

# ANTARCTIC

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## ANTARCTIC

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3. Jim Lowery (Wellington), 1982
4. Iris Orchard (Canterbury), 1990
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Cover photo:

The replica "Shackleton Whisky": MacKinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt Whisky" drunk on Christmas Day in Antarctica. Image courtesy Chanel Furburough.

# Antarctic Round Up

December 2011



## Paul Woodgate awarded Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit

Paul Woodgate, more usually known as Woody has been working for the New Zealand Antarctic Programme for 30 years in a range of roles. He is a legend to those who travel to the Ice through Antarctica New Zealand and has the important role of making sure that every person and piece of cargo bound for Antarctica actually gets there. When interviewed on receiving his award, (Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit) Woody said that “having a job that touched all walks of life was reward enough”. Woody has prepared a wide range of people for their Antarctic experience, from school students to the King of Malaysia, from New Zealand Prime Ministers to specialist scientists, from Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir David Attenborough to poet Bill Manhire, all of whom receive the same high quality service. With four flights per week to the Ice during the summer season, Woody often works long hours, with the responsibility of ensuring that Scott Base always has enough supplies of the food and equipment they need.

## Fishing vessel the *Sparta* hits iceberg

The Russian-flagged fishing ship *Sparta* hit an underwater iceberg in the Ross Sea in December. The accident caused a split in the hull of the ship which flooded at least one hold. Three ships went to their rescue assisted by a Hercules aircraft sent by the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) which assessed the heavy sea ice conditions around the ship. The 48 m vessel, with 32 crew on board, had a 30 cm



Fishing vessel *Sparta* hits iceberg. Image courtesy United States Air Force.

hole in the side, 1.5 metres below the water line. The Korean Research vessel *Araon* arrived in the area to assist and once the vessel was stabilised both vessels headed to ice-free area of open ocean. The *Sparta* took two weeks to travel back to New Zealand where it was repaired in Nelson before returning to Antarctic waters.

January 2012

## Lockheed Martin to support United States Antarctic Programme Logistics

The United States National Science Foundation has awarded Lockheed Martin the contract to support the US Antarctic Program’s logistical and scientific research station requirements in Antarctica. The company will support McMurdo, Palmer and the Amundsen – Scott South Pole Stations along with field stations and provide power, food, transport, communications and medical needs. Lockheed Martin will take over from Raytheon Polar Services on 1 April 2012.

February 2012

## Bouvet Island expedition

A team of four led by Queenstown based Aaron Halstead, successfully climbed Bouvet Island’s highest peak – reaching the summit after a nine-hour ascent. The team couldn’t see anything from the summit due to high winds (80 km/hour) and a storm. Bouvet Island, in Norwegian territory is very isolated and is situated more than 2000 km from any land.

## Russian Scientists Drill into Lake Vostok

Russian scientists say they have removed 40 litres of water from Lake Vostok, 3769 metres beneath the ice sheet. Science teams have been working towards this for 20 years. It is the first time one of Antarctica’s sub glacial lakes has been penetrated. Lake Vostok is a 16,000 sq km body of water that has been isolated from the rest of the world for almost 15 million years. Scientists will examine the water for so-called “extremophiles” – bacteria and other single-celled organisms that have evolved to live in conditions in which other life forms would struggle to survive, such as darkness, or extreme temperatures, or salinity. The scientists have been careful to drill in such a way to avoid contamination of the lake with drilling fluid. The team planned to pierce the roof of the sealed ice cave which encases the lake and then let pressure in the lake force water into the drill hole. The lake water will freeze in the borehole and create a plug, preventing contamination and then scientists can return to sample during the next summer season. 🚀

# New Zealand to Help Conserve Norway's Antarctic Heritage

By Paula Granger

The Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, announced in December 2011 that Norway would support New Zealand expertise to secure the only remaining link to Norway's Heroic Era polar history in Antarctica.

The announcement came following a bilateral meeting between the Norwegian Prime Minister and New Zealand Prime Minister John Key. The Norwegian Government has pledged NOK four million (\$900,000.000 NZD) funding for the Antarctic Heritage Trust to help conserve Norwegian explorer Carsten Borchgrevink's 1899 expedition base at Cape Adare, Antarctica.

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key welcomed the news saying, "Norway and New Zealand have a history of strong cooperation on Antarctic issues. This four-year project is a chance to preserve an important piece of heritage, and Norway's generous support for this project is greatly appreciated."

The Norwegian Prime Minister visited Antarctica in December to commemorate the achievements of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. While he was staying at McMurdo Station, the United States Antarctic Research Station, he attended a dinner at New Zealand's Scott Base and visited the Heroic Era bases of Ernest Shackleton and Captain Robert Falcon Scott at Cape Royds and Cape Evans.

Prefabricated in Norway, Borchgrevink's expedition base includes the first buildings ever constructed on the Antarctic continent. With Roald Amundsen's Framheim Base lost, this is the only link in Antarctica to his expedition.

The news of funding support was welcomed by the Antarctic Heritage Trust. According to Paul East, the Chair of the Antarctic Heritage Trust, the Trust is extremely grateful for the

Norwegian Government's confidence in their expertise. The Trust has an extensive track record in conserving Heroic Era-age polar buildings and their collections and is looking forward to conserving this valuable part of history despite the logistical challenges of this site.

The Trust cares for four heroic-era bases in Antarctica and has a successful record of conservation. The Trust has completed a four year programme to conserve Ernest Shackleton's 1908 base and over 5000 artefacts at Cape Royds and has completed five years of a seven year conservation programme to conserve Robert Scott's 1911 base at Cape Evans along with its extensive

artefact collection. To date over 5,500 artefacts (out of 8,500) from Cape Evans have been conserved with the project due for completion in 2014.

