



A story from the history of Australian Artillery:
Commemorating 150 years – 1871-2021

DX87 / SX500266 SGT Douglas Haig Russell DCM

2/3rd Field Regiment, RAA

'Holding the Klidi Pass'



Douglas Russell enlisted in Darwin in Oct 1939, and later deployed overseas as part of the 2/3rd Field Regiment. After fighting in the western desert, the Regiment deployed to Greece and was the first Australian regiment to engage the onslaught of the German invasion. Ordered to stage a staggered withdrawal, the Regiment made their way south. On 12 April 1941, the Regiment was deployed in the vicinity of the Klidi Pass and although initially holding the enemy at bay, the Australians was forced to withdraw to a more defensible position when the enemy broke through at 1300 hours. SGT Russell and his detachment was chosen to remain behind with the 25-pounder gun, and buy precious time for the remaining nine guns to be withdrawn.

His delaying mission now complete, SGT Russell took out an enemy observation post with a couple of well-aimed rounds, before he and his detachment also withdrew.

With Greece now lost and forced to destroy their equipment, the 2/3rd Regiment evacuated successfully to nearby Crete. But they were confident in the fact that they had done all they could, having fired over 65,000 rounds in just over three weeks of battle, causing the paint on the barrels of the guns they left behind to be blistered from the firing.

Now armed with captured Italian guns, the Gunners prepared to repel the German attempt to capture Crete. The Allies were again forced to evacuate, but this time a number of the Regiment fell into enemy hands as prisoners. Others, including Douglas Russell, made it back to Egypt, and began to re-organise, rearm, reinforce and continue the fight both in North Africa and later the Pacific.

SGT Russell was awarded the coveted Distinguished Conduct Medal, *'for great coolness and control at Klidi Pass'*. The Official History recounts that Russell's action "was largely responsible for the other nine guns being got away".

Russell survived the war and was discharged In October 1945.

Sources:

Anzacs of Greece, [The Battle of Greece](#), accessed 18 August 2021

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Australian War Memorial, [Collection](#), accessed 15 August 2021

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