

Greek Currents in Australian Waters: Greek-Australians and the Sea, 1810s–2013*

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The sea has been an important element in the history of both the ancient and modern Greeks, providing passage, local livelihoods and access to international trade. In the modern era, Antipodean waters have been part of this ongoing relationship. The sea brought the earliest Greek settlers to Australia, together with the majority of post-World War II Greek migrants, offering them employment opportunities, adventure, recreation and sport. This paper provides evidence of the significance of the Greek contribution to Australia's maritime activities — a contribution that has helped to mould modern Australia's connection with the sea.

This presentation builds on material from two earlier research articles published by the authors (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:48–50, 52; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10–11).

Go as far inland as you can [in Greece] and you are never more than a day's walk from the sight of the sea. It was by the sea that the first human inhabitants came to Greece, and by the sea that the island dwellers set out to seek their fortunes because the land could not support them. Greek mariners, from the Argonauts to the shipowners of today, succeeded so well that there are now half as many Greeks living outside the country as the ten million in it. (Gage, 1987:12)

Greeks have traditionally had a close affinity with the sea, not only as a means of passage but also as a means of both domestic and commercial sustenance. For over two hundred years, Antipodean waters have continued to nourish this association.

As a means of passage, the sea brought the earliest Greek settlers to Australia, and it was by sea that the majority of post-World War II Greek migrants travelled to this continent as part of one of the most significant government-orchestrated mass immigration schemes of the modern era.

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Bill Florence (Vasilios Florias) being welcomed to Australia (Melbourne, Vic., 1922)

Bill arrived from Ithaca as a young teenager eager for “a better life”. He became part of the chain migration of his family to Australia — his father, Georgios Florias, having initially journeyed to the Antipodes in the mid-1870s. Bill’s brothers, John (Ioannis) and Bob (Haralambos), his sister Androniki, as well as his maternal grandfather, Efstathios Raftopoulos, also migrated. Bill’s family, like thousands of other Greeks between the early 1800s and late 1970s, had made the long, arduous passage to Australia by sea. The last migrant ship to dock at Station Pier, Port Melbourne, was the *Australis* in 1977.

Photo courtesy S. Raftopoulos and J. Florence, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

Greek sailors attached to British merchant or naval vessels may have sojourned in Sydney as early as the 1810s — the Ionian islands were a British protectorate from 1814 to 1864 and were a source of skilled seamen for Britain. A Greek connection is implied by the birth of a George Papas in the colony in 1814. Recorded as a “Man of Colour” (a person in the colony having one Indigenous Australian parent), his father may have been a visiting Greek sailor (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1995:16; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1995:13, see endnote 3; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:10). Whilst the suspected Hellenic origins of Papas’ father cannot presently be authenticated, the sea did provide passage some fifteen years later to seven Greek sailors convicted of piracy in the Mediterranean. Amongst them, two would become Australia’s earliest confirmed Greek settlers — Andonis Manolis and Ghikas Boulgaris (Gilchrist, 1992:31–32).

Across the sea came other isolated Greek arrivals prior to the 1850s. Most were sailors. With the Australian gold rushes of the 1850s–1880s, quite a considerable number of Greek sailors and fishermen, serving mostly with British vessels, eagerly jumped ship and made off to the inland diggings of New South Wales and Victoria. Many of their names appear in regular listings of ship-jumpers in both the *New South Wales Government Gazette* and the *Victorian Police Gazette* (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1995:18; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:12). Before the end of the nineteenth century, sea passage endowed all Australian states with Greek settlement, and through the chain migration which followed, the establishment of Greek communities. Despite the imposition of Australian immigration restrictions upon southern Europeans during the 1920s, and two notably aberrant periods when departures exceeded arrivals, Greek communities maintained their growth during the opening three decades of the twentieth century. Significantly, like the earliest Greek arrivals, most Greek migrants between the late 1800s and the end of the 1940s came from areas possessing strong traditional associations with the sea — coastal Greece and the Greek islands. Immigrants from three islands, Kythera, Kastellorizo and Ithaca, were predominant during this period (Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1995:8; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:13–14, 16–17; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1995:20).



Vasilios Karaoglanidis with his sons, Michael (on right) and Alex, aboard the *Patris* (1961)

The Karaoglanidis family left Greece for Australia aboard the *Patris* in October 1961 — the journey lasted approximately one month. Vasilios had made the decision with his wife, Eugenia (nee Hatzimouratis), to migrate “for the future of the family”. There was no work available in their village of Vathilakos in northern Greece, Australia was wanting migrants, and Vasilios’ older brother, Fotis, had successfully migrated to Melbourne 1954. Though only a child at the time, Michael Karris (Karaoglanidis), vividly recalls “the journey through the Suez Canal, the desert landscape, the heat and the golden light, the dark-skinned boys diving towards the ship’s bow to retrieve coins that passengers tossed into the sea... the costume party and toys when we crossed the equator... and that constant sound of the engines beneath us”.