A detailed Conservation Plan and Implementation Plan has been prepared to conserve Borchgrevink's base and its 1000-plus artefact collection. Work will commence once the project is fully funded. The Antarctic Heritage Trust is continuing to seek funds for this project. If you would like to support the Antarctic Heritage Trust in its work, by either making a donation or through Antarctic Explorer Club membership, please contact the Trust on: [info@nzah.org](mailto:info@nzah.org) or visit [www.nzah.org](http://www.nzah.org)



Antarctic Heritage Trust Programme Manager Al Fastier shows Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg artefacts in Captain Scott's cubicle, Cape Evans. Image copyright to, and courtesy of, the Antarctic Heritage Trust, [nzah.org](http://nzah.org).



*Santa paying the snow cave a Christmas visit. Image courtesy Hanne Nielson.*



*The Christmas party with Mt Erebus in the background. Image courtesy Peter Wilson.*

# Christmas on Ice for Antarctic Students

*By Hanne Nielsen*

For most kiwis, dreaming of a white Christmas is an exercise in futility. Not so for the 15 University of Canterbury students who spent Christmas day camped on the Ross Ice Shelf with more snow than they knew what to do with.

Santa came to visit early on and roused a few sleepy heads from their icy beds, but Rudolph was nowhere to be seen. Instead, a Häggglunds served as both reindeer and sleigh, bringing a Christmas feast from Scott Base. The spread was impressive and a far cry from the pemmican Christmases of old: croissants, roast vegetables, ham, gingerbread and Christmas cake. We had a banquet, but where was the table? Cue: shovels. Before leaving for Antarctica we were warned that the course would involve much digging but none of us imagined that this digging would extend to creating a lounge suite out of a flat plane of ice.

Sue Ferrar's rendition of a few Christmas favourites on her violin set a jolly mood as the students mucked in and dug. Antarctica is the continent of peace and science, so it was only fitting that upon finishing the final verse of 'Silent Night' we looked up to see a weather balloon slowly ascending and giving a shout out to the latter. Larger than the Canterbury Museum, the weather balloons only go up twice a

year, so to see one released was quite a treat. It was also a distraction from the lyrics of the next song, as the majority of us had had no experience whatsoever of 'roasting chestnuts on an open fire'.

An open fire was nowhere to be seen, but we did kick off our Christmas meal with a toast to explorers past and present, savouring the nose of 'whispers of gentle bonfire' from our bottle of Mackinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt Whiskey. Diligent as we were, the class had taken it upon ourselves to become enlightened in every area of Polar history before departing for the ice. The story of Shackelton's whiskey, discovered during the hut restorations and subsequently reproduced for commercial sale, was particularly intriguing. When a 9 am lecture was cancelled back in New Zealand we filled the slot with a talk from the owner of Whiskey Galore and came away inspired by the descriptions of 'a whisper of marmalade' and 'a tease of smoke'. What better way to celebrate Christmas on the white continent than to follow in the footsteps of explorers of old?

Dinner was rounded off with the giving of secret Santa gifts, with highlights including a hula skirt and ukulele, both of which appeared in later skits, and several chickens. Yes, they were real live chickens, but before everyone gets up in arms about spreading avian flu to the penguins, they were bought through Oxfam and gifted to poor families in Laos. A necklace made from the Ferrar Dolerite (igneous rock) for H. T. Ferrar's granddaughter also had great personal significance for Sue and caused all eyes to turn to our resident geologist, rendering the 'secret' in 'secret Santa' redundant.

Christmas was celebrated despite the fact we were all far from home on an icy continent. Learning to cross country ski was a personal highlight, and an activity that made our honorary Norwegian feel quite at home. The teamwork and laughter and really bad singing made for a fun day and created memories of a white Christmas we will treasure for years to come. Sometimes your dreams do come true, after all. ❄️

# Oamaru and Antarctica *part 2*

By David L. Harrowfield

In Part One (*Antarctic* Vol.26 No.4 2008) the long association Oamaru has with Antarctica was discussed.

Previous writers about Oamaru's link with the British Antarctic Expedition 1910–1913 have relied mainly on a few publications, newspaper reports and reminiscences by the next-of-kin of residents at the time. These document the secretive arrival of *SY Terra Nova* in the early hours of the morning on 10 February 1913.

In my former article, archives in the Kinsey Collection; Alexander Turnbull Library extended knowledge of this event. Nevertheless some questions required confirmation or clarification and again, original material has proved beneficial. The Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge has the finest collection of archives related to Captain RF Scott's last expedition. Included are a diary by expedition biologist Apsley Cherry-Garrard and the Deck Log Book of the *Terra Nova*.

Over the years extensive enquiries had failed to locate the precise text of a coded telegram thought to focus on the death of the Polar Party. This message was sent from Oamaru to Central News Agency London, which had exclusive rights to the first news release on the expedition. It is now believed that the initial telegram did not specifically focus on the Polar Party, but was a lengthy message of a more general nature including reference to the tragedy.

As the *Terra Nova* proceeded north along the east coast of New Zealand's South Island, Lieut. Edward RGR. Evans RN now in charge of

the expedition formed a committee and compiled text for the message to London. Because of limited equipment available in the Oamaru Post Office this message, almost certainly went initially to the New Zealand Agent for the expedition, Joseph Kinsey in Christchurch. Kinsey had Power of Attorney for Scott including matters of finance in New Zealand.

Omitted from his classic book *The Worst Journey in the World* (Constable 1922), Cherry-Garrard's original diary provides an important insight into the background of the message sent.

## Tuesday Jan 28 1913

Evans addressed the After guard – committee for winding things up to be Evans, [Cdr Harry] Pennell [R.N.], [Lieut. Victor] Campbell [R.N.], [Lieut. Wilfred] Bruce [R.N.R.], [Edward] Atkinson [Surgeon, R.N.], [Francis] Drake [Asst. Paymaster, R.N.].

