

Chronology of Events – Crete

1940	
June 1940	Italy declared war.
28 th October 1940	Italian Troops cross the Greek border and advance into North West Greece.
29 th October 1940	First British Troops sail for Crete.
6 th November 1940	Headquarters 14 th Infantry Brigade, 2 nd Bn. The York and Lancaster Regiment and 2 nd Bn. The Black Watch arrived in Crete. Brigade Headquarters designated as the Headquarters, British Forces in Crete with Brigadier O. H. TIDBURY as Officer Commanding.
10 th November 1940	Greek forces halt the advance on the 3 rd Alpini Division and push back the Italian Forces from Pindus Mountains.
22 nd November 1940	Greek Forces retake Koritsa.
November 1940	British Forces in Crete come under command of G.H.Q. Middle East.
13 th December 1940	Directive issued for the invasion of Greece.
1941	
18 th February 1941	General WAVELL meets with Lieutenant General BLAMEY to discuss the deployment of Allied Forces to Greece. The intention is to deploy I Australian Corps with the 6 th and 7 th Australian Infantry Divisions and the 2 nd New Zealand Infantry Division, Polish Infantry Brigade Group and 1 st Armoured Brigade to Greece. 2 nd Bn. The Welch Regiment arrives in Crete and joins the 14 th Infantry Brigade.
22 nd February 1941	A meeting takes place in Athens between the Foreign Secretary, General WAVELL and Field Marshal Sir John DILL and representative of the Greek government. The Greeks advise they do not require assistance and will fight on regardless of support.

23 rd February 1941	Greek government agree to British support, provided it is at least 100,000 men as the Greeks state it has to be a large enough force to deter the Germans and not to precipitate an attack.
4 th March 1941	Lieutenant General Sir Henry Maitland WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., commander designate of British Forces in Greece arrives in Athens.
7 th March 1941	First Allied troops arrive in Greece.
26 th March 1941	H.M.S. York sunk by torpedo in Suda Bay.
27 th March 1941	Pro Axis government in Yugoslavia overthrown by Military coup. King Peter (aged 17 years) assume throne, and pro Allied government installed.
28 th March 1941	Battle of Cape Matapan between Royal Navy and Italian Navy forces. Three Italian cruisers sunk.
March 1941	Front stabilised with half of Albania under Greek control.
1 st April 1941	Yugoslav Senate dissolved and general mobilization ordered.
2 nd April 1941	2 nd New Zealand Infantry Division completes its concentration on the Aliakmon Line from the Aegean Sea near Katerini inland.
5 th April 1941	Lieutenant General WILSON assumes command of 'W' Force, including two Divisions on the Greek Central Macedonian Army. His Headquarters are located at the foot of Mount Olympus. Headquarters I Australian Corps opens, with Lieutenant General BLAMEY in command.
6 th April 1941	German Forces invade Greece and Yugoslavia. German 12 th Army moves into Eastern Macedonia from Bulgaria and attacks Metaxas Line. 'W' Force hold the Aliakmon Line.
7 th April 1941	German XVIII Corps capture the Rupel Pass and thereby threaten flank of Metaxas Line.
8 th April 1941	German Armoured Forces push back the Greek 19 th Division along the Dojran Gap behind the Metaxas Line. British 1 st Armoured Brigade dispatched to support Greek 19 th Division.

9 th April 1941	2 nd Panzer Division captured Thessaloniki. Metaxas Line collapses and Greek Forces in Eastern Macedonia surrender. The German advance through Yugoslavia threatens the Monastir Gap, so the British 1 st Armoured Brigade and 19 th Australian Brigade are dispatched to hold the Gap under the command of Major General MacKAY.
10 th April 1941	XL Panzer Corps attack down through the Monastir Gap, but are initially held. They also attack down the Florina Gap, and are held by the 27 th New Zealand Machine Gun Battalion, the 64 th Medium Regiment and 3 rd R.T.R. The 16 th Australian Brigade is withdrawn from the Veroja Pass to Servia on the Aliakmon Line.
11 th April 1941	The German assault down the Florina Gap is halted by Allied troops, with significant casualties.
12 th April 1941	General WILSON decides to pull back Allied Forces to the line of Mount Olympus (Aliakmon Line) due to the collapse of the Yugoslav Forces and the danger of being outflanked by German Forces attacking from Yugoslavia. Due to Australian and New Zealand Forces now fighting together, 1 Australian Corps redesignated as ANZAC Corps.
13 th April 1941	General WILSON decides to withdraw to the Thermopylae Line in the South of Greece. This line is only 50 miles long compared with 100 miles of the Aliakmon Line, and can be held by Allied Troops alone.
17 th April 1941	Yugoslav Forces officially surrender. Planning commences for evacuation of Allied Forces from Greece.
18 th April 1941	Greek Prime Minister commits suicide.
19 th April 1941	Allied Forces concentrate at Thermopylae, having extricated themselves from the Pinios Gorge.
21 st April 1941	Greek Government recommends evacuation of Allied Forces commences. Permission from London to commence evacuation is received.