Photo courtesy V. Karaoglanidis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.



A “**bride ship**”, the *Begona* (1957)

The pattern of gender imbalance in Greek migration to Australia during the period prior to World War II initially persisted during the post-war migration boom with men still greatly outnumbering women. Between mid-1953 and mid-1956, Greek male “assisted migrants” exceeded Greek female “assisted migrants” by five to one. In 1956 a program was instituted to redress the imbalance and bring out single Greek women. Such women would be trained in Athens for domestic work in Australia, as well as being taught basic English. Between 1957 and 1963, more Greek females than males arrived in Australia, though most were privately sponsored rather than “assisted”. With migrant ships carrying large numbers of single Greek women to Australia, many as prospective brides for Greek men, the vessels became known as “bride ships”. Of a total of 688 passengers aboard the *Begona* on its mid-1957 trip to Australia, 630 were female.

Photo courtesy N. Pirtidis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

In 1946 Arthur Calwell, Australia’s first Minister for Immigration, declared that “the days of our isolation are over... more and more people... will come from overseas to link their fate with our destiny” (Calwell, 1946). Australia’s post-war mass migration policy had been launched. Over most of the following three decades, Greeks from all over Greece would journey by ship to the antipodean continent in unprecedented numbers, hoping for “a better life”. Passenger vessels such as the Chandris Line’s *Patris*, *Ellinis* and *Australis*, the *Cyrenia* of Hellenic Mediterranean Lines, and Lloyd Triestino’s *Toscana*, have since become Australian maritime icons — symbols of the populating of the “new Australia”. Unfortunately though, beyond the mythology, some vessels, such as the *Tasmania*, *Skaubryn* and the *Radnik*, were converted cargo and/or military

ships, and not particularly suited to long distance civilian passenger trade. Numerous individual stories of the vicissitudes of the “voyage out” on most of the migrant ships have been well documented since the 1980s, clearly revealing the personal conflicts of cultural and geographical dislocation (Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:129–132; Afentoulis, 1988:102; Woods, 1992; “In Their Own Image”).¹

An important, and significant feature of post-war Greek sea migration to Australia was the creation of “bride ships”. Prior to the late 1950s, Greek migration to Australia was overwhelmingly male. With the “bride ships”, which carried large numbers of single Greek women as prospective brides for Greek men in Australia, an attempt was made to redress this imbalance. The *Begona*, for example, is reported to have carried 630 female passengers (37 of whom were aged between one and twelve) and only 58 male passengers (34 of whom were aged between one and twelve) on its trip to Australia in mid-1957. Initially stimulated in 1956 through an Australian Government and ICEM (Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration) “assisted” migration program specifically targeting single Greek women, overall, most female arrivals were privately sponsored migrants, rather than “assisted”. Between 1957 and 1963, more Greek females arrived in Australia than males. Migration provided a means for single Greek women to extricate themselves from the burden of the traditional dowry system in Greece and proxy engagements to Greek men in Australia became common (Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:18, 126–127, 144; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10; Janiszewski and Alexakis 2006:167–169; Kunek, 1989:36–41; Kunek, 1993:99–100; Plowman 1992:57; Nazou, 2009:170–178; Palaktoglou, 2013:436–443). As portrayed in David Martin’s 1962 novel, *The Young Wife*, “bride ships” succeeded in capturing the Australian media’s and public’s imagination:

Anna was gazing sideways at a copy of the evening newspaper... On the third page, looking straight up at her, was her photograph... The photographer had caught a moment when a breeze was blowing her hair and she had put up a hand to restrain it.
Young Bride Gazes at New Country. Belle of the Brideship. (Martin, D., [1962] 1984:23)

But not all “promised brides” were content with their betrothed husbands upon meeting. Some bravely chose to break their agreement, placing their destiny in a new land solely into their own hands, a point well developed in Theodore Patrikareas’ 1963 play *Throw away Your Harmonica Pepino*; the play was later produced as a film (Greek title *My Name is Antigone*, English title *The Promised Woman*) and was subsequently retitled *The Promised Woman* (Patrikareas, 2001:211–275; Kanarakis, 1987:247).

A generally neglected aspect of Greek migrant ships of this period was that whilst the majority of passenger trade was to Australia, the return trip was often not simply cargo, but also paying passengers. These generally included those returning to Greece permanently (either to retire or because of disillusionment with life in Australia), or for

¹ See also: Plowman, 1992:7, 44, 55–57, 75, 85, 93, 96–97, 146–147, 192–193, 221–223, 229–231; Potter, Gallos and Dracopoulos, 1988:93–94, 100, 106, 113, 119–120, 128–129, 135–136, 139, 150–151, 164.

