

Kelvin Crombie – Brief Bio

Kelvin and Lexie Crombie have lived in Israel for nearly twenty-five years, and their four daughters, Orit, Nirel, Talia and Abigail were all born there.

Kelvin was based at Christ Church in the Old City of Jerusalem. He developed an intimate and profound knowledge about the history of the restoration of Israel and particularly the role of the ANZACs in that restoration, and has published a book, documentary video and pamphlets on the subject.

Early Interest

Kelvin first became interested in Israel while growing up on a wheat, sheep and pig farm at Babakin near Corrigin in the central wheat belt of West Australia.

This interest developed due to the service of uncles in the Middle East as Australian soldiers during the Second World War; and also due to various direct Israeli connections such as an Israeli family on a nearby farm; and the Six Day War in 1967.

He subsequently went to Israel in 1979 and took up residence in Jerusalem working at a hospital for handicapped children and then an old people's home.

Involvement at Christ Church

In 1986 Kelvin was asked by to become the guide at Christ Church, the Anglican church in the old city of Jerusalem, hosting thousands of people monthly, including secular Israelis studying the beginning of modern history in Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

It so happened that the beginnings of modernization in Jerusalem were synonymous with the construction of Christ Church and the work of early Protestants in the land.

As guide he not only had to lecture these numerous groups, but also had to undertake considerable research. During this research he discovered numerous historical artifacts. These included several large and unique models of Jerusalem as well as the largest portrait of Jerusalem, the 1879 Jerusalem Panorama a painting and the very special Montgomery Bible. One model, discovered by Kelvin in 1986 was made in Jerusalem in 1864 revealed a tunnel going under Christ Church. In that same year, 1986, the tunnel was re-discovered, but not excavated.

These artifacts then served as the basis for a museum that he developed at Christ Church when he also became Guest House manager in 1990.

These projects brought Kelvin into contact with numerous Israeli academics with whom he often works on joint projects.

Rediscovering of ANZAC identity

As this research focused much upon the involvement of Britain in the region, Kelvin covered the involvement of Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) soldiers here during the two World Wars.

As a result of his intimate knowledge of the ANZAC role in Israel's history, Kelvin began taking small groups of people to the Negev area and especially Beersheba from 1988, acquainting people there with the famous Battle and Charge of Beersheba on 31 October 1917. Over the years he has conducted perhaps as many as one hundred of these tours.

This subject intrigued Kelvin, but he desired to see the ANZAC involvement in the region within the broader historical and geo-political context, so from 1992 he began thoroughly researching the subject, and published *Anzacs, Empires and Israel's Restoration 1798-1948* in 1998. This book coincided with the release of a documentary on the same subject produced in conjunction with Peter Darg entitled *The Battle for Zion*.

In time Kelvin established four heritage centres in four locations associated with his work. Part of this work also involved opening up the huge underground cistern from where the tunnel began. This tunnel, which dates back to Herodian or pre-Herodian time, possibly connected Herod's Palace with the Temple Mount.

Over the years Kelvin has become involved with other ANZAC military heritage and commemoration projects in Israel. He is a participating member of the Association of the Heritage of the First World War, and was one of the initiators of the 2007 Ride of Peace and re-enactment of the 1917 Light Horse charge at Beersheba, and he guided the seventy-strong group of horsemen.

Kelvin is occasionally asked by the Australian Embassy, the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, the Israel-Australia Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Army and others (including recently a WA Government delegation) to provide exposure to visiting delegations concerning the ANZAC involvement in the land of Israel.

Of late he has also completed in conjunction with *HaTikvah Film Trust* a new documentary detailing this entire story entitled *From Exile to Restoration* (in Britain, *The Destiny of Britain*, and in USA, *The Cyrus Call*).

Kelvin has also published a booklet, *Journey to Beersheba* with the background story to the Battle of Beersheba and the re-enactment, in diary form.

The Crombie family has temporarily relocated back to Perth, Western Australia, and is available to speak about his work in Israel, and the unique relationship between Australia & New Zealand and Israel.