

In the news

New herbarium to house valuable plant collection



KATE KIEFFER

Professor Rod Seppelt, curator of the AAD's new herbarium

June marked the official opening of the new herbarium at Kingston that houses one of the most valuable assets of the AAD – the taxonomic plant collection. This herbarium houses over 25,000 specimens of mainly mosses, liverworts and lichens, collected from locations in Antarctica and subantarctic islands as well as many alpine and arctic localities. The specimens are a valuable record of life at the ecological extreme.

The new herbarium contains a specially designed specimen vault to protect the specimens from fire and water damage. Regular pest control measures are also in place to protect the specimens from insects such as silver fish, dermestid beetles, weevils and other small insects that may sneak through the door when the vault is open, and which could easily destroy the collection. Coupled with stringent quarantine rules regarding new material, these measures will ensure that the collection remains pest free. Adjacent to the vault is a new laboratory for taxonomic research.

The specimens are linked to a state-of-the-art Antarctic biodiversity database which contains 10,205 plant specimen records so far. A current project is in place to curate a collection of a further 5,000 specimens from Heard Island and botanist Perpetua Turner has joined the AAD to assist with this enormous task. Curator of the herbarium, Professor Rod Seppelt described his studies as being 'fundamental to our understanding of biodiversity and conservation in Antarctica – we need to

know what is there and where it is before we can develop a sensible and informed management and protection policy'.

DANA BERGSTROM, BIOLOGY PROGRAM, AAD

New Australian Antarctic Territory ship stamps released

To mark the 50th anniversary of the *Kista Dan*'s first voyage to the Antarctic, Australia Post has released four stamps featuring the distinctive *Dan* ships – *Kista Dan*, *Thala Dan*, *Magga Dan* and *Nella Dan*.

The *Kista Dan* was the first of four 'Dan' ships built by the Danish firm J Lauritzen and chartered by Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) for Australian Antarctic exploration and scientific research.



50c *Kista Dan*: The charter of *Kista Dan* opened the door to Antarctica for ANARE. Much subantarctic research had been done since 1947 but in early 1954 the ice-strengthened *Kista Dan* allowed the establishment of Australia's first continental station – Mawson. On the return voyage *Kista Dan* weathered a 12-hour hurricane in Prydz Bay, when winds of over 100 knots and huge seas rolled her to 70°. *Kista Dan* is recognised in the naming of Kista Rock, west of Davis and Kista Strait, west of Mawson.



50c *Magga Dan*: *Magga Dan* sailed down the Thames in November 1956 for her maiden voyage – to deploy the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, and the Royal Society's Antarctic Expedition, to the

Weddell Sea. In her ANARE service from 1959 to 1961, *Magga Dan* with Director Phil Law, surveyors, scientists and pilots, explored most of the coastline of Australian Antarctic Territory, from Mawson to Oates Land. The Australian flag was raised near Magga Peak in February 1959.



\$1 *Thala Dan*: *Thala Dan* was launched in 1957, and was chartered by Australia later that year, working with ANARE until early 1982. On her voyage to Macquarie Island

in late 1958 she carried the first helicopter used by ANARE. *Thala Dan* was extended six metres, rebuilt and modernised in 1975. The top superstructure deck was removed, a new deck built, and the old deckhouse replaced one level higher. This increased expeditioner accommodation to 50. New facilities included a larger helicopter deck, more deep-freeze storage space, and enclosed bridge wings. The new length overall was 81 metres. This \$1 stamp features *Thala Dan* in her original layout. Thala Fjord, Thala Hills, Thala Rock and Thala Valley were named for *Thala Dan*.



\$1.45 *Nella Dan*: The most famous of the *Dan* ships to serve ANARE was the *Nella Dan*, named in honour of Nel Law. During its 26 years with ANARE it sup-

ported major exploratory and scientific activities. While resupplying Macquarie Island in December 1987, the *Nella Dan* was driven aground and eventually scuttled. The *Nella Dan* is shown anchored in the Antarctic.

Australia Post has released AAT stamp issues since 1957. Stamp products released for the Antarctic Ship issue include a first day cover, stamp pack and 'maximum' cards (pre-stamped postcards featuring one of the new issue). All products are available nationally from Australia Post outlets.