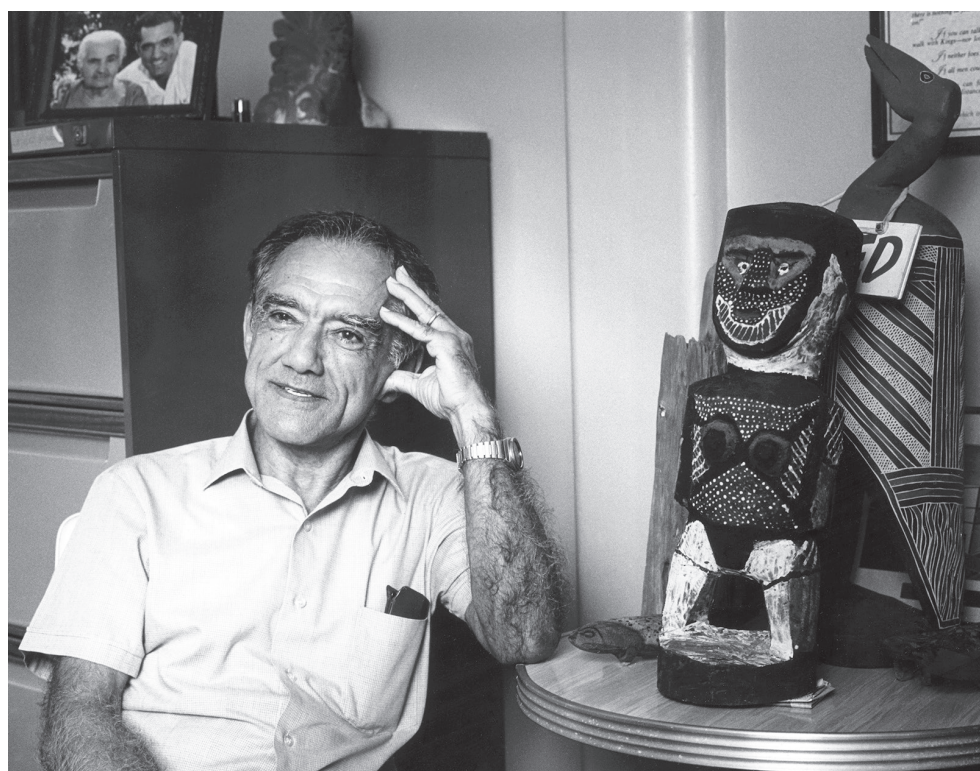
a holiday, and even to marry; Greek return migration by sea from Australia had commenced as early as 1837 (Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1995:8; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:11). Moreover, aboard some of the migrant ships Greek-Australian interpreters, such as Ted (Telemachos) Payzis, were utilised as a means of introducing migrants to their new country, teaching English, and generally dealing with communication problems as they arose. Ted, who was born in Newcastle, New South Wales (his father, Spiros, migrated from Ithaca around the mid-1880s), was employed as an interpreter on the *Patris*. Ted's cynical, though generally positive description of life aboard a migrant ship provides a strong contrast to many of the moments of despondency articulated by passengers (Payzis, 1986; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:48; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:129, 132, 178).

In 1949, at the age of just 25, Les Liveris, an Australian-born Greek (both of his parents having migrated from Kastellorizo during the 1910s), was appointed to the position of Commonwealth Migration Officer for the Northern Territory — joining the public service at age 13, he had originally been informed that as a Greek, he would not advance beyond the limited duties of a messenger boy. Les was officially involved with immigration to Australia for the next 34 years and oversaw, amongst other migrant arrivals, the post-war influx of Kalymnian, and later Greek-Cypriot immigrants, to Australia's "Top End". From 1980 to 1982, although post-war Greek migration to Australia had dramatically fallen away since its peak during the mid-1960s, Liveris was offered the position of Immigration Counsellor with the Australian Embassy in Athens. Upon accepting, he became the first Australian of Greek background to hold the post (Liveris, 1987; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:48; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:18).

Between the end of World War II and the early 1980s, approximately 250,000 Greeks had arrived in Australia as permanent or long-term settlers. Passage for most, had been by sea (Kringas, 2001:392).

Located on the western bank of Sydney Cove, the Sydney Dock Yard provided Damianos Ninis (one of the seven Greek convicts who arrived in 1829) not only with his required assigned labour, but also with the distinction of becoming the first Greek to undertake work in Australia's maritime industry. Others soon followed. Early Greek arrivals like Samuel Donnes (Antonatos/Antonakis) and John Peters (Ioannis Iakoumis), both of whom arrived in Sydney during the 1830s, initially utilised their skills as sailors and became mariners on coastal or river vessels. An unidentified Helene was commanding a Sydney-based coastal vessel in 1852. George North (Georgios Tramountanas), who arrived in Port Adelaide, South Australia, in 1842, was working as a seaman at the time of his marriage in 1858. He fortunately left his position of First Mate aboard the coastal steamer *Admella*, before the vessel's tragic demise — which resulted in the loss of 89 lives — near Cape Northumberland (on the far eastern coastline of the Great Australian Bight) the following year (Gilchrist, 1992:32, 72–74; Symes 1992; Symes, private papers; Tuckey, private papers; Williams, 1993; Clarke, private papers; Purcell, 1989; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:10–11, 26–29, 170). Antonio

