



■ Hugh Gilchrist (08.08.1916-16.10.2010):

Career diplomat, intellectual, and the premier Greek-Australian historian of the 20th century

Hugh Gilchrist was born in Sydney on 8 August 1916. He was educated at Edgecliffe Preparatory School, Sicup Place School Kent, and Cranbrook School, Bellevue Hill. He received his tertiary education at Sydney University.

World War II saw him serving with the Australian Military Forces (1941-1943) and the Australian Imperial Forces (1943-1945), reaching the rank of Captain.

He first joined the Department of External Affairs in 1945 and held a number of overseas postings with that Department, namely London and Berlin (1947-1948), Paris (1949-1950), Djakarta (1950-1952), and South Africa (1955-1959). He represented Australia as High Commissioner to Tanganyika (1962-1964) and Tanzania (1964-1966) and as Ambassador to Greece (1968-1972) and Spain (1976-1980).

He has been a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly (1963) and a Member of the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (1949-1950).

In Australia he has held the offices of Assistant Secretary of the Information and Cultural Relations Branch, Department of External Affairs (1966-1968) and of the Legal and Treaties Branch, Foreign Affairs (1972-1974) as well as First Assistant Secretary of the Consular and Legal Division of Foreign Affairs (1974-1976).

After retiring in 1981 he became a member of the Literature Board of the Australia Council until 1984. During his four years as the Greek Ambassador he became a passionate Philhellene. (Hence the name of his first born - Athene). With free time, he launched into research on the Greek presence in Australia. Amongst his first publications was a comprehensive article, Australia's First Greeks in the Canberra Historical Journal, 1977.

His reputation as the premier Greek-Australian historian of the 20th century followed the publication of Greeks and Australians. Volume 1. The Early Years. 1992, Volume 2. The Middle Years. 1997, and Volume 3. The Later Years. 2004. Reviews of these works included comments such as, "Hugh Gilchrist has virtually set the benchmark for study of ma-

ior ethnic communities in Australian society and culture," and, "Gilchrist has created a monumental and praiseworthy work of three volumes, which will be treasured not only by historians but also by the community at large, both in Australia and Greece."

In 2003 he was awarded the Niki Award by the Australian Hellenic Council, a coordinating body for the Greek community, for his history, and for his philhellenism. In 2005 he was awarded an Order of Australia, in the general Division, (OAM), "for service to the community, particularly as a historian of Australian-Greek relations and through support for the work of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens". In December, 2005, the Academy of Athens, Greece, announced the award of the silver medal, "for recognition of his outstanding achievement in the publication of the three-volume work Australians and Greeks."

It is testimony to the quality of Greeks and Australians, that all three books have remained in print, since the date of publication. The debt that Greek-Australians owe to Hugh Gilchrist, for establishing an important role for them, in the Australian historical narrative, can never be repaid.

Hugh and wife Elizabeth, (Libby), lived at Telopea Park, Canberra. Hugh, in particular, had a long relationship with the Greek Community in Canberra. He enjoyed walking over to the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas, because it reminded him of Greece.

It was with Hugh's help on the 23rd of March 2003, to coincide with Greek National Day, that the then

President of the Greek Community, Canberra, Kostas Tsoulas, organised several buses of members of the community, to travel to Nimmitabel, near Bombala, to visit the resting place of Ghikas Boulgarys, reputed to be the first Greek in Australia, to give him an Orthodox deliverance. Hugh came along and generously shared his knowledge of this lonely Greek pioneer and the difficult conditions faced by the Greeks in this early period. Indeed he was very generous with his time to all historians who sought him out, and wished to learn from him.

Hugh was also heavily involved with the Friends of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens. Professor Alexander Cambitoglou, the founder and Director of the Institute, regarded Hugh with great warmth and recalled his generosity with gratitude. The AAIA remains today one of the few cul-



tural organisations that successfully integrates Greeks and Australians in its governance. When the Canberra Friends of the AAIA was founded in 1989, the late Nick Ellis became its first President, with Hugh as Vice President. Ann Moffatt has intimated how she and Hugh walked around the carpark of the Hellenic Club in that year and left membership forms on hundreds of car windscreens. The AAIA has grown considerably in the 20 years since, into an organisation which hosts four public lectures a year, an annual dinner, and other functions as well. Hugh himself spoke at its annual dinner a few years ago.