## Monday Feb 3 1913

Evans had those of the After guard who were not on the Committee into his cabin, and read the telegram. It is not as bad as it might be. The Eastern [Northern] Party winter is splendid, brief and very much to the point: I could wish that the Western Party were either as brief, or, if it must be amplified, proportioned better (three lines omitted)...

Curiously there is no mention in his diary at this time of the Polar Party, something Cherry-Garrard felt very personally for the rest of his life. The initial media release mainly focused on the tragedy and events of Campbell's Northern Party; particularly their privations in 1912.

## Thursday Feb 9

'At breakfast we were just crossing from 50 °S latitude [and] at mid-day [had] 260 [nautical] miles to [reach] Oamaru, where the telegram will start. So the plan is Oamaru Monday morning, and Lyttelton 10 a.m. Wednesday morning, which will give the required interval of twenty-four hours for the cable to get home, and will also allow it to get back to New Zealand and be published before we get in: the news will be official and not scraps from the ship – such as the official news seems to be worth. A good day: steaming hard and burning nine tons [of coal] a day – doing six to seven knots.'

## Sunday Feb 10

'...Tomorrow morning, entering Oamaru harbour, we are able to get our first glimpse of civilization – though we shall only be able to look, for there can be no communication with the shore till Wednesday morning when we arrive in Lyttelton [Cherry-Garrard incorrectly states in his book...we crept like a phantom ship into the little harbour of Oamaru...]



Sumpter wharf with view of landing platform and breakwater beyond. Image courtesy David Harrowfield.

The Deck Log Book provides details of arrival.

### Sunday 9th Feb 1913

11.45 [pm]. Sighted Oamaru light ½pt on St<sup>d</sup> bow.

11.55. Fisk Reef Lt S70W

### Monday Feb 10

Furled fore and 1 aft sail.

2.30 Stopped engines. Sent dinghy ashore to Oamaru with Lt Pennell and Dr Atkinson...

2.42 [am] Hauled in Pat[ent?] Log (04.8) a/c [altered course?] S67°W. Eased [engines] to 50 revs.

3.0 Put clock back 30 min to NZ Mean Time.

The Deck Log indicated “at 3 a.m. on the 10<sup>th</sup>, weather and sea conditions were good for a landing, with wind NW [Beaufort] Force 2; w[ea]ther OC [overcast]; state of sea 2; barom[etric pressure] 63 [inches mercury =2133.4 millibars]; thermom[eter] 30.02 [-1.2°C] and air [temperature] 60 [15.6°C]”.

Cherry-Garrard’s diary further explains how many men disembarked.

At 2.30 am we landed Pennell and Atkinson at Oamaru. It was quite dark, and only the lights showed. We made no sign [of] who we were, [and] it will be better to get the news straight out-but I do not expect it to remain unknown for long. The lighthouse got very excited-morseing “What ship?” and Crean who rowed the boat ashore [the *Oamaru*

*Mail* incorrectly reported four men] on being asked whether anybody was about, said “We was attacked on the wharf by a man, sorr? But we came away quick, and I told him nothing sorr!” As a matter of fact he was off chasing Pennell and Atkinson.’

In contrast to his diary Cherry-Garrard’s book states “...the lighthouse blinked out the message [and]...Crean announced: We was chased, sorr, but they got nothing out of us.”

Although entry to the harbour may have been considered, the initial report (*Oamaru Mail* Monday 10 February 1913) confirms the ship did not enter but hove to off the end of the breakwater. This is supported by Night Watchman Neil Mackinnon. He maintained the water at the entrance was too low (high water Monday 10 February was at 5.16 am and 5.36 pm) and suggested the ship lie out until high tide. It is likely that because of the nature of the visit, the *Terra Nova* intentionally remained outside the harbour entrance.

There is also the suggestion a brief confrontation took place, perhaps with Mackinnon, as no record has been found of anyone else in the immediate vicinity of Sumpter Wharf at the time. In Oamaru’s evening paper published later in the day “McKinnon’s (sic) response was a threat to “arrest” the men and with the name of the ship now known, it was suggested “Captain Scott has selected Oamaru as the station from which to telegraph the report of his explorations and observations.”

The ship’s log for Monday 10 February continues...

3.05 [a.m] Dingy returned. Proceeded °N80E.

3.35 a/c N45E (Stand) Hauled yards round.

3.39 Oamaru Lt S58W (St).

Employed harbour furling and scrubbing canvas gear, etc.

Noon.

Upon taking Crean and the unmarked dinghy aboard, the *Terra Nova* continued to Lyttelton and the *Ngatoro* which docked in Oamaru later that morning at 9 am, reported passing the ship as it continued north. Meanwhile as the Express train headed for Christchurch that day, a reporter for the Ashburton Guardian boarded at Rangitata. He spoke to Pennell and Atkinson and apart for confirmation the men were from the ship, nothing was divulged. The officers were again confronted in Ashburton, this time by Hugo Friedlander Chairman of the Lyttelton Harbour Board, who thought “but for their cheerfulness and the buoyancy of their spirits, it may have readily been concluded that [Scott] had reached the Pole.”

The same day a media release from the Press Association Wellington reported “when seen today Mr JJ Kinsey [with whom Pennell stayed] stated that he had heard nothing concerning the arrival of the *Terra Nova* beyond the news that the papers had received”.

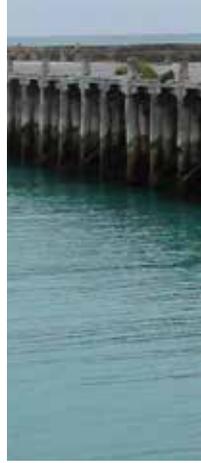
*Continued over...*



Oamaru Post Office (built 1864) now The Last Post Restaurant. Image courtesy David Harrowfield.



Captain Ramsay's house 51 Wharfe Street, Oamaru. Image courtesy David Harrowfield.



'You know as much as I do' he said. This was incorrect as Kinsey had already been in contact with Central News Agency (*Antarctic* 26:4).

