from the main theatre of war, the Western Front.

Amongst the Triple Entente forces were a number of Australian servicemen and women. The Australian media regularly carried reports about developments there. The first Australian to fall in action defending Macedonia was Second Lieutenant Ralph Neville Cullen of the Royal Irish Fusiliers Regiment. Born Ralph Neville Cohen, he was the son of the President of the Great Synagogue (now known as the Central Synagogue) in Elizabeth Street, Sydney. He adopted the surname "Cullen" when he enlisted in the Irish unit in Great Britain. Cullen was killed defending his 5th Battalion's position on the Kosturino Ridge on the Helleno-Bulgarian frontier during a Bulgarian assault.²

Jessie McHardy White led a group of Australian nurses from Adelaide on the long trek to Thessalonike's hospitals in June 1917. Her photographs and documents from her time in and around "the bride of the north", present a fascinating view of the city around the time of the Great Fire which devastated and irreversibly altered the city in August 1917.

Born in Victoria in 1870, she took up nursing following her husband's death in 1896. A decade later, she was running a private hospital in Melbourne and had joined the Australian Army Nursing Service Reserve. Sister White embarked with the first contingent of the Australian Imperial Force in October 1914. Early in 1916, she was appointed principal matron of the Australian Imperial Force in England.

In response to a request from London in April 1917, it was decided to send Australian nurses to staff four British general hospitals in and around Thessalonike. White resumed active service on 5 June as principal matron in charge of a contingent of 364 nurses, organised into units comprising one matron and ninety nurses for each hospital. She was also matron of No. 1 Unit which arrived in Macedonia's chief port on 30 July to take over a tent hospital with over 800 beds, located during summer at the foot of Mount Hortiates, south-east of the city centre. The second and third units were soon in position, but all members of the fourth were not present until June 1918. While ministering to sick and wounded soldiers, she and her staff contended with poor living conditions, extremes of temperature, threats to their safety from marauders, and with flies, lice, malaria, dysentery and typhus.³

As recorded in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Matron White was efficient and self-reliant, but isolated from administrative support, White was given additional powers to promote and repatriate nurses; meanwhile she steadfastly preserved her

² Hugh Gilchrist, *Australians and Greeks Volume II: the Middle Years*. Sydney: Halstead Press, 1997:94–95.

³ The Australian War Memorial has a substantial collection of Matron McHardie White's photographs and documents from her time in Macedonia. <http://www.awm.gov.au/search/all/>

contingent's separate identity. Her severe treatment of one subordinate matron did not negate Matron White's essential humanity. Moved by the burial of a British nurse, she wrote: "I was glad to have been there and felt that we had left the little one — she was only twenty-three — in safe keeping". The principal matron spent her leisure hours enjoying the beauty of her natural surroundings.

White was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.), mentioned in dispatches, and awarded the Hellenic Medal for Military Merit and the Serbian Order of St Sava in recognition of her work in Macedonia. She returned to Australia on 28 June 1919, departing from military service on 7 August. Continuing her nursing career until late in life, she was active in the affairs of returned nurses and served for 25 years as president of the Salonica Sisters' Group. Jessie White died on 26 October 1957 at East Hawthorn, Melbourne, feast day of the patron saint of Thessalonike — the warrior Ayios (Saint) Demetrios.⁴

Olive Kelso King was born in Croydon, NSW, joining the Scottish Women's Hospital (SWH) in May 1915. In October, the unit sailed to Thessalonike. Their role was to provide medical assistance to the Serbs, at first at Gevgeli and later at Thessalonike. King remained here for the next two and a half years, even after the SWH had left the country.⁵

Stella Miles Franklin, one of Australia's most celebrated authors, served as a nurse on the Macedonian Front in 1916. Born near Tumut, New South Wales, in June 1917 she joined as a voluntary worker the "American" Unit of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service, stationed at Ostrovo (modern Arnissa Pella prefecture) and commanded by Dr Agnes Bennett and Dr Mary De Garis, a stimulating but debilitating experience. She returned unwell to London in February 1918.⁶