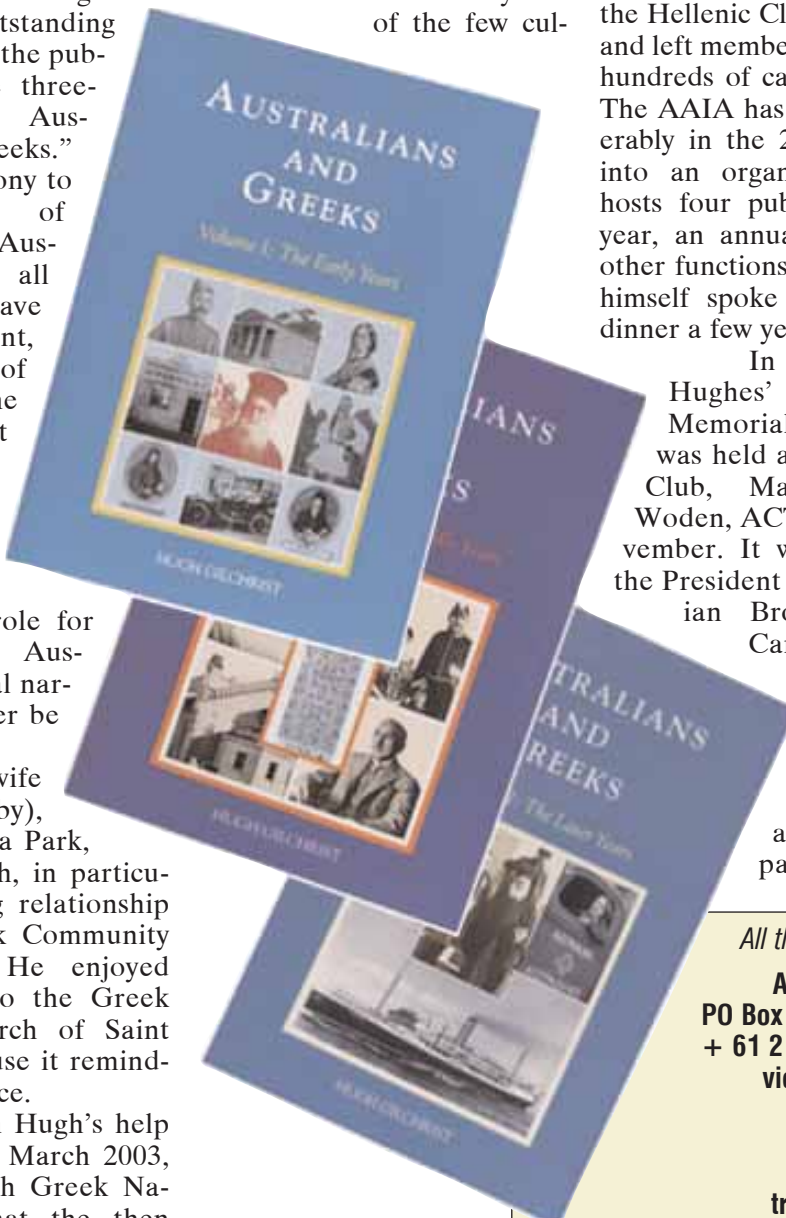
In deference to Hughes' wishes a Memorial Reception was held at the Hellenic Club, Matilda Street, Woden, ACT, in early November. It was hosted by the President of the Kytherian Brotherhood of Canberra and Districts, John Kalokerinos. Family, friends and admirers packed the

Aegean Room, to pay their respects. Hugh's long time friend from Sydney University and the diplomatic service, Bill Pritchett, provided insights into Hugh Gilchrist's young adult life. And the Ambassador of Greece, his Excellency, Alexios Christopoulos, reflected on Hugh's intertwined life with Greece, and the enormous service he had provided to both countries.

John Kalokerinos, summed up the sentiments of many in the room, in his concluding remarks. "He made those of us who knew him, better people. He was a great philhellene, and a gentleman."

Hugh died on the 16th October, 2010. He is survived by his beloved wife Elizabeth, and children, Athene and Julian. A daughter, Yolanda predeceased him. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Zoc, Gabriel and Ariana.

As stated above, "it is testimony to the quality of Hugh Gilchrist's work, that all three volumes of *Australians & Greeks*, have remained in print, since the date of publication."



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