

# Weather beaten hut given extra protection

A six-man conservation team spent Christmas 2006 finishing a major task in the ongoing restoration and conservation of Mawson's Huts at Cape Denison.



Overcladding the roof of Mawson's Main Hut with Baltic pine boards.

The team over-clad the roof of the living section of the main hut with Baltic pine boards – the same material it was built from in 1912. Over-cladding the roof protects the original boards, which remain in place, while the new boards will stop snow and ice penetrating the roof and causing further damage.

The team – provided by the Mawson's Huts Foundation and supported by the Australian Antarctic Division and commercial sponsorship – completed around 90 percent of the task of preventing the snow from entering the building. The last conservation effort was in late 2005, when snow and ice were removed from inside the hut.

The team also brought back the original 1.6 m Oregon pine pole from the roof of the living quarters. The pole was used to hoist the British flag in honour of King George V during the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) of 1911-1914. Windborne ice had eroded the pole to about half its original thickness and it was in imminent danger of being snapped off and blown out to sea by the regular hurricane-force winds at Cape Denison. The flagpole was removed for conservation and replaced with a replica, which will stand in its place until the original can be safely returned.

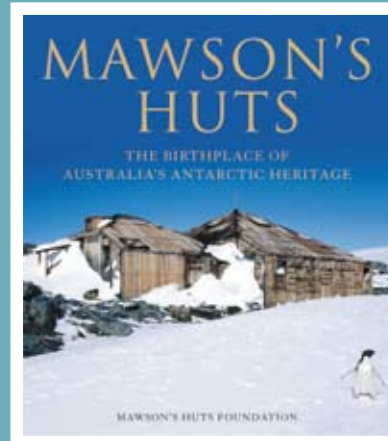
Plans are now underway for the next conservation phase – excavating and cataloguing thousands of artefacts left behind by the AAE, as well as maintenance on the buildings.

The shift in focus from urgent structural repairs to maintenance and archaeology is an opportune time for the Australian Antarctic Division to develop a new management plan for the site. Since the previous management plan, which guided on-site work from 2001 to 2006, the site has been listed as a National Heritage place and a Commonwealth Heritage place, and included in an Antarctic Specially Protected Area and an Antarctic Specially Managed Area, under the Antarctic Treaty. The new plan meets the requirements of these recent designations, extends the conservation principles that underpin on-site work, and sets up key phases of work in the lead-up to the site's centenary in 2012.

A draft management plan was available for public comment in July and August 2007, and will be launched before the next conservation expedition in December 2007.

Conservation of Mawson's Huts is expected to continue through public-private partnerships (as was Douglas Mawson's own expedition nearly a century ago). In May 2007, the Australian Government announced that the public purse will continue to fund on-site conservation through a \$1.3 million grant to the Mawson's Huts Foundation. The Foundation, in turn, will raise additional funds.

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## Historic book

A photographic history of Sir Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE), and the historic huts used by the men at Cape Denison, will be published in May 2008 to raise funds for the conservation of the Cape Denison site.

The 192-page coffee table book, *Mawson's Huts: The birthplace of Australia's Antarctic heritage*, contains over 200 images, including the largest published collection of photographs taken by the expedition's official photographer, Frank Hurley, and other members of the AAE. The book also contains a brief history of Mawson's expedition, biographical details of the men, and never before seen letters. The book is produced by the Mawson's Huts Foundation in partnership with the Australian Antarctic Division.

A limited leather-bound edition signed by Mawson's seven grand children can be ordered for AUS\$400, plus freight, and will include a limited edition print of a painting by either Alasdair McGregor or Angus McDonald – artists and members of previous conservation expeditions. Standard editions of the book are available for AUS\$95. Copies can be ordered through [www.mawsons-huts.org.au](http://www.mawsons-huts.org.au).