Sister Gertrude Evelyn Munro is the sole member of the Australian Army Nursing Service to perish on active duty in Macedonia.⁷ She now lies in the Mikra British Cemetery. Also located here is the Mikra Memorial, commemorating almost 500 nurses, officers and men of the Commonwealth forces who died when troop transports and hospital ships were lost in the Aegean Sea, and who have no known grave. They are commemorated here because others who went down in the same vessels were washed ashore and identified, and are now buried here.⁸

⁴ Perdita M. McCarthy, "White, Jessie McHardy (1870–1957)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-jessie-mchardy-9076/text16001> (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

⁵ Hazel King, "King, Olive May (1885–1958)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/king-olive-may-6962/text12045> (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

⁶ Jill Roe, "Franklin, Stella Maria Sarah Miles (1879–1954)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/franklin-stella-maria-sarah-miles-6235/text10731> (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

⁷ "Munro, Gertrude Evelyn (Sister, b.? – d. 1918)" Australian War Memorial Collection <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/1DRL/0525/>

⁸ Eight kilometres south of Thessalonike, in the municipality of Kalamaria. Opened in April 1917, Mikra

Humanitarian relief workers

Throughout the early 1900s, the Australian media carried reports about the persecution of the Ottoman Empire's indigenous Christian Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic populations. By 1914, this persecution had become exterminatory: it became clear that the new rulers of the Empire — the Party of Union and Progress, nicknamed the Young Turks — were determined to “purify” the lands they controlled of all non-Muslim populations.

As reported by *The Argus*, eastern Thrace and the Aegean coast of Asia Minor were the initial focal points of this genocidal campaign, with deportations, expulsions and massacres of the indigenous Hellenic population. In June 1915, it reported that the “Greek population from Moidos and Krithia, on the Gallipoli Peninsula, have been transported to Panderma in a deplorable condition”.⁹ The genocides culminated in the holocaust of Smyrne (Smyrna) and the subsequent “compulsory exchange of Greco-Turkish populations”. This was — in effect — the expulsion of all non-Muslims from Anatolia.

This wave of human misery triggered an unprecedented response, the world's first international humanitarian relief effort. The International Commissioner for the Near East Relief Federation, Dr Loyal Lincoln Wirt

informed a representative of the Australian Press Association that two shiploads of food and clothing had arrived from Australia ... 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...¹⁰

Over the coming decade, Macedonia became the safe-haven for over 600,000 destitute Hellenic, Assyrian and Armenian Genocide survivors. The overwhelming need prompted a handful of Australians “to come over into Macedonia and help us”, in the words of the Acts in the Bible.

The most significant Australian women to serve were Ethel Cooper and Joice Nan-Kivell Loch. Apart from their physical and intellectual efforts, they left remarkable written and photographic records of the settlement of genocide survivors in towns and villages across Macedonia.

Between May 1924 and 1928, Adelaide-born Ethel Cooper worked with the mission of the Society of Friends (Quakers) at the American Farm School, in the foothills

now contains 1,810 Commonwealth burials, as well as 147 war graves of other nationalities. “Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* <http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/35900/MIKRA%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY,%20KALAMARIA> (Accessed 24 December 2013).

⁹ “Piteous Condition of Greeks”, *The Argus* (Melbourne Victoria) 28 June 1915:7.

¹⁰ “NEAR EAST RELIEF. Australian Help Arrives. Refugees as Migrants”, *The Register* (Adelaide, South Australia) 20 November 1922:7.

of Mount Hortiatis. 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.

A passionate philhellene, Cooper named her pet donkey *Agamemnon*, and offered insects as sacrifice on her altar to the god Pan. Colleague, close friend and Gallipoli veteran 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.¹¹

Queenslander Joice Nankivell Loch and her Scottish-born husband, Sydney, spent decades working to help the community of Pyrgos (later named Ouranoupolis) recover from the Hellenic genocide and the Second World War. Born outside Ingham, Queensland, she worked with refugees in post-war Poland and Ireland before joined the Society of Friends’ relief effort at Hortiatis, in late-1922.¹²

A few months later, the Lochs moved to Pyrgos. This camp created by the settlement of refugees from the Prinkiponisa (the islands in the Propontis/Sea of Marmara), from Pontos and from Kappadokia was named for the medieval stone tower that still dominates the area.

