

Saving Mawson's Hut

A team of four headed south from Hobart last summer to work on Australia's most iconic Antarctic heritage site – Mawson's Hut. They removed snow and ice build-up from inside the hut, checked the cladding, secured loose planks, and assessed further conservation options, including the possible overcladding of the existing roof.

The works party, provided by the Mawson's Huts Foundation, made the 25-day round-trip voyage to Cape Denison, Commonwealth Bay, on board the tourist vessel *MS Marina Svetava*. The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) provided tools, generators, communication equipment, clothing, first aid supplies, and cameras and film to document the work.

The last significant conservation effort was undertaken by the AAD in 2002. The conservation team repaired parts of the Main Hut, removed snow and ice from inside, catalogued artefacts, and installed sensors and data loggers to monitor the hut's internal microclimate (a continuation of the process started in 1997-98, *Australian Antarctic Magazine* 5: 19-21). Mawson's Huts Foundation chairman, David Jensen, says that one more expedition should secure the hut's future to its centenary and beyond.

'The main work to be done is overcladding of the existing roof of the main building and the removal of more ice and snow, and thereafter ongoing maintenance,' he says.

Mawson's Hut has been battered by fierce katabatic winds – captured here by photographer Frank Hurley – since it was built in 1911.

'We plan to launch a \$2 million fundraising campaign to give us all the funds we require for this maintenance.'

Jensen says the success of the conservation effort to date is due to the collaborative approach of the foundation and the Australian Government, through the AAD.

'Having the AAD's full support has been critical to the success of the operation and is a great example of what can be achieved by a joint venture between private enterprise and government,' Jensen says.

Eight significant conservation expeditions have been mounted by the AAD and/or the Mawson's Huts Foundation since 1977. The huts were recognised for their historic, scientific and cultural significance in 2004 when they were included on the National Heritage List. The huts and memorial crosses are also listed on the Historic Sites and Monuments List of the Antarctic Treaty.

More information on the conservation work can be found at: <http://www.aad.gov.au/default.asp?casid=12151>

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Islands to Ice exhibition

A new permanent exhibition celebrating Antarctica and the Southern Ocean opened at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery on 7 March. *Islands to Ice: The great Southern Ocean and Antarctica* was opened by the Tasmanian Minister for Arts, Lara Giddings, with some 450 invited guests in attendance. The opening was timed to coincide with the 94th anniversary of Roald Amundsen's telegram to the world, sent from the Hobart GPO in 1912, announcing his successful journey to the South Pole.

The exhibition has five main themes:

- **Earliest perceptions:** brings the narrative of the earliest human perceptions of the region to life through multimedia.
- **The Southern Ocean:** presents still and moving images of the Southern Ocean, focusing on its role in climate. A huge diorama reveals the diversity of animal species in this region, from a bait-ball of fish to sleeper sharks, albatrosses and shearwaters.

The new *Islands to Ice* exhibition at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery has a diorama showcasing the diversity of animal species in Antarctica.

- **The subantarctic islands:** highlights two main subantarctic island groups under Australian jurisdiction – Macquarie Island and the Heard and McDonald islands – and briefly describes and illustrates 24 other subantarctic island groups.
- **Antarctica: the continent of ice:** explores the different forms of ice, describes Antarctic flora and fauna, examines some of the scientific material used in Antarctica, and includes displays such as an ice-core sample and a touch drawer of animal specimens.
- **Humans in the Antarctic region:** explores why people go to the Antarctic region and how they live once they are there. Artefacts from various expeditions are presented in the gallery, including early navigation instruments, whaling equipment, provisions lists, letters, paintings, personal items, and a sled from Borchgrevink's pioneering 1898 expedition. There's also the first Australian flag flown at the South Pole. Large objects include celestial and terrestrial globes, a blubber press from Heard Island, figureheads, scrimshaw, historic maps and documents, and a scale model of Mawson's hut at Commonwealth Bay.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is a 3D theatre that gives viewers the feeling that they're standing inside photographs taken by Frank Hurley during Mawson's 1911-14 expedition. The images are part of a larger, rarely seen collection taken by Hurley using a stereoscopic camera and brought to life by academic Peter Morse (a recent AAD Arts Fellow) and Paul Bourke of the Swinburne Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing.

The new exhibition is open from 10-5 daily except for Christmas Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day.

—MICHELLE NICHOLS

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

