

CONSTANTINE ARONEY

KYTHERIAN WWI ANZAC

This month we celebrate a very solemn anniversary.

It has been 100 years since those fatal days of World War I which saw hundreds of lives lost at the campaign of Gallipoli in Turkey. It was at dawn on 25th April 1915 when Australian troops landed on a beach only to be ambushed by Turkish forces. The young men, many aged in their teens and early twenties, who had enlisted in search of grand adventure, and swearing allegiance to King and Country, were suddenly faced with a life and death situation, a bloodbath, of which many would never return. It was on this day that our nation came of age with the birth of the ANZAC spirit.

Australian troops were deployed to many other campaigns including the battle of Lone Pine and on the Western Front. Amongst the young men who enlisted were many new immigrants including from Greece and amongst them was one Kytherian, Constantine Aroney.

Not much is known about his life here in Australia. From his military history and a little bit of digging into archival records a more complete picture of his life has emerged.

This is his story.

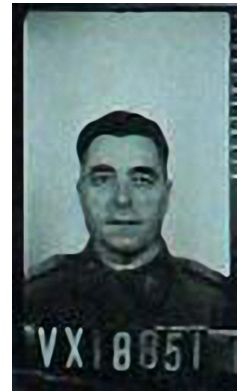
Constantine Aroney, was born in Aroniadika Kythera to parents Panagiotis Aroney and Stamatia Margetis on 10th March between 1894-1896, (depending on which record you look at). Research into shipping passenger lists for the period shows a Konstantine Aronis, born about 1895 in Greece aged 16, on board the Waipara which travelled from London and arrived in Brisbane on 5th July 1911. There are no other Konstantine Aronis or Constantine Aroney arriving before 1915. As there are no immigration records held in either name, it can only be assumed this is his record of

arrival into Australia. No Australian naturalisation papers have been located in the National Archives records on line, under either name, however his service records make reference to him being naturalised as a British subject in February 1915. It is interesting to note that on his service records, his place of birth is referred to as Cerigo, Greece. Most Australian records of that period all refer to Kythera as Cerigo.

He lived in Melbourne and it was from here he enlisted into the Australian army on the 6th March 1915. His army records initially show he was deployed as a private to 24th Infantry Battalion - "B" Company.

He left Australia on 8th May 1915 arriving in Gallipoli on 30th August 1915. Whilst in Gallipoli he appeared to have contracted conjunctivitis twice and was hospitalised for a short period. The records show him then going to Malta, Alexandria in Egypt and then was transferred to the 2nd Australian Division Salvage Unit on 24th January 1917 and deployed to France. In April 1918, he was admitted to hospital with a suspected hernia. He was transferred to Reading War Hospital in England, where he was operated on for a double hernia. He returned to Australia on 31st July 1918 and was discharged in Melbourne on 11th September 1918.

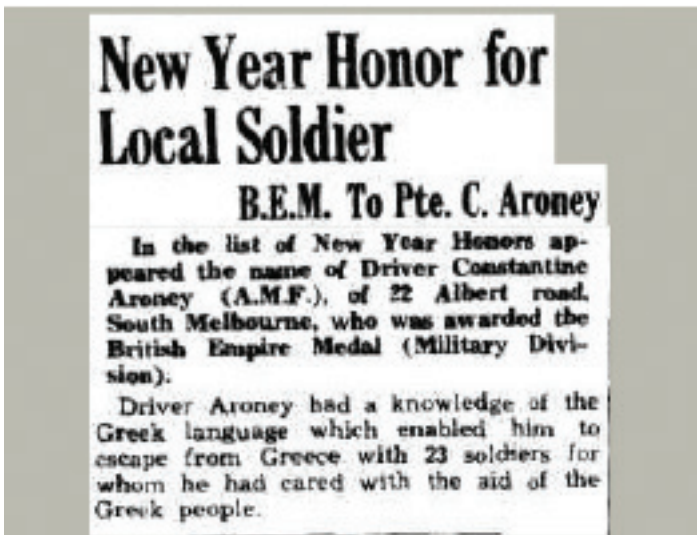
In October 1939, he enlisted in the Commonwealth Military Forces and seven months later he transferred to the 2nd Australian Imperial Forces and the Headquarters of the 1st Australian Corps, serving in Palestine, North Africa, Greece, Crete and Syria. His enlistment records refer to his marital status as divorced. Further



CONSTANTINE ARONEY'S PATERNAL ANCESTORS

investigation into the Victorian Divorce records show his divorce from Muriel Agnes Aroney in 1928. He was living at in South Yarra in 1939 and his next of kin was listed as his sister Annie, living in Kythera. By 1940 his address was listed as Carrington Mansions, 22 Albert Rd South Melbourne and his next of kin was listed as Elizabeth Lawrence, a friend who also lived at the same address, where he seemed to have spent the rest of his life. The address may have been a boarding house as one reference to it has been found in the Victorian newspapers archives, in which it was listed as the address of the infamous Squizzy Taylor in 1924.