Meanwhile in Oamaru Captain Ramsay when interviewed on Tuesday 11 February 1913 and also maintaining silence, stated "the officers said nothing as to the success of the expedition, or to lead anyone to believe so dreadful a calamity may have happened. They intimated that, in pursuance with their mission ashore they were bound to secrecy, and this being the case the harbourmaster made no effort to secure information..."

Rumors abounded and flags flown half-mast enhanced the mystery. The same day the leader in the *Oamaru Mail* was headed "Polar Catastrophe" and extensive reports were published over several days including the question, had the *Terra Nova* returned with the bodies of the Polar Party.

Because Kinsey and Pennell were unable to receive visitors, the newspaper offices had to respond to queries and there was considerable discontent. For example Wellington's *Evening Post* (11 February) reported "That secrecy could be so jealously maintained was, in the circumstances, incredible." When further pressed for information, Kinsey stated the message received from London was simply a repetition of one he had himself sent, this confirming his release of the cable sent from Oamaru.

None of the London papers received the entire first installment of the message from New Zealand in time to print in the latest regular editions. The first report was published by *The New York Times* in the papers first edition at 1 am and in Britain, the fullest report appeared in *The Daily Mail* after 5 am. New Zealand papers then carried the news released by the Press Association Wellington at 8.30 am

Tuesday 11 February, and reports from New Zealand reached London via Montreal, by electric telegraph and the Anglo-American Line.

Interviewed in New York Sir Ernest Shackleton was astonished at the news and pointed out that he had not lost a person on his expedition in 1907–09. A week later he reaffirmed his intention of making another expedition to Antarctica.

In Christchurch on Wednesday 12 February the committee of officers released a statement and a few days later Cherry-Garrard summing up the situation wrote:

### Friday Feb 14

'The press here has been letting us know about the cables which are coming in. There is nothing published here that I have seen except a reference to the "Times", but the New York papers have said that all that could be done was not done, and that there have been complaints among ourselves to this effect...we have to keep our mouths shut for talking will only do harm... He (Atkinson) says "that the news has been held back too much: he wanted in the first case to send fuller accounts to the papers – they were always certain to criticise, and any tendency to give short accounts tends to make people believe that something is being held back."

Cherry Garrard was a dedicated scientist and careful recorder of his observations. His original account, the only one located, is significant and for much of the final hours of the expedition cannot be refuted. It not only provides background into the nature of the message sent from Oamaru, but also differs in various respects from his edited, published version.

Together with the Deck Log the diary states the precise time the ship

arrived and left, compared to that in the *Oamaru Mail* and other reports which said the ship arrived "about 2 am". The diary also indicates that Neil Mackinnon did not in fact see four people in the dinghy. The latter is understandable as it was states Cherry-Garrard, "quite dark and only the lights [of the town] showed" and Mackinnon was doubtless agitated by the unusual arrival.

For any historical research it is desirable to use where possible, original manuscript sources compiled at the time. Published works usually have editorial changes and media releases are sometimes based on hear-say and later interviews.

In 2011 a further letter of appreciation, (refer *Antarctic* Vol. 26 No. 4) relating to this significant event in Oamaru's history, written by Pennell from Valetta Malta, 26 April 1914 to the Harbour Master Captain James Ramsay, was presented to the North Otago Museum.

'I hope Mrs Ramsay appreciates the fact that we were most comfortable despite the fact of choosing to sleep on the floor,' he wrote. "It is all a matter of custom and if accustomed to sleeping on a board one gets to consider that the most comfortable form of couch."

Captain Ramsay's home at 51 Wharfe Street, Oamaru, apart for the room that served as a parlor and dining room with a view over the harbour, is largely unaltered. It is not too difficult to imagine the men in the lounge at the front of the house, discussing with the Harbourmaster the Antarctic tragedy.

David Harrowfield acknowledges Scott Polar Research Institute and the North Otago Museum for the opportunity to examine material in the collections, and Caron Sullivan for permission to inspect and photograph the former home of Captain Ramsay. ❧

# Alf Howard

1906–2010

Alf Howard was the last surviving member of Sir Douglas Mawson's 1929–1931 British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE).

*Tribute by Anna Bemrose, Australia*

**B**orn in Canterbury, Victoria, Australia on 30 April 1906, Alf Howard grew up in Camberwell and graduated from the University of Melbourne with a BSc in chemistry and physics (1926) and a MSc in chemistry (1928).

In June 1929, Alf, whilst working in the Chemistry Department of the University of Melbourne was approached by David Orme Masson to join Mawson's scientific staff as chemist and hydrologist. After three-months training in hydrology at he sailed on the *Armadale Castle* to Cape Town where he boarded the *Discovery*.

His oceanographic observations involved determining temperatures with Nansen-Pettersen and Ekman water bottles and thermometers, and salinities estimated by the Knudsen method, using international sea water as a standard. He also made chemical determinations of pH, phosphate, silicate, and nitrite, and dissolved oxygen. In the BANZARE Reports Mawson wrote: *“His work was a never-ending task. He worked very long hours daily, mainly occupied with the chemical examination of the very numerous sea-water samples obtained. Except in calm weather, the rolling of the vessel rendered difficult the delicate operation involved in the chemical examination of those waters. Howard is therefore to be congratulated upon the extensive series of determinations he ultimately achieved and the unabated enthusiasm and great care with which he prosecuted the task.”*

Returning to Australia in 1931 Alf joined the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) working at the Irrigation Research Laboratory in Griffith. During the war he transferred to the Division of Food Preservation and Transport to work on dehydration techniques for meat and vegetables. In 1949 he was appointed Chief Scientist of the CSIRO Meat Research Laboratory at Cannon Hill, Brisbane. His work on the interrelation of chemistry and psychology in interpreting flavour differences led to the award of a Doctorate degree in psychology in 1968. He retired in 1971.

