

JAPAN AND THE FORGOTTEN WAR STORY

AM 25.3.2010 P22 APRIL EDITION

A small wartime booklet discovered deep within the archives of the Albany Advertiser took the newspaper's former editor on an extraordinary journey, writes **MICHELE PHILLIPS**

Denise Smithson had no idea her life was going to take a very different turn when she first came across a small wartime booklet in the *Albany Advertiser's* archives 18 months ago.

But what began as simple curiosity became a quest that eventually took the newspaper's former editor to the other side of the country, then on to New Zealand, Singapore, Japan and England.

It was a journey that trailed through libraries, war archives, personal diaries and ships' logs and ended with her uncovering the story of the Japanese involvement in one of Australia's defining moments of World War I.

The story in a nutshell is that Japan, honouring a military agreement with Britain, had declared war on Germany on August 23, 1914 and was called on to provide part of the escort for the Australian and New Zealand troops being shipped to the Middle East.

His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Ship Ibuki, a battle cruiser weighing 13,263 tonnes and carrying four 30cm guns and eight 20cm guns, was part of a naval escort that included the Sydney and the Melbourne, HMS Minotaur and two

New Zealand cruisers, the Psyche and the Pyramus.

The Ibuki was there when 30,000 men, 10,000 of them from New Zealand, sailed from Albany on November 1, 1914.

The ship was also involved in the protection of the fleet from the German light cruiser, Emden, famously sunk by the Sydney eight days later near the Cocos Islands.

Ibuki eventually left the fleet at Aden to return to Japan, while the troops carried on up the Suez Canal to Egypt and, ultimately, Gallipoli.

The now-rare booklet Denise had found – titled *The Australian & New Zealand Expeditionary Forces: Assemblage at and Departure from Albany* – Western Australia – was written in 1915 but because of censorship laws wasn't published by the *Advertiser* until 1920. It listed the Ibuki as one of the escort ships and Denise was so intrigued by this mention of Japan's involvement with the Anzacs, she decided to do a little digging.

The digging soon turned into major research and now, thanks to a grant from the Australia-Japan Foundation and lots of hard work, she's about to publish her research project, *Japan's Forgotten Link to the Anzac Legend*.

"When you live in Albany you understand how important the Anzac legend is," she said.

"And being a journalist I saw the Ibuki mentioned and thought, 'There must be a great story in here somewhere'."

"I didn't realise Japan was part of the allied forces in World War I and I think a lot of people would be in a similar position.

"Everything that happened in World War II has coloured people's impressions of the Japanese and you can imagine that this was quite sensitive – for me to be asking them questions military-wise."

She decided her best course of action was to go directly to the consulates in Canberra before she embarked on any detailed research.

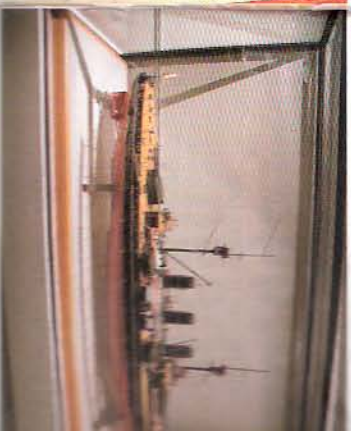
"I went to everyone – the Japanese Embassy, New Zealand, the Brits, the French, everyone – and told them what I was doing.

"And then I saw a newspaper advert for the Australia-Japan Foundation and how they have research grants, so I applied.

"I came up with a concept and told them about me and about the Anzac's place in Albany's history and how I wanted to find out as much about the Ibuki as I could, and they were very enthusiastic."



H.N.A.T. HOROGRATA' 4.20
14. 11. 1914
Several other names of ships
The ship Albany set base on Sunday
arrived by Mrs. Minotaur. "Middlemore"
Sydney. It was a wonderful day etc.
which also being from between the two
No wonder the Anzac's of 2000 on Monday
meeting, our part of the Anzac's and
Anzac's were part of Japanese with
Anzac's. "Middlemore" which was 2000
of the Anzac's. "Middlemore" which was 2000





Denise Smithson sifted through archives, files and World War I diary entries for her research project, *Japan's Forgotten Link to the Anzac Legend*.

