

Chronology of Events – Greece

1940	
10 June 1940	Italy declares war on France and United Kingdom.
28 th October 1940	Italian Troops cross the Greek border and advance into North West Greece.
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	Greece comes under command of G.H.Q. Middle East.
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 1 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.
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.
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.
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	<p>German Armoured Forces push back the Greek 19th Division along the Dojran Gap behind the Metaxas Line. British 1st Armoured Brigade dispatched to support Greek 19th Division.</p> <p>Australian 16th Infantry Brigade moves forward to the Veroja Pass (or Veria Pass) and occupy positions astride a mountain road, 3,000 feet above sea level. It snows.</p>
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	<p>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 27th New Zealand Machine Gun Battalion, the 64th Medium Regiment and 3rd R.T.R.</p> <p>The 16th Australian Brigade is withdrawn from the Veroja Pass to Servia on the Aliakmon Line.</p>
11 th April 1941	The German assault down the Florina Gap is halted by Allied troops, with significant casualties.

12 th April 1941	<p>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.</p> <p>At Vevi, the Germans push back The Rangers, but are held by the guns of the R.H.A. and Australian Anti-Tank gunners. The 2nd/8th and 2nd/4th Australian Infantry Battalions are surrounded, but are extricated and withdraw to the Aliakmon Line.</p> <p>Due to Australian and New Zealand Forces now fighting together, 1 Australian Corps redesignated as ANZAC Corps.</p>
13 th April 1941	<p>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.</p>
14 th April 1941	<p>King Peter leaves Belgrade for Athens and Yugoslav Forces collapse allowing the Germans to outflank all Greek Forces in Albania.</p> <p>Elements of 1st Armoured Brigade and 17th Australian Brigade form a force to protect Allied left flank.</p>
15 th April 1941	<p>Allied withdrawal commences, with 6th N.Z. Brigade acting as rearguard. 16th Australian Brigade to secure Larisa, a potential chokepoint through which all Allied Forces need to pass.</p>
16 th April 1941	<p>German 5th Panzer Division halted by Anzac Troops. General Wavell decides not to send 7th Australian Infantry Division and Polish Infantry Brigade to Greece as originally planned.</p>
17 th April 1941	<p>Yugoslav Forces officially surrender. Planning commences for evacuation of Allied Forces from Greece.</p>
18 th April 1941	<p>Greek Prime Minister commits suicide.</p> <p>16th Australian Brigade is attacked in the Pinios Gorge and 21st N.Z. Battalion at Ellasson. Initial attacks are held, but 2nd/2nd and 2nd/3rd Australian Battalions are eventually forced into the hills.</p> <p>German aircraft attack the retreating convoys of vehicles, but cause little damage.</p>

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.
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.
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.
	50,732 men were successfully evacuated from Greece to Crete and Alexandria, in what has been called a second Dunkirk, known as Operation 'Demon'. 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.

The Germans lost 1,518 men killed, and 3,360 wounded in Greece, plus 151 dead, 15 missing and 392 wounded in Yugoslavia.

A sergeant of the 20th New Zealand Battalion, John (Jack) Daniel HINTON (1908 – 1997), was awarded the Victoria Cross at Kalamata, in Greece, in April 1941. He was involved in hand-to-hand fighting against the Germans in the last days of the Greek campaign, before he was wounded and captured by the Germans. His award was announced to him by the commandant of the camp in which he was held prisoner in Germany. HINTON settled in Auckland after the war and died in 1997.