Fossilo/Fossili (Andoni Phasoulas), who jumped ship in Albany, Western Australia, in 1870, soon took up work as a Fremantle barge operator, and in 1889 displayed much courage in simultaneously saving a one-year-old infant and twelve-year-old girl from drowning — apparently the incident had been his third rescue of children from drowning (*West Australian*, 1889:3; Pollard, private papers; Gilchrist, 1992:119–120; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:31; Appleyard and Yiannakis, 2002:8–11). Jack (John) Caparatus (Athanasios Kaparatos), who arrived in Launceston, Tasmania, in 1884, also exhibited exceptional valour while employed as a boatman and stevedore. Ten years after his arrival, Caparatus was presented with the Royal Humane Society’s medal for rescuing, at different times, eleven individuals from drowning in the Tamar River (Grubb, 1988; Grubb, private papers; *Mercury*, 1944; Gilchrist, 1992:121–123; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:32; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2003:10).



Les Liveris (Darwin, NT, 1987)

Although initially informed that he would not advance beyond a messenger boy in the public service because he was Greek, Les Liveris rose to become the Commonwealth Migration Officer for the Northern Territory and oversaw, amongst other migrant arrivals, the post-war influx of Kalymnian and later Greek-Cypriot immigrants to Australia’s “Top End”. In the early 1980s Liveris was appointed Immigration Counsellor with the Australian Embassy in Athens.

Photo by Effy Alexakis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

Naturalisations in Australia prior to 1903 reveal that almost 40 Greeks had recorded their occupations as either mariners or as wharf labourers — most being located in South Australian ports, followed by Queensland and New South Wales. By 1916, New South Wales was dominant with 34 Greeks reported to be working on the state's coastal shipping and wharves (Gilchrist, 1992:376–385; Gilchrist, private papers). Unfortunately in 1928, newly arrived or out-of-work Greek migrant workers found themselves caught up in a bitter national Australian maritime strike. Employed — together with other European and British migrants — to work the wharves left idle by striking members of the Waterside Workers' Federation, they found that the underlying racial tensions of “White Australia” were quick to surface. Non-British “scab labour” was particularly targeted by union retaliation — verbal abuse, pelting with debris, and bashing. On 1 December 1928 a bomb exploded on the roof of the Acropolis Café in Melbourne's Lonsdale Street where a group of Greek stevedores were playing cards. Fifteen individuals were injured by the blast. Five British-Australians were charged and found guilty of the offence and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment — one was a union member (Jones, 1996:17; Dimitreas, 1995:238; Dimitreas, 1998:181–182). During World War II, alliances rather than divisions were forged between Australian maritime unions and Greeks. Greek ships left stranded in Australian ports following Greece's invasion by Axis forces, were chartered by the Australian Government and Australian unions were successful in gaining improved conditions for Allied Greek seamen on a par with their own (Jones, 1996:17–18).

From World War II onwards, Australians of Greek background have continued to maintain a relationship with the sea as sailors, and in a variety of roles. Some, like Michael Sofoulis and Socrates Likiard (Likiardopolous), joined the Royal Australian Navy. Sofoulis' youngest brother, Angelo (“Lucky”), later became a marine engineer with the Adelaide Steamship Company while Likiard's brother, James (Jerasmus), spent many years captaining various ships in Queensland waters. (Sofoulis, private papers; Lambert, private papers; Gilchrist, 2004:49–52; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:49; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10). At least three Greek women served with the WRANS (Women's Royal Australian Naval Service) during World War II — Polyxeni Lucas, Helen Metaxas and Rita Svokos (Gilchrist, 2004:50). Brothers Wayne and Grant Vafiopolous, served with the Royal Australian Navy during the Vietnam conflict, as did Paul Martin Procopis (Kyritsis, 2009:186–189, 232–236). Based in Darwin, during the 1980s, George Haritos was captain of a barge which delivered supplies to Indigenous communities from the Kimberley coast to the Gulf of Carpentaria (Haritos, G., 1987; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:52; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10). During the early 1990s, Steve Pelecanos was employed as a marine pilot, navigating bulk carriers, oil tankers and other vessels in and out of Brisbane's busy port and through south-east Queensland's channels and environmentally sensitive reefs (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:49; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10). While Royal Australian Navy Reservist, Lieutenant Andrea Argirides, served in Iraq in 2008 (Wishart, 2008:3, 15), in 2010,

John Stavridis was given command of HMAS *Arunta*, one of the Australian Navy's eight Anzac class frigates (Burgoiné, 2010).