It rose mystic, wonderful, gleaming bluish-white under the full moon, its ancient stone walls stained pink by the setting sun. ... currents of air that streamed through the glassless windows ... the enormous beams that supported the roof and locked the joints of the ancient tower together.¹³

With the help of contacts in the Australian relief movement, the Lochs established a carpet-weaving industry that provided income to build a community out of the malarial swamp that had previously occupied the area. So esteemed did she become amongst the locals, that she is still known by the honorific *Kyria* (Lady). As *Kyria* Loch recalled in an interview with *The Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1965:

There were 600 to 700 of these people, ... They were supposed to farm, but they were traditionally rug-makers. They were starving and dying. They showed me one or two rugs they had and a lot of hand-dyed silk. So we got them to make up six rugs in black, white and grey from sheep in the area — we had no colours — and sent them to a handicraft show in Salonika. The villagers thought they were awful, but they were snapped up. Two of our villagers, who had walked about 150 miles to see what had happened, were astounded. Buyers wanted every one we could make.

¹¹ 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: 24/12/13).

¹² Ros Pesman, “Loch, Joice Mary Nankivell (1887–1982)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/loch-joyce-mary-nankivell-14347/text25418> (Date accessed: 24/12/2013).

¹³ Susanna De Vries, *Blue Ribbons. Bitter Bread*, p. 186.



The Pyrgos from the beach at Ouranoupolis. Photograph: Panayiotis Diamadis, July 2013

The traditional Anatolian designs were deemed too oriental by *Kyria* Loch, who sought a more “Greek” feel to the products. So “I became interested in art and I gave the weavers designs, using all sorts of material” drawn from photographs Sydney Loch took of illustrated manuscripts in the monasteries of Mount Athos. These became the basis of the famous “Pirgos Rugs”. One — *Tree of Life*¹⁴ — now adorns the Loch Museum in Ouranoupolis. Another — *The Creation*¹⁵ — is held at Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. There is even one rug designed on Australian Aboriginal rock paintings. As *Kyria* Loch wrote of it, “In a native dance, boys are turned in men”.¹⁶

¹⁴ Based on manuscripts from the Esphigmenou Monastery. J. M. NanKivell, *Prosporion-Uranopolous Rugs and Dyes* 1964:15–16.

¹⁵ J. M. NanKivell, *Prosporion-Uranopolous Rugs and Dyes* 196:19.

¹⁶ J. M. NanKivell, *Prosporion-Uranopolous Rugs and Dyes* 1964, Plate 7.

The development of carpet weaving in northern Greece was remarkable. The Refugee Settlement Commission Vice President reported in 1927:

In the vicinity of the urban settlements a large number of factories of various kinds have sprung up. Of these, the most numerous and the most important are the carpet factories. In this industry the refugees are expert and it has been introduced since their arrival. The industry is increasing very rapidly, and in the year 1927 the exports of Greek carpets to America were valued at over half a million pounds sterling.

The Lochs' legacy in Macedonia goes far beyond their relief efforts. Both were prolific writers, documenting the profound and the mundane in equal measure. *Kyria* Loch wrote articles for newspapers and magazines in Great Britain and Australia, donating much of the money earned to the community.

One of these articles was for *The Daily Mail* (London), reproduced in a number of Australian media outlets, covered the devastating earthquake that struck the Halkidike region in October 1932. Written on a typewriter resting on an improvised table made of a disused millstone, Loch recorded that:

Ierissos¹⁷ was reduced to heaps of stone and brick ... We are living on bread and coffee on the roadside, lacking even a change of clothing. This is my second earthquake and I hope it will be my last. ... the survivors, despite the ruin of all the villages surrounding Ierissos, courageously bore their afflictions and eagerly helped in the alleviation of the suffering of others.¹⁸

War returned to Hellas on 28 October 1940 when the forces of Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini invaded. The operation went so badly, that Adolf Hitler was forced to come to his ally's aid, sending in the Wehrmacht in April 1941. Despite fierce resistance, the Hellenic government surrendered to the Nazis in late May 1941. As British citizens, the Lochs were forced to leave Ouranoupolis in order to avoid internment, spending the war in British Palestine.

