

Battles of Mainland Greece and Crete remembered

The memorial service for the 68th anniversary of the battles of Mainland Greece and Crete, held on May 25 at the National Australian Hellenic Memorial by the ACT Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch, was attended by political, diplomatic and defence force representatives of Australia, Greece, NZ, UK, Cyprus, European and World War II veterans.

The Greek Defence forces were represented by the Deputy Chief of the Hellenic Armed Forces, Lt General Konstantinos Kalamatas, and by Commander Leonidas Tsiantoulas HN.

Official representatives of the Greek Government visited Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra as well as Wellington, NZ, as part of their itinerary before returning to Athens on May 27.

Amongst the official party laying wreaths were the Minister for Veter-

ans Affairs, Alan Griffin, the Chief of the Australian Defence Forces, Air Chief Marshal Angus Huston AO ASC and Brig J M C Robins, representing the UK High Commissioner.

Others to attend included His Excellency Mr George Zois, Ambassador of Greece, and His Excellency Mr Yannis Iacovou, High Commissioner for Cyprus, NZ High Commissioner Dr John Larkendale, accompanied Ms Kate Skandret for the Chief Minister of the ACT, Senator Gary Humphries, RSL National President Major General Bill Crews AO MC, Mr Bruce Tunnah OAM (ACT Branch RSL), Mr Speros Vardos OAM representing the WWII Veterans and Mr George Kathakakis for the Cretan Association.

Veterans of the Greek and Crete campaign friends and relatives included



The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin (left) greets Lieutenant General Konstantinos Kalamatas, Deputy Chief of the Hellenic Armed Forces, at the memorial service.

Frank Atkins, Les Cook, Keith Hooper, Ron Metcalfe OAM, Norm Simper, Irene Lind and Paul Taylor.

The Australian Federation Guard provided both the flag and catafalque parties.

Anger at incompetence in Gallipoli policy

By Anne Fairbairn AM, continued from Page 3



Lord "Jackie" Fisher (portrait detail)



Winston Churchill circa WWI



Sir George Reid



Charles E.W. Bean

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The official history of the Dardanelles disaster was recorded in detail by Australian historian Charles E.W. Bean, who was permitted to be present at the landing at ANZAC Cove and during the continuing battles, by the strident intervention of Reid (as Australia's High Commissioner to the UK) with the British authorities.

He was to stay on the peninsula for the whole of the campaign, the only correspondent to see it from beginning to end and having, as he hoped, a perfect vantage point for recording the Australians in action. Day after day, night after night, he set down in his diaries what he was seeing and hearing and what men said when he asked them about their experiences. Like everybody else on both sides he got little sleep in the first week of the struggle.

Bean rejects, with uncharacteristic vehemence, a common British view that Australian troops had "advanced in an ill-disciplined rush far beyond the positions they should have occupied" (page 602 in Bean's official history of the war). "The Australian soldier," Bean declares, "has scattered to the winds, once and for all, the notion, often reiterated, that an Australian force would be ineffective through lack of discipline."

Indeed, Bean insists that Australians displayed a remarkable kind of self-discipline, which obliged every man to pay no heed at all to shell fire "even so

much as by turning a head or by lowering the pannikin from which he was drinking."

The landing dissolved all doubts about the relations between the Australian men and their officers, since the appointed leaders revealed "character and competence".

Bean resolved from the beginning to offer as a memorial to the soldiers a full and accurate account of what they had done, conceiving it to be his duty, as he puts it in the preface, "to record the plain and absolute truth so far as it was within his limited power to compass it".

The modesty was genuine but he knew that he was uniquely well-placed to do the job, having observed the men of the AIF at close hand for four years. The odds must have been long against his surviving it all to become their historian. Bean was struck in the leg by a stray Turkish bullet, while following the column of Brigadier General Monash's 4th Infantry Brigade at the start of the Battle of Sari Bair. Despite the wound, he refused to be evacuated from the peninsula. He left Gallipoli for good on the night of 17 December, two nights before the final evacuation. He would return in 1919 with the Australian Historic Mission.

As an Australian journalist, war correspondent and historian who is renowned as the editor of the 12-volume Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Bean wrote Volumes I to VI himself, which dealt

with the Australian Imperial Forces at Gallipoli, France and Belgium. Bean was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian War Memorial and the creation and popularisation of the ANZAC legend.

My father joined the Australian army in World War II. Bean told him, many years later, that he was hugely appreciative of George Reid's assistance in arranging for him to be present during the Dardanelles campaign. He also said that eventually the Australian forces would be also fully recognised — not just for their role at the Dardanelles but also for their immense efforts in Northern France. This is something which is now certainly deeply appreciated by the people of Villers-Bretonneux.

After the war he often discussed with Bean the concept of the Sydney-to-Canberra Remembrance Driveway, which my father helped create because he felt so deeply about the losses suffered by Australia in both World Wars. Also his older brother, Douglas lost his two sons, Bruce and Ian Reid, in World War I. My mother's two brothers, Colin and Keith Ross Munro, were killed in World War II.

One result of Australia's faithful and sacrificial effort to the cause of World War I was an enhanced international status. After the war, the question of dominion independence arose. As Australia developed a diplomatic service, the Government pressed for more autonomy from Britain in enacting laws. The Statute of Westminster 1931 (UK)

was passed by the Imperial Parliament in the UK and established legislative equality between the self-governing dominions of the British Empire. In effect it gave the dominion parliaments equal status with the British Parliament established that the dominions were under the authority of the Crown as opposed to the Government of Britain. Australia finally ratified this law in the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act of 1942.

I am certain that my grandfather would have been extremely proud of the positive symbolism of ANZAC mateship, galvanised in horrendous circumstances, which has emerged as symbolic of our Australian way of life.

I never knew my grandfather — I was born many years after he died. He married my grandmother, Dame Flora Reid, when he was over 50 and she was 20. I have done quite a lot of research into his life and written about his contribution to Australia. Flora was one of the first women to receive the title of Dame; this was bestowed for her huge contribution in caring for wounded Australians in the UK, where she was living during World War I as the wife of Reid, the High Commissioner. According to my father, she always spoke of the strong spirit of "mateship" that existed among all the men she helped.

I trust today all Australians will remember this and never seek to vilify their fellow Australians, especially those who are of non-Anglo-Celtic background.