Greeks have not only worked as sailors or as dock labourers but also as fishermen. By 1900, three Greeks who had arrived during the Australian gold rushes — Fort Lacco (Fotis Lakonas), Frederick Vean (Vine/Vien) and James George (Vean's and George's Greek names are currently unknown) — were all successful fishermen at Rosebud on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula (Wilson, P., private papers; Lacco, private papers; McLenan, private papers; Moresby, 1954:15; Hullinshed, 1982:41). During the 1910s, Greek fisherman at Bunbury, Cossack and Port Hedland on the Western Australian coast, were also harvesting the sea for a living. Since at least the Great Depression, Greeks at Thevenard, near Ceduna, on the west coast of South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, have been catching whiting. They also developed a small, though thriving, shark liver oil industry during the Depression years. In the 1930s and early 1940s two Kytherian Greek brothers in Tasmania, Gregory and Anthony Casimaty, acquired trawling vessels, employed Greek fishermen to run them (Victor and Theo Vanges), and ventured into the netting of flathead and crayfish. In the process, Danish seine fishing techniques were introduced into Australian waters and Tasmania's Governor, Sir James O'Grady, appointed the brothers as his official fishmongers. From the late 1940s until well into the 1960s, George Haritos and his brothers Ningle (Nicholas),



Frederick (Fred) Vean (Vine/Vien), fisherman (Dromana, Vic, c. 1916)

Fred Vean is recorded as having been born on Milos in 1834. He arrived in Australia in 1860 and was naturalised in 1901. At the time of his naturalisation he was successfully making a living as a fisherman at Rosebud. In 1916, he was still working as a fisherman but had moved to Dromana, just a little over seven kilometres north of Rosebud along the Mornington Peninsula's west coast. Frederick is said to have lived to the grand old age of 106.

Photo courtesy P. Wilson, from the "In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians" National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

Michael, and Jack, pioneered commercial barramundi fishing in the Northern Territory. By 1956 they had established interstate markets for the fish in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and even succeeded in supplying Melbourne's Olympic village during the city's hosting of the Games. George Margaritis (nicknamed "Barramundi"), who regularly caught the fish in the Territory's rivers, creeks and mangrove estuaries from the 1930s until his death in 1952, had initially stimulated the Haritos' interest in the species. George Haritos became exceptionally skilled at barramundi fishing using traditional Aboriginal spearing techniques. Based in Fremantle, Western Australia, by the early 1980s, Michael G. Kailis, of Kastellorizian background, had substantial



Shark fishing (Thevanard, SA, c. 1949)

During the 1930s, in addition to whiting, Greek fishermen at Thevanard, near Ceduna, on the north-west coast of South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, started catching sharks for their liver oil. The oil was extracted by placing the livers in a large steam-jacketed drum — the steam from a boiler would circulate around the livers extracting the oil. Such enterprise generated the development of a small, though thriving, local shark liver oil industry; the oil was used as a lubricant for machinery, as an ingredient in ointments, for the tanning and curing of leather, as a wood preservative (particularly in the waterproofing of boats), as fuel for lamps, in the manufacturing of paint and early margarine, as a vitamin supplement, and in the tempering of steel. Connie D'Ercole (nee Kriticos) recalls that up to two hundred sharks would be caught on a good day. Shark fishing was undertaken by using a long line with ten to ninety hooks. The line was suspended across the ocean's surface by the use of a series of buoys placed in between the hooks.

Photo courtesy C. D'Ercole, from the "In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians" National Project Archives, Macquarie University.



Michael Nicholas Manifis, fisherman (Onslow, WA, 1987)

“Dad came to Perth aged about sixteen, around 1920... there was nothing in Kastellorizo... I started selling fruit with my father and then went into fish processing with Theo Kailis [G. P. Kailis & Sons and later Kailis and France Group] when I was fifteen — I was with him for fifteen years... I travelled around the world in the fisheries business for the Kailis family... Left Kailis’ seventeen years ago... Came to Onslow eight years ago... A better life up here on the Pilbara coast... it’s beautiful. Built this business up — Ashburton Fisheries [named after the Ashburton Shire and River] — from nothing... [We now have] a couple of boats of our own and a fish shop... My sons are both on boats now.”

Ashburton Fisheries is still in operation today.

Photo by Effy Alexakis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

interests in prawn trawlers operating from Exmouth Gulf to the Gulf of Carpentaria. His dominance in the industry acquired him the title of, the “Prawn King”. In 1987, 54 individual commercial fishing licences were registered to Greek-Australians in South Australia, maintaining a long tradition of Greek fishing along the Great Australian Bight around ports such as Thevenard, Streaky Bay, and Port Lincoln. From such fishing ports Greek names such as Raptis & Sons, and Angelakis Brothers have emerged to become prominent within South Australia’s fishing industry — the former has expanded into Queensland (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2013:407–409; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:78, 97, 104; Casimaty, 1988; Haritos, G., 1987; Haritos, J., 1987; Anthony and Haritos, J., 1996; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:49–50, 52; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:10; County and Lloyd, 2003:119–123).