In the aftermath of the Hellenic Civil War (1946–49), *Kyria* Loch taught local girls dyeing and weaving techniques to give them a means of earning an income. Sydney Loch wrote one of the earliest English-language histories of *Athos: the Holy Mountain*. Left incomplete by his premature passing, the work was finished by *Kyria* Loch and published in Sydney's name in 1957.¹⁹

In the ultimate demonstration of respect, the people of Ouranoupolis laid Sydney Loch to rest in their cemetery, with the rites of the Orthodox Church, despite his not being baptised Orthodox. His gravestone bears the following inscription:

¹⁷ Ierissos is the largest town in the eastern Halkidike Peninsula, the major centre closest to Ouranoupolis.

¹⁸ Joice NanKivell Loch, "Greek Upheavels — Villages ruined — Relief by Australians", *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Queensland) 10 October 1932:6.

¹⁹ Sydney wrote the first six chapters, Joice the last three. Sydney Loch, *Athos: The Holy Mountain*. Lutterworth Press, 1957:254.

Frederick Sydney Loch

London, Jan 24th, 1889 – Prosporion, Feb 6th, 1954

THE SOUL TO GOD

Let me make wing as swallows wing
to where summer dwells,
striking the clouds as autumn's sting
on the meadow falls.
My fleshy home with gladness leave
and to Thee return,
cleaving to Thee as swallows cleave
to where summers burn.
Let me approach to Thee, so pass
on as swallows speed,
that skim a last time o'er the grass
of the watered mead.
This ailing flesh my green fields are
where autumn runs,
and I arriving from afar
towards new suns.

By the 1960s, synthetic dyes and machines had replaced traditional carpet-weaving techniques. Tourism and other sources of income also began supplanting carpets as a source of income. *Kyria* Loch turned her attention to retaining as much of this traditional knowledge as possible, documenting every aspect of the process. In *Prosporion-Uranopolous Rugs and Dyes*,²⁰ she wrote the primary colours and shades each local plant would produce:

Dyes listed under colours

BLUE: Bloeberry fruit with alum

Elder fruit with alum

Indigo, vegetable (Method see formulas).

Gentian Violet with Verbana (Chaste Tree), root base.

Mountain Ash bark with alum.

Scabie's (Devil's Bit). Leaves with alum.

Stock, dark purple flowers. With alum.

Pistacio lentiscus (Greek folk name Skene), with alum.

Woad, with fermented leaves in urine.²¹

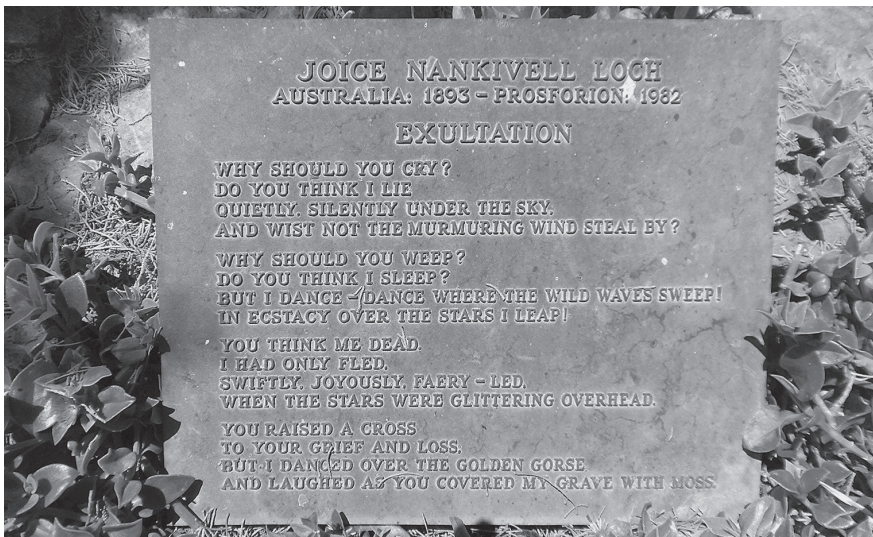
²⁰ J. M. NanKivell, *Prosporion-Uranopolous Rugs and Dyes*. American Board Publications Department, 1964:43.