22 nd April 1941	German Forces reach Thermopylae. Evacuation starts.
23 rd April 1941	Greek Government flee Athens for Crete. Northern Greek Army surrenders.
24 th April 1941	Main evacuation of Allied Troops takes place from Porto Rafti and Rafina. 6 Royal Navy cruisers, 24 destroyers and escort ships, 2 L.S.I. and 14 Troopships take part in the evacuation. The 6 th N.Z. Brigade and 19 th Australian Brigades hold the Thermopylae line as rearguards, halting the German advance.
25 th April 1941	Directive issued for German forces to invade Crete under command of Lieutenant General Karl STUDENT, General Officer Commanding XI Fliegercorps.
26 th April 1941	German Airborne Forces capture the Corinth bridge by a parachute assault, however, the bridge is destroyed by British anti-aircraft shell. Troops of British 1 st Armoured Brigade are evacuated from Athens beaches, and 16 th and 17 th Australian Brigades from Kalamata.
27 th April 1941	Transport ship 'Slamat', with about 700 troops on board, sunk by bombs from Ju 87. 193 men lost with the original sinking and about 700 troops rescued by H.M.S. Diamond and H.M.S. Wryneck. However, both are also then sunk by German aircraft. Only 1 officer, 41 seamen and 8 troops from the 'Slamat' are rescued from both ships. 4 th N.Z. Brigade evacuated during the night. Headquarters 14 th Infantry Brigade hands over command of Crete. Brigadier TIDBURY relinquishes command of the 14 th Infantry Brigade handing over to Brigadier B. H. CHAPPEL.
28 th April 1941	German Forces capture Kalamata in the south of the Peloponnese, the last embarkation port available to the Allies. Greece falls. About 7,000 men captured at Kalamata before they could be evacuated.

	<p>50,732 men were successfully evacuated from Greece to Crete and Alexandria, in what has been called a second Dunkirk, known as Operation 'Demon'.</p> <p>However, 11,000 men and all heavy equipment left behind in Greece. 223,000 Prisoners of War. Some Greek and British soldiers escape to Crete over the next few weeks. Allied casualties listed as 900 men killed, 1,200 wounded, and 9,000 prisoners of war.</p> <p>The Germans lost 1,518 men killed, and 3,360 wounded in Greece, plus 151 dead, 15 missing and 392 wounded in Yugoslavia.</p>
30 April 1941	<p>Major General FREYBERG, V.C. arrives from Greece and assumes command of Creforce (British Forces on Crete). The Headquarters, Creforce is established in a quarry above Canea.</p> <p>British Troops on Crete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creforce (14th Infantry Brigade) 5,300 • <u>Ex 'W' Force (Greece)</u> • Australian 8,800 • New Zealanders 8,300 • British (includ. Cypriots & Palestinians) 8,200 • M.N.B.D.O. 1,200 • R.A.F. 800 • Greek (ex Greece) 15,000 • Italian Prisoners-of-War 15,000
16 th May 1941	<p>2nd Bn. The Leicestershire Regiment arrives in Crete aboard H.M.S. Gloucester and H.M.S. Fiji to come under command of 14th Infantry Brigade.</p>

18 May 1941	<p>German aircraft bomb the 7th British General Hospital at 16.05 hours, in spite of it being identified by Red Cross symbols. Three medical officers and two other ranks are killed. Others injured. (N.B., can only find two R.A.M.C. officers on the CWGC website, but three Privates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 87504 Major James Edward Colleton ROUSE, R.A.M.C., aged 38 years, married, from Worthing in Sussex, 2. 133920 Major David WARDROP, R.A.M.C., aged 36 years, married with three children, from Shrewsbury, Shropshire, 3. 7361177 Private William FARDOE, R.A.M.C., 7th General Hospital, aged 22 years, 4. 7518510 Private Edgar Peter TAYLOR, R.A.M.C., 7th General Hospital, aged 22 years from Cholsey, Berkshire, 5. 7259405 Private Ralph BASTABLE, R.A.M.C.
19 th May 1941	<p>1st Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders arrive at Tymbaki, Crete, aboard H.M.S. Glengyle and come under command of 14th Infantry Brigade.</p>
20 May 1941	<p>06.00 – Air raid starts as prelude to invasion.</p> <p>07.30 – German Airborne troops from Gruppe West start landing around the Maleme airfield. They are engaged by the New Zealand soldiers stationed in the area, composed of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd N.Z. Infantry Battalions. The Germans suffer heavy casualties, with 400 out of 600 men of III Battalion, 1st Assault Regiment killed, wounded or missing.</p> <p>Other German troops land in Prison Valley near Chania, but they fail to make progress on securing the airfield. By the evening, however, German troops take Hill 107 that overlooks the airfield.</p> <p>1st Greek Regiment, assisted by Police, Cadets and armed civilians, attack a detachment of German soldiers dropped near Kastelli.</p> <p>A second wave of German and Italian aircraft begin dropping paratroops at Retimo (Rethymno) at 16.15 hours (Gruppe Centre) and at Heraklion (Gruppe East) at 17.30 hours. The Germans managed to secure the docks at Heraklion, and the former Greek Army barracks, but both locations were recaptured by Greek troops.</p>

