

## Isabel Cowan, Santa Maria College, Western Australia

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The Anzac spirit has continued to evolve since the landing at Gallipoli on April 25<sup>th</sup> 1915. The Australian national identity was first based on the Aussie bushman who demonstrated hardiness and a democratic spirit. After the First World War, we developed a stronger national identity that incorporated the courage that the Anzacs displayed while at Gallipoli. Although the First World War was a military disaster and a human tragedy, it was through this experience referred to also as our 'baptism of fire'<sup>1</sup>, that Australia created her own national identity. Through primary sources and oral accounts the legend developed, showing the Anzacs' courage, mateship, determination, resourcefulness and sense of humour. Our national identity is based on these values. These qualities were significant to defining our Anzac legend, providing Australia with a proud past and laying the foundations for who we are now.

Our national identity was originally based on our hard working Aussie bushmen<sup>2</sup> who inspired images of hardiness, mateship, resourcefulness and democratic spirit. Our identity was to change, as the Anzacs of the First World War became our heroes. The two identities merged and created the Australian national identity of tough, hard working, brave, resourceful, determined Australians. We successfully created an identity that spoke truly of how men and women were before, during and after the First World War. Our national identity is very much based on admirable values and is recognised worldwide.

Australia's response to the Mother Country's plea for help was for every lad and bloke to sign up; it was his duty. They left Australian soil for Gallipoli ready to embark on war, and what they were to face was a most difficult situation. The historic landing at Gallipoli was to give birth to our legend, Jack Kirkpatrick, later known as John Simpson<sup>3</sup> is now known as a hero of our past. He was an Anzac model, displaying courage, loyalty, bravery and resourcefulness. Simpson's courage guided him to get injured men away from the firing line. He was their glimmer of hope during tough times. Boldly risking his life to save others, he seemed to be laughing in the face of death with his singing and whistling. The men admired Simpson; Captain C. Longmore remembered how the soldiers *watched him spellbound from the trenches ... it was one of the most inspiring sights of those early Gallipoli days.*<sup>4</sup> Men like Simpson defined the Anzac legend.

Australians could see the importance of Gallipoli to their country; nurse Nellie Pike said: *We were all glad to be taking part in the great adventure. They were grim and tragic, but somehow inspiring days.*<sup>5</sup> These are inspiring words written during the tragic time of the Gallipoli campaign. These men were men fighting out of duty to the Mother country. With only 14 years of Federation and nation building behind us, our response to England's cry for help was enormous and demonstrated our Australian Anzac spirit, which seemed to have only been waiting for the heroic stories of Gallipoli to bring it to life. Our efforts were recognised

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney Morning Herald dated 6/8/1914

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Recreation and Culture Portal, The Australian Bush, available: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/busy/>, accessed on 18/11/2005

<sup>3</sup> Afundit.co.uk, John Simpson Kirkpatrick, available: <http://www.afundit.co.uk/jskirk1.htm>, accessed on 18/10/2005

<sup>4</sup> John Woods, Australia's Favourite Hero, available: <http://anzacs.net.Simpson.htm>, accessed on 10/11/2005

<sup>5</sup> Nurse Stories, Nellie Pike, in Baker, Nightingales in the Mud, page 42, available: <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/nurses.html>, accessed on 18/10/2005

by King George V who said: *I heartily congratulate you upon the splendid conduct and bravery displayed by the Australian troops in the operations at the Dardanelles, who have indeed proved themselves worthy sons of the Empire.*<sup>6</sup> The ultimate sacrifice for the nation was made by men like Private Donald Clarkson, a farmer from Toodyay, who wrote to his young family before his death on the Western Front in 1918: *The difficulty lay between my duty to my family and to my country and though I love your mother more than anything else on earth and the agony of leaving her and you little children no one can ever know, I did it because I thought it my duty ... if I did not do it I should always feel that I had failed my country in her hour of need.*<sup>7</sup>

My own Grandmother's brother, Great Uncle Jock Anderson, was a man to be proud of. He was an engineer for boats during the Second World War. The ship he was on was rammed by the German Bismarck, on May 24, 1941. The hole made endangered the lives of everyone down in the engine room; Great Uncle Jock took on the responsibility to repair the hole while the younger men went above. Jock survived and was awarded a George Cross in recognition of his courage. On another occasion, his sister (my father's mother) received a letter saying he was aboard the HMS Hood<sup>8</sup> when it literally disintegrated with only three men surviving. Fortunately for him, he had been transferred to do repairs on another boat only days before. His Anzac spirit was expressed, elsewhere: being an engineer, he was able to trade whisky for chocolates and candy which he would then give to English orphans. After the war he came back to Western Australia and in the Anzac spirit of serving the community founded Legacy Western Australia which was established to help widows and children of ex-servicemen. Among its many services it runs orphanages for children whose parents died during the war.

Today the Anzac spirit is being demonstrated in a different area; our soldiers in Iraq, the Australian SAS (Special Air Service) are known for their toughness, resourcefulness and bravery, just like the Anzacs. The Australian SAS displayed discretion and resourcefulness gathering intelligence behind enemy lines. The SAS is known to be one of the best in its line of work, like the Anzacs. The Anzac spirit is seen through other events that relate closer to home for me. In 2002 in Kukerin, a small town about three hours from Narembeen in Western Australia, a farm was burnt down by an out-of-control fire; most of the livestock were killed, the crops burnt and the sheds destroyed. Almost everything except the farmhouse was gone. The years that the owners had put into the best bloodline of sheep, and carefully monitored crops were all down the drain. The community, from not only Lake Grace but all around the Wheatbelt, helped the family, demonstrating the true Anzac spirit of mateship. They were offered much from the community: sheep, grain and hay; and my father, who sells Merinos, offered rams and ewes from his own stock to help replenish the lost stock.

The Anzac spirit is integral to our sense of identity. It has continued to be the spirit that binds the country and is important that it is passed onto future generations. It is heartening then, to see this happening with the Anzac Day memorial service at Kings Park which is famous Australia-wide for its large attendance especially by those from my generation.

The characteristics of the Anzac spirit such as courage, mateship, resourcefulness, and a larrikin sense of humour have defined our nation today. As Australia has matured and developed so has the 'Anzac spirit. It inspires actions like helping others in crisis, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Australian War Memorial, Minister for veterans, Worthy sons of the empire, available: <http://www.awm.gov.au/dawn/empire/index.asp> accessed on 17/10/2005

<sup>7</sup> Pam Casellas, For my Country, My Life, The West Australian dated 11/11/2005

<sup>8</sup> David C Chandler and Colin McIntyre, Chronicles of World War II, page 67

common identity that unites us enables the development of stronger communities. The Anzac legend is alive and active today. It is my hope that we never forget its value to us.

**Isabel Cowan**

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