²¹ Op cit, p. 32.

It appears *Kyria* Loch returned to Australia at least once, presenting a lecture at Melbourne's The Australian Church (Russell Street) on Sunday 12 December 1948. Her presentation was titled "A Picture of Greek Villages" and was focussed on the relief work being conducted by the Society of Friends in Macedonia.²²

As the years passed, a housekeeper moved into the Prophoreion to assist *Kyria* Loch. This amazing Australian's final publication was released in 1980, *Collected Poems*. She was by then 87-years-old, sound of mind but with fading physical health. One of them, titled "I Dream of Hills", is very evocative of the physical surrounds of her beloved tower:

I dream of hills that plunge
 from Heaven to the sea,
 where lambs in spring sink deep in thyme,
 a tender rhapsody;
 and heather spills its honey;
 where birds of God skim low
 to dip their wings and eagles soar
 above the line of snow;
 and lambs of little homes
 shine out to show the Virgin where
 true hearts beat strong,
 and women bow their humble heads in prayer.²³



The plaque on Joice NanKivell Loch's tombstone, Ouranoupolis Cemetery. Her husband Sydney rests to her right. Photograph: Panayiotis Diamadis, July 2013

²² "City Services Tomorrow", *The Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria) Saturday 11 December 1948:28.

²³ Joice NanKivell Loch, *Collected Poems*. London: the John Roberts Press, 1980:5.

Joice NanKivell Loch passed away at her home of almost six decades in 1982. Her funeral service was conducted by the Orthodox Bishop of London and Great Britain. She was laid to rest beside her husband, both their graves encased in a stone wall, topped with a bed of green plants. The inscription over her final abode reads:

Joice NanKivell Loch

Australia 1893 – Proshporion: 1982

Exultation

Why should you cry?
 Do you think I lie
 quietly, silently under the sky.
 And wist not the murmuring wind steal by?
 Why should you weep?
 Do you think I sleep?
 But I dance — dance where the wild waves sweep!
 In ecstasy over the stars I leap!
 You think me dead.
 I had only fled.
 Swiftly, joyously, faery-led,
 when the stars were glittering overhead.
 You raised a cross
 to your grief and loss.
 But I danced over the golden gorse
 and laughed as you covered my grave with moss”.

United Nations’ Refugee Relief

The Occupation of Hellas would last until November 1944, when the last Axis units withdrew northwards. A power struggle erupted in the vacuum left behind, pitting the conservative *EDES* and the Royalist government-in-exile backed by Great Britain and the United States against the communist-led *ELAS* backed by the Soviet Union. In December, the rivalry exploded into civil war, a fratricidal conflict that would last until December 1949, when the last rebel forces retreated into Albania.

Under the auspices of the United Nations’ Refugee Relief Agency, a 20-person Australian mission was organised, active in relief work across western Macedonia, particularly Kozane, Florina and Grevena districts. Their main role was to transport and return home thousands of predominantly young women whom the Nazis had abducted and taken to Germany as slave labourers. With the war’s end, they began drifting homewards, but were then caught at the Yugoslav border by their lack of identification papers and by the fighting.

The Australian unit drove their trucks 300 miles over mined dirt roads, fording rivers where bridges had been detonated, from Pireaus to Kozane, where they set up

camp in an abandoned barracks. From the border, Moira Rankin (from Bendigo, Victoria) and her colleagues would drive the refugees to Florina, the district capital, where they were fed, bathed, deloused, registered and given medical attention.

Aboard a train repaired and operated by the team's youngest member — Annabella “Penny” Penglaze (from Point Piper, NSW) — aid was ferried from Thessalonike to Florina. Penglaze had driven a truck to the lignite mines at “Vivie” to fuel the train, found abandoned and heavily damaged on the Florina line. Refuelled, she used the train to bring refugees to the United Nations’ camp at Kozane. From there, the fortunates returned to their homes all over the country.