21 May	<p>Overnight, the 22nd N.Z. Infantry Battalion withdraw from Hill 107, as a result of confusion and poor communications within Creforce (mainly due to a lack of working radio sets).</p> <p>The German forces realise that Maleme airfield is now undefended, and they focus their efforts on that location. Elements of 5th Mountain Division are landed at Maleme.</p>
22 May	<p>03.30 hours – The New Zealanders launch a counter-attack using 20th N.Z. Infantry Battalion, which had been relieved by the 2nd7th Australian Infantry Battalion. The attack delayed due to lack of transport to move troops up to start-line. 29th (Maori) Battalion also involved in the operation. The attack met serious opposition, and it ground to a halt.</p> <p>A German/Italian convoy is attacked by H.M.S. Orion, with eight caiques sunk and six surviving. Only one landed its troops on Crete.</p>
23 May	<p>A second German/Italian convoy is attacked by the Royal Navy in the morning. A large Royal Navy force steams into the Kythera Channel, but is subject to heavy air attacks by German aircraft. H.M.S. Greyhound is sunk, and then between 15.30 and 15.50 hours, H.M.S. Gloucester is hit repeatedly and sinks with heavy loss of life. H.M.S. Fiji is sunk at 20.15 hours after being disabled two hours earlier.</p> <p>5th Destroyer Flotilla, having sailed from Malta, is attacked as it reaches the western side of Crete. H.M.S. Kashmir and H.M.S. Kelly are sunk.</p>
24 May	<p>German troops from 95th Gebirgs Pioneer Battalion attack and gain the town of Kastelli, from 1st Greek Regiment, although the Greeks remain in the area and continue to harass the Germans in the locality.</p>
26/27 May	<p>A detachment from No. 7 Commando and No. 50 and 52 Middle East Commandos land at Suda Bay under the command of Colonel LAYCOCK.</p>

27 May	<p>28th (Maori) N.Z. Bn., 2nd/7th Australian and 2nd/8th Australian Infantry Battalions clear the road between Suda and Chania, which had been occupied by German troops from 141st Mountain Regiment.</p> <p>General WAVELL, C.-in-C., Middle East Command, makes the decision to evacuate Crete based upon current situation reports. FREYBERG orders Creforce to withdraw to the south coast for evacuation.</p> <p>About 3,000 Italian troops land on Crete.</p> <p>In the evening, a group of German soldiers penetrate Allied lines b=near the Imbros Gorge, but are held by four New Zealanders.</p>
28 May	<p>The retreat continues, under sustained German air attack.</p> <p>The majority of Layforce is cut off and surrounded.</p> <p>The evacuation commences from Sfakia.</p>
28/29 May	<p>About 4,000 British troops are evacuated from Heraklion and 1,000 from south coast at Sfakia.</p>
29/30 May	<p>6,000 men evacuated from Sfakia.</p>
30 May	<p>Colonel CAMPBELL surrenders the Australian troops at Retimo, after they are surrounded, and left with little ammunition or supplies.</p>
30/31 May	<p>1,500 men evacuated from Sfakia.</p>
31 May/1 June	<p>Final 4,000 men evacuated from Sfakia, about 6,500 left behind.</p>
1 June	<p>Crete now under German control. About 18,600 soldiers were evacuated, but about 12,000 remained on Crete.</p>
2 June	<p>German troops begin reprisals against Cretan civilians. Many are executed, and houses burnt and demolished.</p>
22 June	<p>Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, commences.</p>

Casualties – British (including Australian and New Zealand):

- 1,742 killed,
- 1,737 wounded,
- 11,835 prisoners of war.

German & Italian

- 1,990 killed,
- 2,131 wounded,
- 1,995 missing.

From Official History

	Killed	Wounded	P.o.W.
British	612	224	5,315
Royal Navy	114	30	1,035
R.A.F.	71	9	226
Australians	274	507	3,079
New Zealanders	671	967	2,180
Revised New Zealand figures in 1951	643	1,039	2,285