Alf continued his association with the University of Queensland working in the Schools of Psychology and Human Movement Studies as a research fellow and statistics consultant from the mid-1970s until he was 97. During these years he was awarded a BA with majors in psychology and linguistics (1976) and, a BA (Hons) in linguistics (1980). In 1993 the University of Queensland awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Science and in 1998 Alf Howard was appointed Member of the Order of Australia.

Howard was patron of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) Club in Queensland but



*Alf Howard revisiting Mawson's hut.  
Image courtesy Anna Bemrose.*

it was not until the 1990s that he returned to Antarctica for the first of eight visits. As a passenger on board the *Kapitan Khlebnikov* (1996–97) Alf gave a guest lecture about his days with Mawson. In 2001 he received a Lifetime of Adventure Award from the Australian Geographic Society.

In Antarctica he was honoured by Sir Douglas Mawson on 18 February 1931 with the naming of Howard Bay. The youngest member of the expedition, Alf was awarded the Polar Medal (Antarctic Clasp) in 1934 in recognition of his work. Alf Howard will be remembered as a humble, kind and generous man with a wry sense of humour who left a gentle footprint on the lives of all those fortunate enough to meet him. ❧



# Antarctic Blizzard

By John H. Lewis (part one of two)

A local ground blizzard was kicked up by the C-130 transport as it took off on its way back to McMurdo Station, 1100 km to the west. It had just disgorged us and our three months' supplies in Marie Byrd Land. We three were a little forlorn as we recalled the comforts of the base we had left only hours before, which were in stark contrast to our present situation.

Alone on a broad, gently sloping glacial plain some 20 km from the mountains, we faced our new surroundings. A gentle breeze was dusting our feet with powdery drift; the temperature was about  $-26^{\circ}\text{C}$ . We were warm in our well-designed clothing as we organised our equipment onto the four Nansen sleds. It was October 1967.

All of us had read the accounts of early Antarctic explorers. Now, we were to learn first-hand some of the romance and adventure of Antarctica, through spending a field season fending for ourselves on an isolated and barren mountain range. The reality of our being there overwhelmed us a bit during those first few moments. Each of us wondered whether this might not be a bit more than bargained for.

We started north toward the east end of the mountains, where we were to start our work on two isolated bedrock peaks. The two small one-horsepower snowmobiles had hard going on the gentle climb over the wind-sculpted glacier surface. The sleds banged heavily

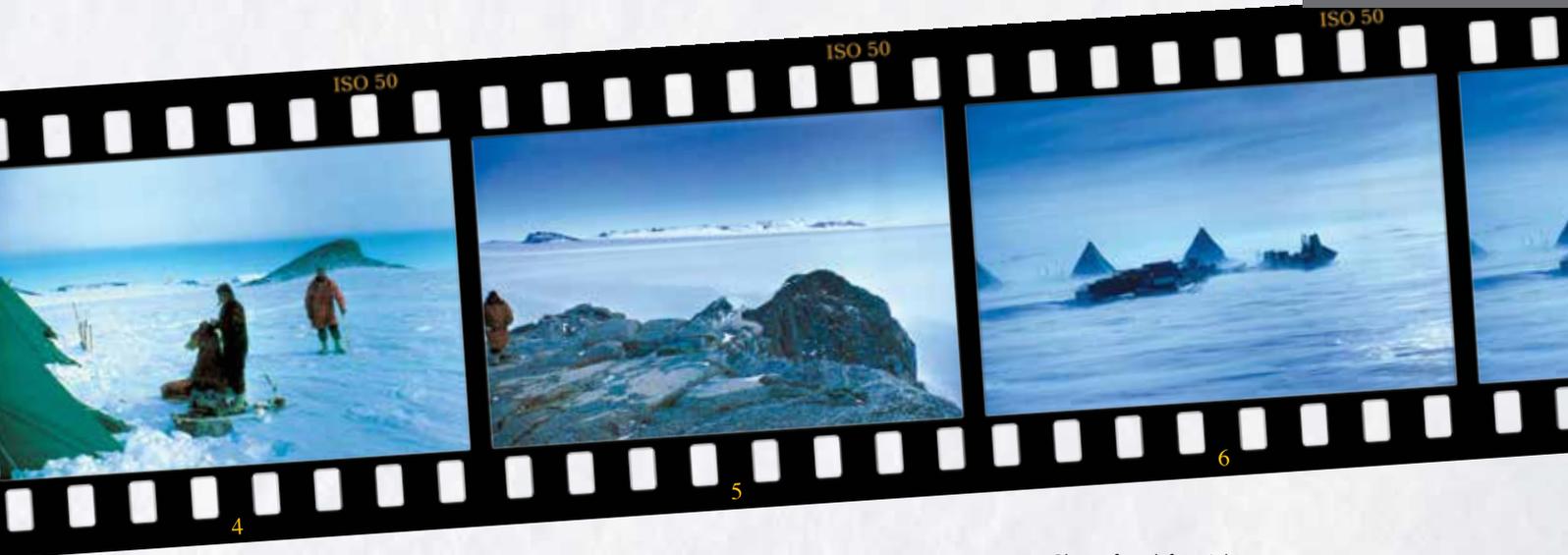
along, with us running alongside helping pull. All the way, we were impressed with the vastness of the white wastes extending all around us. In the direction of the sun, myriad snow crystals sparkled. Here and there the limitless view was broken by up-surging mountain peaks.

We covered the 20 km to the peaks in six hours and immediately got to work setting up camp, as close as possible to the rock outcrops (Griffith nunataks) we were to study. The campsite was a wind-swept saddle between two nunataks, each of which was about one kilometre away. Our "Scott tents" were said to be able to withstand winds of 160 km/h, and had large flaps extending from the outer walls, on which snow was piled to anchor the structures. The work was difficult: hard-packed snow had to be hacked loose with an ice axe and our inexperience with the tents made too long a task of erecting them.