Early Greek settlers opened oyster farms at Hawkesbury River (just north of Sydney), Port Stephens (on the New South Wales central coast), Minnamurra (on the New

South Wales south coast), Great Keppel Island, (off Queensland's mid-east coast), and Bicton (near Fremantle in Western Australia), and Greek pearlers were to be found along Australia's northern coast at Port Hedland, Broome, Darwin and Thursday Island before the 1920s. While Kalymnian sponge divers were brought out during the 1950s to dive for pearl shell in seas off the continent's north-west coast (involving the Haritos' and later Mary Dakas as lugger owners/operators), one enterprising and single-minded Greek, Con Denis George (Georgiades), experimented with the production of cultured pearls, an avenue later pursued by other Greeks such as Nicholas Paspaley (Paspalis) of Darwin and Western Australian fishing magnate, Michael G. Kailis (the MG Kailis Group's pearling interests were taken over by the Paspaley Pearling Company in 2009). Mary Dakas, Nicholas Paspaley's sister, was Broome's only female pearler/lugger owner in 1949 (there were other female pearler/lugger owners/operators prior to Mary's involvement), and successfully operated luggers out of Broome and Port Hedland for most of the 1950s (*Richmond River Herald*, 28



Falangas oyster farm (Bicton, near Fremantle, WA, c. 1906)

George Falangas who established the farm on the south bank of the Swan River, is standing on the extreme left. Whilst Falangas pioneered oyster farming in Western Australia, in New South Wales, the extent and success of Athanasios and John Comino's oyster leases on the Hawkesbury River and along the state's coast, earned them the title of "Oyster King". Oysters were supplied from these farms direct to numerous Greek-run oyster saloons, soda parlours, cafés and fish shops.

Photo courtesy E. Mirmikidis, from the "In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians" National Project Archives, Macquarie University.



Stephanos Makrillos (seated on right) aboard a pearling lugger (Waters off the north-western Australian coast, c. 1955)

Stephanos Makrillos arrived in Darwin in 1954 as a member of one of the Kalyrnian diving crews which the Australian Government brought out to replace Japanese crews involved with the local pearl shell industry (pearl shell was used for buttons, buckles, jewellery, fans, combs and as decorative inlay) — following World War II, the Japanese presence was considered inappropriate. Although the experiment with Kalyrnian crews quickly failed, Stephanos remained in Australia until 1968, initially building his own caique and independently earning a living collecting corals and pearl shell.

Photo courtesy M. Makrillos, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

November 1919:4; *Kiama Independent and Shoalhaven Advertiser*, 22 March 1901:2 and 23 May 1902:2; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2013:408–409; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2009:119–130; Kotis, 1990; Skourbouthis, 1990; George, 1987; Hills, 2013:24; Yian-nakis, 2009:120–128, 131–134).

Ongoing conspicuous involvement in the processing and sale of both fresh and frozen seafood has ensured that Greeks have become synonymous with fish markets in most Australian capitals. For example, at the Sydney Fish Markets, the dominant Greek-Australian businesses are Poulos Brothers, De Costi Seafood, Claudios, and previously Manettas Ltd, while Perth’s fish retail and wholesale operations are dominated by close relatives of Michael G. Kailis. Greeks have also operated seafood processing plants focussed solely upon the wholesale market. Many have been small enterprises such as that owned by Nikolaos and Mary (nee Minopetros) Agrios in Port Lincoln during the 1980s or that established by Harry Paul and Peter Parisos at



Crayfish boat construction (Geraldton, WA, c. 1960)

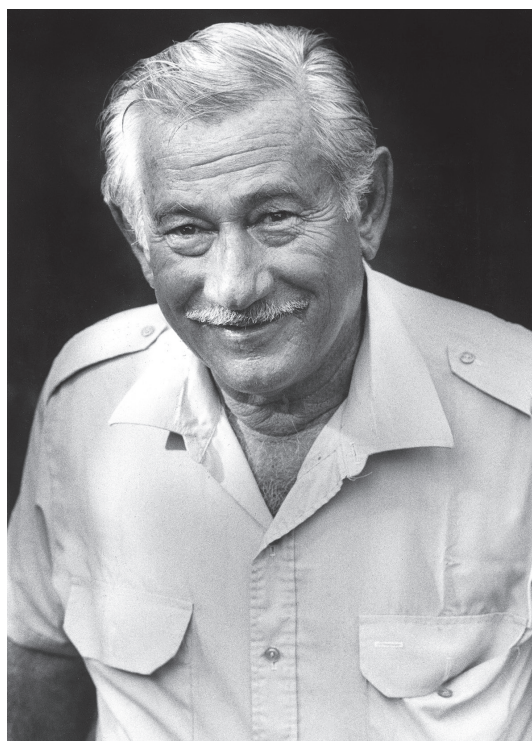
Georgios Karageorge (standing on left) arrived in Australia in 1939. A carpenter by trade, Karageorge initially found stable employment constructing dwellings in Darwin for Indigenous Australians. During the 1950s and early 1960s he took up work building boats for the crayfishing industry in Geraldton.

