

Davis station turns 50

Australia's Davis station celebrated its 50th anniversary on Saturday 13th January 2007.

Davis was established on 13th January 1957, at the start of the International Geophysical Year, by an Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition party led by Dr Phillip Law – the founding Director of the Australian Antarctic Division. Aboard the *Kista Dan*, the party had spent days searching the coast off the Vestfold Hills for a good anchorage and source of fresh water. On 12th January a suitable spot was sighted – a small rocky terrace above a black sandy beach – and unloading of the ship and station building began.

The next day a small ceremony was held to officially establish Davis station, named in honour of Captain John King Davis, master of many historic Antarctic ships, including Douglas Mawson's 1911-14 Australasian Antarctic Expedition ship *Aurora*.

The first two years at Davis were devoted to gathering basic knowledge about the Vestfold Hills – one of the largest ice-free areas in Antarctica – and developing essential station services.

Davis was temporarily closed in January 1965 to allow concentration of the Australian Antarctic Division's resources on the building of Casey station. It was re-opened on 15th February 1969, and has operated continuously since then.

There are over 300 lakes in the Vestfold Hills, ranging from hypersaline to fresh water. In the 1970s a biology programme began, studying the lakes' microorganisms. As the programme



At 1600 hours on January 13th 1957, work stopped and all hands assembled around a flagpole, which had been strapped to the wall of the first hut being erected. Phil Law made a short speech stressing the importance of the new station in the International Geophysical Year programme. This was followed by short account of achievements of Captain John King Davis, the singing of God Save the Queen, three cheers, and then back to work.

developed, field huts were built at several sites in the Vestfolds, the first being Brookes Hut at Long Fjord in 1972.

In the 1980s Davis station was substantially upgraded as part of the rebuilding programme for all Australia's Antarctic stations. Davis has now become the premier Australian Antarctic research centre. It is the hub of investigations into the biology, geology and glaciology of the Lambert Glacier/Amery Ice Shelf region, and the home of a major atmospheric physics programme using laser technology to investigate the Antarctic stratosphere.

Davis is also the base for Australia's two C212-400 aircraft that deploy researchers and equipment to the less-accessible areas of the Vestfold Hills and remote coastal and inland areas beyond,

undertaking aerial surveys and transferring personnel between Mawson, Casey and Davis.

Expeditioners marked the 50th anniversary with a group photo outside the original hut, similar to the first group photo taken in 1954. Celebrations included a telephone hook-up between Davis and Dr Phillip Law, now aged 94. In the spirit of international friendship, representatives from the nearby Russian station, Progress 2, and China's Zhong Zhan, were invited to share in the event.

A slide show of images of Davis from the 1950s to today, and a commemorative video and poster, are available on the Australian Antarctic Division's website at www.aad.gov.au.

Compiled by Information Services, AAD

AURORA AUSTRALIS CONTINUES HER ANTARCTIC SERVICE



Australia's Antarctic flagship, the bold, orange ice breaker, *Aurora Australis*, will ply the Southern Ocean between Hobart and Antarctica for another five years, under a new contract between the Australian Antarctic Division and P&O Maritime Services.

The contract was renewed after a competitive 'Request for Proposal' process, which attracted responses from around the world. It enables the Antarctic Division to use the ship for 180 days per year over the next five years.

Since 1989 the *Aurora Australis* has delivered personnel, supplies and equipment to Australia's Antarctic and sub-Antarctic stations, and carried intrepid marine scientists safely through the Southern Ocean rollercoaster.

Now docked in Hobart, the ship is undergoing a facelift, with refurbishment of cabins, recreational areas and laboratories, addition of a new marine laboratory on the trawl deck, and repairs to plumbing and telephone systems.