Tired and cold, we ate a hot steak dinner then drifted off to deep sleep to the sound of the 600-metre-thick glacier

ice creaking and groaning beneath us. The first four days at this location saw us up by 7.00 am, and at work in the bitter bright cold by 9.00 am. We trudged the outcrops collecting samples and trying to get some feel for the complexities of the rocks, and by the fourth day we thought we were starting to make some sense of the contorted layers and their age relationships. By that time we also thought we had become pretty well-seasoned Antarctic workers, fairly confident in our newfound ability to live out there: to eat, sleep, and get around safely and comfortably.

The afternoon of this fourth day brought a change. The wind started to pick up and it was painful business to do without a mitten long enough to write in the notebook. Far off in the east we could see a towering wall of white, which could only be an approaching blizzard. The cloud cover increased; visibility deteriorated. At 4.30 pm we trudged back toward the shelter of the tents. By the time we reached camp the wind was blowing at about 45 km/h per



*“Tired and cold, we ate a hot steak dinner then drifted off to deep sleep to the sound of the 600-metre-thick glacier ice creaking and groaning beneath us.”*

hour; the upper portions of the tents and the piles of supplies seemed to be floating ghostlike on the misty whiteness of low-blowing drift. We began packing up the loose gear around camp, getting ready to move to the next campsite the following day. After a light supper we went to bed early, eager to finish there and move on.

The night was a restless one. The wind woke us at about 2.00 am and was noisy enough to prevent continuous sleep. At 7.00 am we dressed and crawled through the low circular opening that formed the door to the tent. Once outside, we couldn't see more than five metres, and during the gusts the visibility dropped to near zero. The temperature was not especially low – about  $-17^{\circ}\text{C}$  – but the wind made it seem much colder, and any exposed skin felt first burned, then numbed and deeply chilled. We piled into the dark chilliness of the cook tent and fired up the two-burner Coleman stove to melt snow. After cups of warming tea we bundled up again and made our way to the radio tent, where most of our personal and field gear was kept.

The conditions outside made it senseless even to think about moving around, so we spent the morning in various tasks – fuelling the stove and lanterns, tidying, sketching the data

obtained the day before, labelling samples, mending, darning – and later, reading, playing cards, talking. The wind was erratically gusty: short times of relative quiet followed by noisier periods when the tent walls shook and popped violently. The time passed slowly. We were restless; our attention spans short.

The continual chilliness, the confinement, our impatience to get going, and a bit of loneliness combined to make me depressed, and three months out there suddenly seemed infinite. The decreasing amount of talk and activity in the tent told me that my companions may have shared the mood. That evening we made an attempt to start the little radio generator and make the daily schedule with McMurdo Station. We found the generator frozen stiff. For an hour we tried to thaw it with heat from a lantern, but after making little progress we decided to wait for good weather the next day for freeing it.

The wind that evening was somewhat calmer – only 30 km/h – and we headed to the sleep tent with high hopes for a good day to follow. We were relieved to enter the security of a tent after having been out in the wind, but this relief was somewhat tempered by the prospect of the next ordeal: we had to climb into our frozen sleeping bags

*Photos from left to right:*

1. Helicopter above Observation Hill, 26 October 1967. All images courtesy John Lewis.
2. Wind speed 20 knots, temperature  $-28^{\circ}$  at Byrd camp #1.
3. Camp #1 at Griffith Nunataks looking towards Mt Perkins. 2 November 1967.
4. North Griffith Nunatak Camp # 1. John Lewis and JR Wilbanks – 1st day of work. 2 November 1967.
5. Top of North Griffith Nunatak. Mt Perkins to the left and Mt Lockhart East to the right. 2 November 1967.
6. Camp # 1 Griffith Nunataks during an afternoon blow of around 20 knots. 5 November 1967.

after undressing in the chill of the tent. It took an almost superhuman effort of will to plunge into the double-down bags. Soon, however, body warmth started to permeate the inner parts of the bag, the intense shivering gradually ceased, and a sublime warming feeling followed; a feeling not believed possible moments before.

As on the previous night, at 2.00 am we were woken by a sudden increase in the velocity and number of gusts, which produced spurts of deafening noise. We remained in our warmth and security, alternately chatting and dozing through the rest of the night until it was time, according to our stomachs, to get up for something to eat. The temperature outside was now about  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  degrees – we'd read that the temperature tends to rise during a wind – and the drift, which practically buried the door to the cook tent, kept the visibility down to a few metres. After a breakfast of partially frozen Betterwheat biscuits we groped our way from the cook tent to the radio tent to hole up for a second day, settling down to reading, cards, and a fairly regular schedule of writing impressions in the journals that we each kept. It seemed strange, as I scribbled, to remember an account in an early journal of just such

*Continued over...*



a storm as this; to compare the woefully inaccurate impressions I'd gained before coming here with the reality that was beginning to clothe my own experience. We had read the tales of others caught in the storms of the Antarctic – Cherry-Garrard, and Gould, Balchen, and June – and suddenly they took on a new and vivid meaning. However, we, so far, were in a haven of safety and comfort. We could turn on our stove if our feet got too cold, we were dressed warmly, and we could sit and marvel at the design and construction of our Scott tents. I put a note in my journal to go around to the tentmakers in Christchurch, New Zealand, on the way home to praise them for their good work.

Supper time finally rolled around, and while groping our way to the cook tent we confirmed the continued good shape of the tent exteriors. We cooked up a supper of canned bacon and frozen eggs – the latter cracked out of the can with a chisel and a rock hammer. It was our first satisfying meal in two days. Eating added to the lethargy built during the past two days and we decided against trying to make the radio schedule: the generator would probably refreeze anyway, and we had already spent about four hours thawing it over two stoves in the cook tent that day. We returned to the radio tent to kill more time before sleep. For the first time in three days, Chuck Bitgood, our tall quiet geophysicist, searched the dial of his short-wave receiver and succeeded in getting the time signal from WWV in Fort Collins, Colorado. Here was a distant outside-world

signal coming from just 150 km from my home!