While serving in Greece, Driver Aroney's cultural background and his ability to speak Greek proved extremely valuable. Following the debacle on mainland Greece, when the Allied forces were overrun by the German Army, Aroney managed to escape to Crete in an open boat, taking 23 other soldiers with him, whom he cared for with the help of Greeks on Crete; a heroic feat for which he was awarded the British Empire Medal in the New year's honour list in 1944.



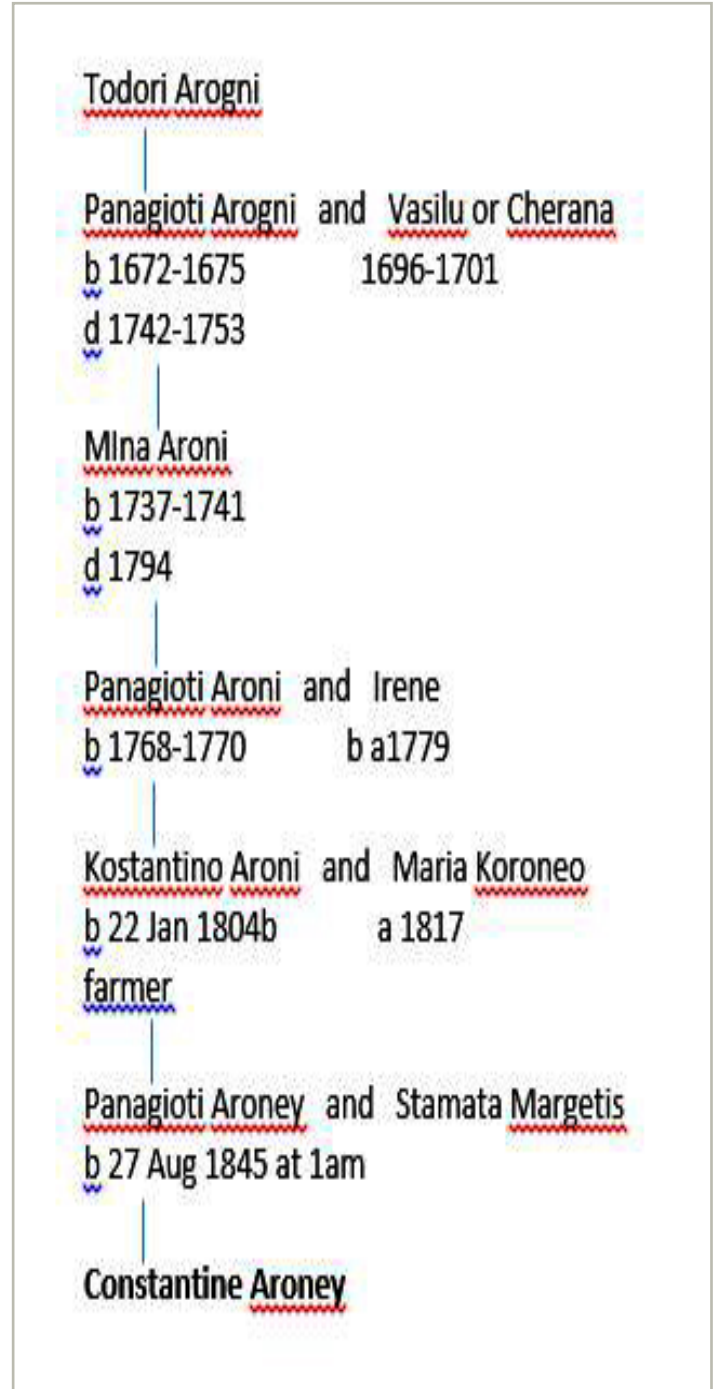
Record (Emerald Hill, Vic. : 1881 - 1954), Saturday 8 January 1944

Voters lists show him categorised as a soldier and later a TPI pensioner. No reference has been found to any children.

He passed away on the 8th August of 1967 aged 73 in Heidelberg Victoria.

Lest we forget!

By Kalie Zervos



Sources:

- National Archives, Australia, Canberra, A.C.T. Article on groundbreaking Greeks
- www.kythera-family.net
- Ancestry.com.au
- Trove
- Public Record Office Victoria – Divorce Records
- Greek Australians in the Australian Armed Forces WWI & WWII by Steve Kyritsis.
- Kythera Municipal Council Marriage records
- Kytherian Genealogy Club