Photo courtesy M. Kailis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

Thevenard during the same period (one of four Greek-run “fish factories” in the town at the time). One of the largest and best-known Greek-operated seafood processing and distribution businesses is Red Funnel Fisheries, based in Newcastle, New South Wales. Acquired in 1935 by two Ithacan Greeks, Jerry Comino and Chris Pappas, the enterprise is today managed by Comino’s nephew, Arthur Comino (Agrios, N. and M., 1987; Parisos, 1987; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2013:408–409; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:50, 52; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2002:11).

Fish retailing by Greek-Australians has of course not only taken place at city fish markets, but also in food catering outlets such as oyster saloons, fish shops, fish’n’chip shops, restaurants, cafés, soda bars, milk bars and take-aways. The commercial popularity of these businesses (offering fresh and/or cooked seafood) arguably assisted in nurturing an increased acceptance of fish and other seafood amongst British-Australians. Some enterprising Greek shop keepers appear to have embraced this acceptance as a means of introducing new fish products to the market — Alexander Stathy (Alexandros Efstathios Palamidis) for instance, is reputed to have introduced smoked blue cod to Western Australian palates through his restaurant, the Atheneum, in Perth around 1900 (Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:100; Janiszewski, 2013:33, 43, 48, 56, 58, 61, 68; Martin, O., 1987; Gilchrist, 1992:329–336; Appleyard and Yiannakis, 2002:23).

Greek involvement with the Australian ship building industry appears limited when compared to their participation in other sea-related industries. Nevertheless, it is certainly worthy of mention. Presumably Damianos Ninis' work at the Sydney Dock Yard would have at least included the re-fitting of existing vessels. Another early Greek arrival, Apostolos Vassoulas from Mykonos, was recorded as a ship's carpenter at Quorn in South Australia, in 1890. While Gregory Casimaty had a 50 foot trawling vessel, the *Nelson*, built in Hobart during the mid-1930s for his venture into Danish seine fishing, members of the Kalymnian diving teams, which were brought out to northern Australia during the 1950s, had experience in timber boat construction — but their skills were later used in the booming Darwin building industry rather than for the maintenance of pearling vessels. Georgios Karageorge, a carpenter by trade,



George Haritos (Darwin, NT, 1987)

Crocodile and water-buffalo hunter, pearler, barramundi fisherman, and coastal barge captain, George Haritos keenly sought adventure and enterprise in his water-related pursuits — a characteristic also shared by his brothers, Ningle (Nicholas), Michael and Jack.

Photo by Effy Alexakis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

was building boats for the crayfishing industry in Geraldton, Western Australia, during the 1950s and early 1960s and Greeks were employed at the Whyalla Ship Yard which operated from 1939–1978. While Michael G. Kailis, the “Prawn King”, held interests in a Fremantle boat building yard which constructed trawling vessels for both local and international markets (a naval patrol boat project proved unsuccessful), he also chaired a charitable foundation which raised finances to construct a full-scale replica of the *Duyfken*, the first known European ship in Australia's maritime history; unfortunately Kailis died in late June 1999, just two weeks before its initial sea trials. (Gilchrist, 1992:32, 384; Karageorge, 1987; Cocks, 1999:14; Wilson, N., 1981:13; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:50, 52; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:78, 102, 122–123).

The need for a sense of adventure has also drawn Greek currents into Australian waters. George Haritos of Darwin has not only been a coastal barge captain, barramundi fisherman and pearler, but also a water-buffalo hunter and crocodile shooter. For

George, hunting crocodiles and water-buffalo in Northern Territory waters — primarily for their skins — was, during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, “thrilling and spectacular in itself”; though he “didn’t shoot anything just for the sake of shooting”. He shot his first crocodile at fifteen years of age and quickly learnt to both understand and “respect them”: “I am scared, yes, but I [now] know most of their reactions” (Haritos, G., 1987). In the 1940s and 50s, George formed a partnership with Jim Edwards and hunted crocodiles all over the Territory, from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Western Australian boarder; at times they were joined on their hunting trips by reptile expert, Eric Worrell. Haritos and Edwards are accredited with the highly successful innovation of night shooting of crocodiles by spotlight, known as “spotlighting” — using this



Olga Martin (nee Stathy) (Bunbury, WA, 1987)

Olga, together with her father Alexander Stathy (Alexandros Efstathios Palamidis), farewelled Peter (Petrounis/Petros) Arapakis and George Blythe, from Bunbury in 1910 — the pair were hoping to circumnavigate the globe in their vessel, *Pandora*. She recalls that “Arapakis came to see my father when I was thirteen... my father and I were the only two people to farewell Peter Arapakis when he left on his trip... he sailed from here... from Bunbury... Apparently no one knows what happened to him.” Tragically, the *Pandora* disappeared somewhere in the Atlantic between New York and London.

