



Mawson's Huts and Mawson's Huts Historic Site

ANTARCTICA

Even the world's most ferocious winds and coldest temperatures, formidable mountains and crevasses could not destroy the incredible spirit and courage of Sir Douglas Mawson during his epic treks in Antarctica.

This spirit is epitomised in Mawson's huts which can still be found standing in this hostile environment. Thanks to the ingenuity and determination of pioneering Australian explorers and scientists, the mysteries of this vast, remote land continue to be revealed, and answers to some of the world's most pressing environmental problems sought.

As international scientific interest in Antarctica grew in the late 1800s, it sparked the interest of notable Australian scientists including mining engineer and geologist Sir Douglas Mawson, who was a man with a singular passion for the Antarctic environment. His plans to explore the continent caught the nation's imagination, and when he set off in 1911 into a largely unknown environment, Australians rallied behind him, confident that his explorations of the continent would help enrich Australia's scientific knowledge.

Sir Douglas Mawson established Australia's first base for scientific and geographical discovery in Antarctica at Cape Denison on the continent's northern coast, 3000 kilometres south of Hobart.

He and his team designed and built five simple huts (one hut, now presumed destroyed, was located at the Western Base, on Shackleton Ice Shelf on Queen Mary Land Station). It was from these huts he set out to learn as much as he could about the forces that carved out Antarctica. His work, on that trip as well as the survey work on subsequent trips to the continent, were instrumental in Australia later claiming 42 per cent of Antarctica as Australian Territory.

Between 1912 and 1913, Mawson's huts provided the basis for his team's heroic exploration of the Antarctic landscape as well as the study of weather, geology and magnetics, and the pioneering use of wireless communication on the Antarctic Continent. They battled intense winds, icy conditions and long periods of isolation to gather this material.



In 1947 the Australian Government established the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions with Sir Douglas Mawson as one of the key advisers to the Government on Antarctic policy. He recommended the establishment of a permanent base on the continent and in 1954 Mawson Station was built and still operates.

Today, Australian scientists, who enjoy an impressive international reputation, are at the forefront of Antarctic research and their investigations and ongoing work on the frozen continent promise exciting future discoveries.

In coming years it is anticipated that Australian research will reveal important data about climate change, space, weather, ocean productivity and ice cap thickness. This follows on from discoveries in the last 50 years about Antarctica's vital role in the generation of much of Australia's weather. Importantly, Australia continues to work to clean up and contain abandoned work sites in Antarctica.

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