When this wave of refugees petered out by October 1945, the team switched to supporting the villagers devastated by World War Two and the Occupation. Flocks had been ravaged and cultivation virtually ceased, so they established soup kitchens and child-feeding centres, riding donkeys and using mules for transport in the mountainous terrain. The mobile medical team of Lesley Gorman (from Hurstbridge, Victoria), Audrey Sourry (from Glenbrook, NSW), and Elaine Giblin (from Hobart) brought medical care and supplies to the isolated highland communities.

In December 1945, the mission changed again, to the distribution of 1.5 million British Red Cross parcels “fortnight earlier than it could be done”, according to the British Army report, “which is, of course, typical of Australians”.²⁴

The team's other female members were E. Brown and Despina Macris (both from Sydney), Queenslanders Joan Fletcher and Keitha Munro (from Indooroopilly), Victorians Fifi Krizos (from Auburn), and Celia Weigail (from Toorak), West Australia Erna Grimm, and Sydney Foott. As an article in the *Australian Women's Weekly* reported:

They have slept on the roadsides by their broken-down trucks, raced over dangerous dirt tracks (which suddenly peter out into yawning ravines) with bullets whistling through the windshields of their jeeps and trucks, lived, worked and laughed at some tragedies and petty frustrations.²⁵

At the mission's conclusion in April 1946, all members were awarded Silver and Bronze decorations of the Hellenic Red Cross and the Order of George for their extraordinary service to Hellenism, especially to Macedonia.

Migrants and Tourists

Visiting family and friends is what has drawn the overwhelming majority of Australian women to Macedonia. Poverty caused by repeated military conflicts across the mountains of western Macedonia in particular propelled tens of thousands to seek their fortunes in the Antipodes. The family and friends they left behind have been

²⁴ Marie Catton “Australian girl ran train service in Greece”, *Australian Women's Weekly* Saturday 25 May 1946:9.

²⁵ Ibid.

a constant attraction for visits, and in some cases, return migration. Thessalonike especially has a substantial expatriate Australian community, warranting an Honorary Consulship.²⁶

Religious pilgrims and history buffs form the second largest group of Australian women to visit Hellenism's northern flank. They have been drawn to sites related to the glories of Kings Philip and Alexander, to the missions of the Apostle Paul, to the monasteries which preserve the physical and spiritual legacy of Christian Hellenism and more.

The Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (AAIA) and the Aristotelian University of Thessalonike have been at the forefront of promoting educational opportunities in Macedonia for Australian educators and students alike. Extensive excavations of ancient Torone were conducted by Australian archaeologists from 1976 to 2000.²⁷

Thessalonike-born, Melbourne-raised Australian Ambassador to Athens, Her Excellency Jenny Bloomfield, has devoted much of her term to developing the relationship between Macedonia and Australia.²⁸ Through events such as the annual Thessaloniki International Fair, female Australian journalists and businesswomen are drawn to Macedonia's capital.²⁹

Conclusion

As presented in this paper, Australian women have influenced — as well as been influenced by — their relationship with Macedonia since the earliest days of European settlement. Whether in the context of conflict or peace, Australian women have played, and continue to play major roles in Macedonian history and society.

²⁶ "Australian Consulate in Thessaloniki, Greece", Australian Government. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/countries/grth.html> (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

²⁷ Near the tip of Halkidike's central Sithonia Peninsula. "Free lecture discusses Australian archaeological expedition to Greece", The University of Queensland News 27 June 2001 <http://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2001/06/free-lecture-discusses-australian-archaeological-expedition-greece> (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

²⁸ "What's New — Néa" Australian Embassy in Greece http://www.greece.embassy.gov.au/athn/whats_new.html. "Australian Embassy honours Professor Alexander Cambitoglou and Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens for contribution to Australia-Greece relations (7/2/2013)", Australian Embassy in Greece http://www.greece.embassy.gov.au/athn/130207_medEn.html (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

²⁹ "Australian participation at the 78th Thessaloniki International Fair", Australian Embassy — Greece 7 September 2013, http://www.greece.embassy.gov.au/athn/130907_fotos.html (Date accessed: 24/12/13).

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