Photo by Effy Alexakis, from the “In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians” National Project Archives, Macquarie University.

technique, the animals could be shot or harpooned more easily. During the late 1940s, Haritos and his brother Michael took Australia's Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, "spotlighting" for crocodiles. In 1952, Haritos and Edwards captured two live crocodiles in the Territory's Mary River delta for Australian film director Charles Chauvel — the reptiles were required for scenes in the film *Jedda*. Four years later, Haritos was asked to take the Duke of Edinburgh on a crocodile hunting expedition — the Duke was in Australia to officially open the 1956 Melbourne Olympics (Haritos, G., 1987; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2013:407–408; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:48; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:97; Cushing and Markwell, 2010:95–96; *Courier-Mail*, 1952:1; *Sunday Herald*, 1952:4; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1951:4).

An earlier Greek adventurer in northern Australian waters was Nicholas Minister. Principally known as "Nicholas the Greek", Minister arrived in Australia in the late 1870s. He became a pearler, *bêche-de-mer* fisherman, trader and "blackbirder" — blackbirding was the "recruiting" of natives from the islands of the south-west Pacific as cheap labour intended primarily for the Australian cotton and sugar industries. Minister has been accredited with robbing the catches of fellow traders, overworking his native divers, and amassing considerable personal wealth by "sheer roguery". While Mick (Michael) George and the brothers Athanasios and Agesilaos Tornaros have also proven to be adventurous Hellenes in the south-west Pacific during the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries (George was a trader on the Trobriand island group while the Tornaros brothers were essentially "blackbirders"), perhaps one of the most daring of Greek sea adventurers in Australia around that time was Peter (Petrounis/Petros) Arapakis (Docker, 1981:191–192, 198–199, 218; Gilchrist, 1992:110–117; Kanarakis, 2010:240–249). Together with George Blythe, Arapakis set sail from Bunbury, Western Australia, in 1910, hoping to circumnavigate the globe in their vessel the *Pandora*. Olga Martin, the daughter of Alexander Stathy (who introduced smoked blue cod to Western Australia), recalls that "Arapakis came to see my father when I was thirteen... my father and I were the only two people to farewell Peter Arapakis when he left on his trip" (Martin, O., 1987). Olga never saw Arapakis again. Tragically, the *Pandora* disappeared somewhere in the Atlantic between New York and London (Gilchrist, 1992:329–336; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:52). On 13 January 2008, modern-day Greek-Australian adventurer, James Castrission, together with Justin Jones, became the first individuals to cross the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand by sea kayak (Castrission, 2010).

A coastal lifestyle of sun, sea, surf and sand has attracted numerous Greek-Australians, offering the opportunity for recreational swimming, surfing, snorkelling, scuba diving, boating, water skiing and fishing. Some have pursued, and achieved, excellence in aquatic sports. Paddy (Patrick) Caparatus, the only son of Jack (John) Caparatus (who was awarded the Royal Humane Society's medal in 1894) displayed exceptional oarsmanship as a member of a "racing eights" rowing crew that won Launceston's Tamar Regatta of 1916. Other Greek-Australians who have enjoyed success in the sport include: Ernest (Anastasi) Lazarus (1930s), Charles P. Freeleagus

(1930s) and Michael (Stratos) Jack Kailis (early 1950s) (Grubb, 1988; Lazarus, 1987; Conomos, 2002:446, 448; Kailis, 2006:202–203; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:52). At the 1933 Queensland state swimming championships in Brisbane, Maria Kousou won the 100, 200 and 300 metre freestyle events (Georgakis, 2000:128). The Likiard (Likiardopolous) sisters — christened Chrysanthe June, Aphrodite Calypso, and Stavroula Catherine — were also champion swimmers, as well as divers, during the 1930s and 40s. Stavroula's aquatic achievements were the most outstanding of the three. As "Cath" Likiard, she held the Victoria and Australian Springboard and Tower Diving Championships for a number of years during the 1940s. In competitive ocean sailing, Edward Psaltis claimed overall victory in the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. In 2000, he was voted NSW Yachtsman of the Year (Lambert, private papers; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 1997:52; Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1998:205; Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2013:412–413; Dugard, 1999).

Like their forebears in Greece, Greek-Australians have successfully embraced the sea. For over two hundred years, Antipodean waters have provided passage, employment, adventure, recreation and sport for Greek-Australians. This insight into their involvement with the sea, can only help but emphasise the significance of their contribution to Australia's maritime activities. Their participation at times has demonstrated great enterprise and courage, and has unquestionably assisted in shaping the course of modern Australia's relationship with the sea.

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