That day marked the fourth day I'd been off cigarettes, and so far that hadn't bothered me. Without a supply of cigarettes made for the ideal way to quit. We crawled into the sleep tent and then into the snowy sleeping bags at about 11 pm. By this time we were somewhat accustomed to the racket of the storm, so we got to sleep without much trouble. The worst seemed to be over.

However, on Wednesday morning at about 4.00 am the big gusts again woke us, and we wondered whether the wind would ever blow out. The especially heavy gusts would give us a start; when they passed, we would doze off for a few minutes until the next tent-rattling onslaught. We lay there until about 9.00 am, then made our way to the radio tent for another day of waiting; more cramped confinement.

During a cup of tea that day, the familiar and constant whipping and popping of the tent stopped. We stared at each other in amazement at first. Was it the end of the storm, or just a prolonged lull? Our voices were suddenly loud in the absence of a roaring background. The doleful feeling of the past hours was quickly replaced by elation as we scrambled outside into a breeze of about 15 km/h. We could see the whole camp: the nearly buried cargo sleds, the toboggans drifted deeply. We could even see to the outcrops, a kilometre away.

It was strange to be able to stand up. We went to work on the sleds, shovelling off the huge accumulations

*Photos from left to right:*

7. John Wilbanks in radio tent at Camp #1. 11 November 1967.

8. Chuck in radio tent at Camp #1. 11 November 1967.

9. John Lewis in radio tent at Camp #1. 11 November 1967.

of drift. An observer dropped into our midst would have wondered about the sanity of these three maniacs throwing chunks of snow off their shovels, slipping and sliding, laughing, and shouting wildly about what a wonderful day it was. The heavy overcast produced a whiteout, which contributed to the hilarity of the scene we presented; each of us stumbling haltingly along, to pitch suddenly forward across some sastrugi into an unseen depression. When we raised McMurdo on the radio we finished our report with a comment about the fierce winds of the past three days, and the McMurdo operator came back with: "Do you guys really like it out there?" After signing off, John Wilbanks, our humorist, muttered: "How the hell would he like it out here away from doors you can stand up to walk through, and no warm dry bunk waiting every night?"

Tired from our six hours' work, we fell asleep to the accompaniment of a soft sighing of new snow on the tent's walls. At six in the morning it all changed: we were woken up by familiar howling and flapping noises. The wind increased tempo to late afternoon, and by supper time we couldn't hear one another shout. It was as if we'd been through four days of preliminaries and now the main bout was beginning. 

# Antarctica – an Encyclopedia (second edition)

By John Stewart

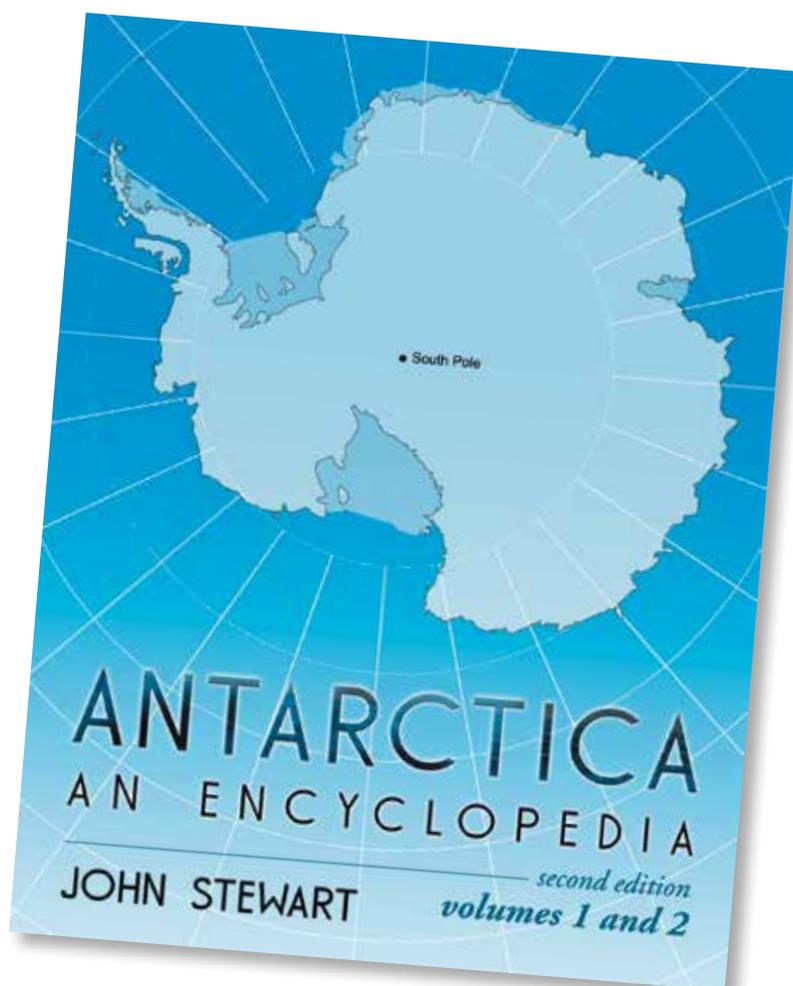
In 1990 John Stewart published his two volume Antarctic encyclopedia and they soon became a very well used resource on my library shelves.

When in doubt, or needing information about an expedition, a person, an animal or a natural or man-made feature in Antarctica this encyclopedia became a first port of call. Invariably it couldn't answer every question and the margins of my copy (in defiance of my earlier librarian training) became annotated with additional entries and snippets of information. Now and then I would think – wouldn't it be great if this useful resource was updated with both contemporary information and the missing pieces. This year I received an email from John Stewart informing me that he had done just that and that, after four years of research, the second edition of the encyclopedia had been published.