"They've been very supportive from the start."

Denise's next stop after Canberra was Hobart, where the *Ibuki* had berthed on its way to New Zealand, then on to the Auckland war museum and Wellington, where the New Zealand troops had embarked on what for many was their final journey.

She later went to Singapore, Tokyo and London, poring over files and sifting through archives, delighted by the support she received at each destination.

She was also very grateful, she said, for the soldiers who ignored censorship laws and kept war diaries, many of which mentioned the *Ibuki*.

It's obvious that some of these diaries have had a lasting effect on her. "I got a bit carried away reading them," she said.

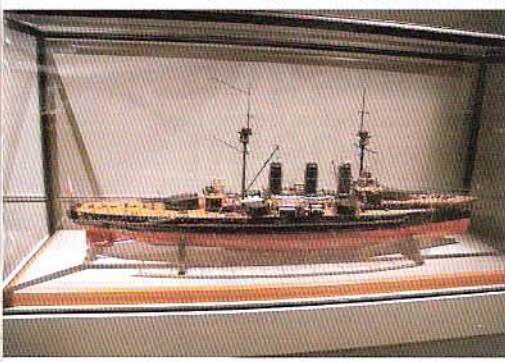
One of them, written by Major Geoff McCrae, was particularly poignant. Major McCrae was twice wounded at Gallipoli while serving with 7 Battalion, then in 1916, at the age of 26, he was killed in action at the battle of Fromelles in France.

It's this personal side of the *Ibuki* story that Denise hopes to bring to life once her research project has been launched and she can concentrate on writing a book.

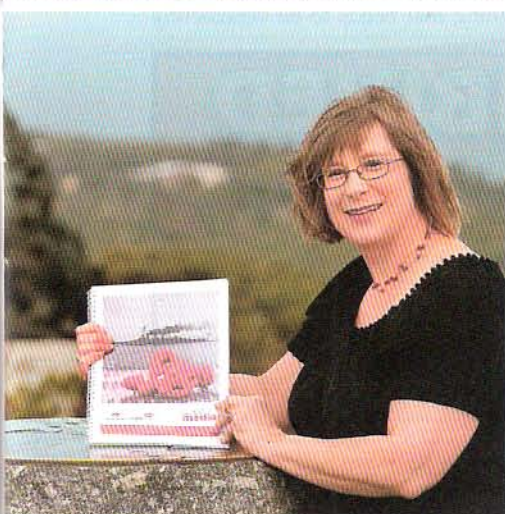
The launch of her report is at 10am on April 24 at the Dog Rock Convention Centre.

If you would like to attend, call Smithson Media on 0419 923 071.

H.M.A.T. "HORORATA" A. 20.
14. 11. 1914
Denise Smithson
We left Albany at 6am on Sunday 1st inst. the fleet consisting of 36 transports escorted by H.M.S. "Munster" "Melbourne" "Sydney" it was a wonderful sight. Ships stretching from horizon to horizon. We rounded the Levee at 2am on Monday morning and picked up the *Medic* and *Corvus* under escort of Japanese battleships "Ibuki" which had come out to join us from Fremantle. On Sunday 8th the transport left.



WHOLESALE DIRECT TO THE PUBLIC
er Road, Gledhow
eter Bertei on:
923 389
T.E.G. ROCKS



Japan's Forgotten Link to the ANZAC Legend

Smithson media

Denise Smithson
April 24 2019

Smithson
media

Freelance Journalism, Press Release Writing,
Editing, Proof Reading, Media Campaigns,
Event/Exhibition Reviews, Event Coordination,
Photography, Media Liaison, Copy Writing

Contact Denise Smithson - *Your local media consultant*

Tel: 9842 9841 Fax: 9842 9843

Mobile: 0419 923 071

Email: denise.smithson@smithsonmedia.com.au

364 Middleton Loop Albany WA 6332

www.smithsonmedia.com.au