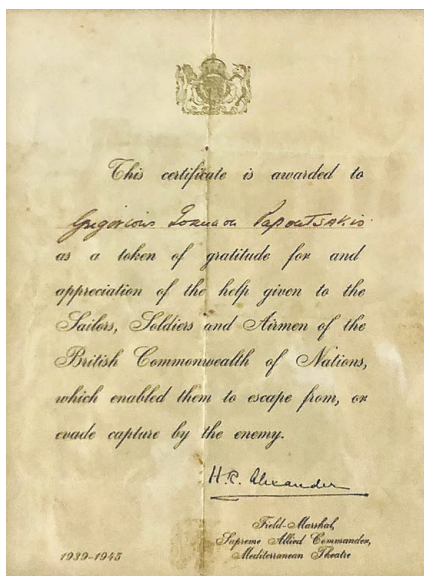
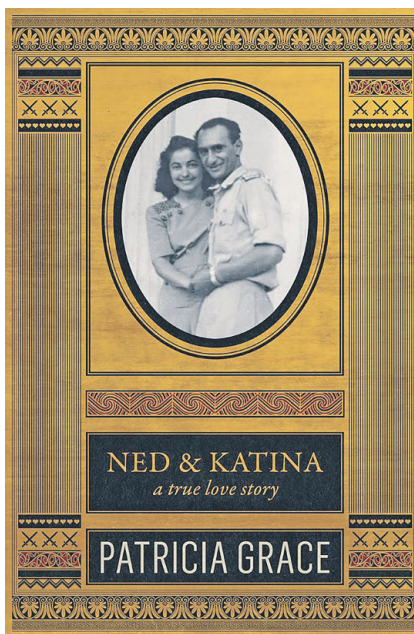


who often came with their families to a country with well-established Greek communities, which helped to lessen the social and cultural dislocation they experienced.

These female workers who came to New Zealand were employed on a contract basis for two years, in different parts of the country. On completion of their contract, some moved to small established Greek communities, especially in Wellington and Auckland. This scheme resulted in a significant period of 'chain' migration consisting of fiancés, close relatives, often assisted by these young women. Some of these women chose later to migrate for the second time to Australia to join other relatives, for better prospects or to be part of the much larger Greek communities there. By the 80s, some of these women returned to Crete. But many are still here, 60 years later, with their Kiwi children and grandchildren.



Certificate of recognition to Valia's grandfather.



The love story of Ned and Katina Nathan began in Crete and grew in Northland, New Zealand where the couple settled. Novelist Patricia Grace captured their family history in this book.

The abruptness of the migration experience, severing with all that is familiar and going into the unknown was a traumatic experience no matter how much the women desired to leave. And things were never the same. The Cretan women interviewed spoke well of how they were treated by New Zealanders. In those early days, the Kiwi soldiers' association kept an eye on them, offering support where they could. In one case, they hired a community hall and organized all that was needed to celebrate the weddings of three of these young women. Yet the toll the migration experience had upon them, and their children is quite profound.

The experience of these women has

stood the test of time and remains relevant in today's culturally diverse society of Aotearoa. Thanks to the support of Auckland Council's Creative Communities NZ program, their stories are now curated and presented on a digital platform in a manner that captures the profound impact of migration on the emotional and social landscape of these individuals involved and their chosen communities here in New Zealand. This platform allows future generations of this community and other migrant communities to access these stories.

In a personal reflection, I am reminded that my mother shares the same background as the migrant women from Crete - same generation, same island and similar circumstances. In fact, some of her siblings migrated to northern Europe during the post war migration exodus, so she could have easily been one of them. It's interesting to ponder that if she had come, I wouldn't be here in Aotearoa today. Yet, here I am, an immigrant woman from a different generation and circumstances. Unlike these women, my migration offered me more choices and opportunities. I arrived here in Aotearoa already fluent in English, with a doctorate from a British institution and an established international career. Comparing thus our migration experience is not fair especially since both Crete and New Zealand have changed significantly since the war. However, a part of me deeply relates to their longing to belong and the effort and commitment it takes to learn to have multiple homes and to navigate split loyalties.

The special bond between New Zealand and Crete is still visible today. Wellington has a sister city relationship with Chania (Hania) on Crete and the street in Wellington on which the Greek Orthodox Cathedral sits is named Hania. The digital project was launched in the Greek Community Hall in Auckland, on 25 November.

You can visit the digital platform of this project here: <https://cretannzwomen.nz/>  
• Valia Papoutsaki



Dr Valia Papoutsaki has a particular interest in islands and the people who live on them. As a scholar she has made a career of studying islands as distant as Crete, Okinawa and the Shetlands as a researcher, writer and oral historian.

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