In the second edition the author has retained the easy to use direct entry A to Z format, included all the information from the first edition and then has added a massive amount of new information, basically doubling the size of the work. Of special interest are the entries relating to geographic places and features in Antarctica. For ease of use Stewart includes all land and water south of 60 °S within his definition of Antarctica. Information for geographical features is drawn primarily from national gazetteers, both old and current, and includes non-English sources. Stewart has a gift for simplifying the complex nomenclature of geographical features; that may vary from one gazetteer to another, may hold multiple names in multiple languages, and which can also have a colloquial name or two attached. For these features the author has tried to include all linguistic variations of place names a feature may have and has provided an extensive number of cross-references to help searchers.

Stewart has also been very clear to make the encyclopedia work for spelling variations within the English language, for example if you wanted information on the types of aeroplanes used in Antarctica, this information is there under the spelling *airplanes* with cross references from each spelling variation. The second edition of the encyclopedia contains around 30,000 entries relating to events, explorers, expeditions, ships, scientists, scientific stations, tour operators, scientific terms, birds, animals, insects, flora, and much more in over 1770 pages. It includes a very useful bibliography in Volume 2 of the edition. Having only dipped into the pages I look forward to using this book for many years to come. 📖

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Reviewed by Natalie Cadenhead

# Mawson's Last Survivor; the Story of Dr Alf Howard AM

By Anna Bemrose

Alf Howard had a long and remarkable life, dying in 2010 at age of 104. He became the last surviving member of Sir Douglas Mawson's 1929–1931 British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) and was also the last survivor to have served aboard the coal-fired three-masted wooden ship *Discovery*, built for Robert Falcon Scott's 1901–1904 National Antarctic Expedition.

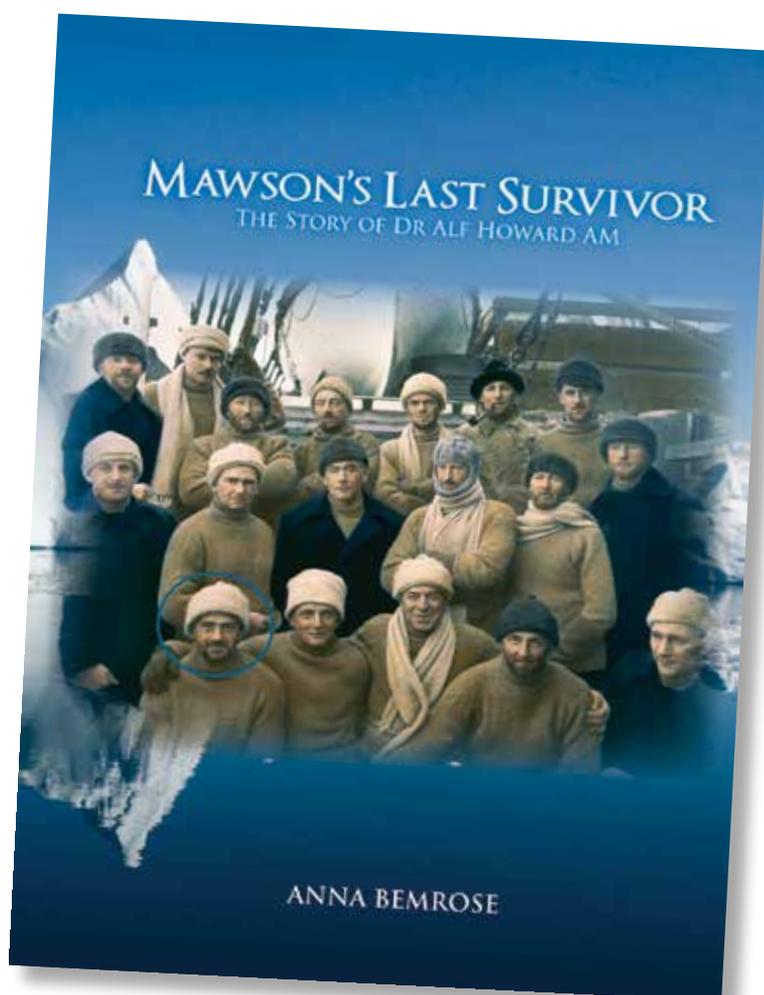
The book is full of quotes from Alf and his companions which bring an immediacy to his adventures; allowing you to see his experiences through his eyes and for his personality to shine through.

Howard was only 23 years old when appointed as a chemist and hydrologist on the BANZARE and was described by Mawson as showing “*unabated enthusiasm and great care*” in his work. Bemrose has meticulously researched not only Howard's life but has also put his achievements into context within the times he lived. While the great depression of the 1930s was beginning the men of the expedition were concentrating on life aboard the *Discovery* while completing a range of scientific investigations and then concentrating on their work in Antarctica.

After the Antarctic expedition Howard began a long and distinguished career with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). After “retirement” from CSIRO Howard returned to the University of Queensland, Australia where he studied, taught and mentored students until the age of 97. Howard showed an amazing ability to take on new challenges (learning computer programming in his 70s) and to continue learning at advanced levels (gaining a PhD in psychology in 1968 at age 62 and a BA Honours degree in linguistics in 1980 at age 74).

In the 1990s Howard returned to Antarctica on a cruise ship and gave lectures on board about his experiences with Mawson. The travel bug caught him after this and he travelled extensively including several more trips to Antarctica (including a circumnavigation on a Russian icebreaker) and to the Arctic. The book is illustrated throughout with photographs including many taken by Frank Hurley during the BANZARE.

*Mawson's Last Survivor* has been described as a “tribute to leadership, comradeship, seamanship and the joys of scientific research” and this it definitely is. I thoroughly enjoyed this very readable book which finishes in seemingly typical “Alf style” with a photograph of Alf Howard raising a glass and looking out at the reader. 🍷



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Osman from the *Terra Nova* expedition 1910–1913. Image courtesy Canterbury Museum: OR2275