

No. 4/2010 News Update. Rymill-related talk 20<sup>th</sup> Nov!

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From the desk  
of the President  
2010~November

Dear Members and Friends,

The next Sprigg lecture is scheduled for Tuesday November 30 in the South Australian Museum. These lectures are given three times a year in honour of the late Reg Sprigg, one of South Australia's best known geologists and a student of Sir Douglas Mawson. Some aspects of the relationship between Mawson and Sprigg are discussed in the latter's entertaining book *Geology is Fun*, the last chapter of which is entitled "Should a Geologist marry?". The opening sentence of this chapter is "Mawson once jibed, "The best geologist is sexless." Tongues were presumably firmly in the cheeks. Incidentally, I will leave you to guess Sprigg's answer to his own question.

The speaker for this Sprigg lecture is Tim Jarvis, who several years ago recreated Mawson's famous lone trek after the death of his companions Ninnis and Mertz. The 're-enactment' was shown both on BBC and ABC television. It made fascinating viewing for all those interested in the Mawson story. FOM members may remember the entertaining launch of Tim Jarvis' book, *Mawson: Life and Death in Antarctica*, at the S. A. Museum in 2008. As I understand it, the subject of Tim's lecture this time will be his plans for re-enacting Shackleton's famous open boat voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia, including following Shackleton's track across South Georgia to obtain help from the Norwegian whaling station at Stromness Bay.

Jim Jago

And wishing everyone a very enjoyable end to 2010, and exciting New Year for 2011, from us all at the Mawson Centre (Editor)



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## PLANS & EVENTS late 2010 onwards

Put the following Mawson or Polar-related dates into your diary

**20<sup>th</sup> November kayaker Paul Caffyn will give a talk about his 2007 Arctic venture, doors open at 6.30pm, in the Armoury, SA Museum:** Paul has kayaked off Greenland to where John Rymill was operating from in the 1930s. This and other achievements have established him as one of the more recognised contemporary pioneers by kayakers and canoeists.

Gold coin donation, drinks and nibbles to start, RSVP essential – numbers strictly limited – Mark on 8207 7574



Paul Caffyn in polar waters © Paul Caffyn

**Scott Terra Nova Expedition Centenary events:** with the UK busy commemorating the Centenary of the venture led by Robert Scott, for those interested there are now several web sites highlighting the major events: <http://www.isce2012.co.uk> &...[scott100.org](http://www.scott100.org)

**26<sup>th</sup> November ‘artworks poles apart – Adelaide and London.’** FoM members are most likely to be able to make it to those by Inside SAM’s place artist Annalise Rees, drawing on the Mawson Collection, but on the same day in the UK a special display by the Ryder family at Arthur Ackermann Ltd., 27 Lowndes Street, London can also be seen *for the last time*: Susan Ryder painted in the Antarctic Peninsula following in the footsteps of her father, Robert Ryder VC, who commanded the *Penola* on Jophn Rymill’s British Graham Land Expedition of 1934-37.

Ryder had himself found time to paint while south, and she painted many of these scenes. The exhibition also displays photographs of watercolours painted by Ryder. **November 10-26<sup>th</sup> only!** <http://www.arthurackermann.com/>

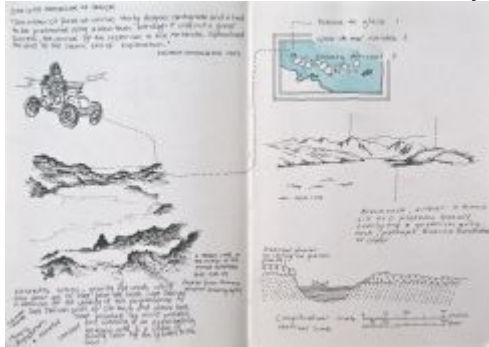


A polar scene. © Susan Ryder

Annalise’s work can be seen in SAM’s **Megafauna Gallery (26 November 2010 to 30 January 2011 10am to 5pm daily).**

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Annalise will also be giving an **Artist floor talk 29 November 2010, 2pm** – those interested, meet in main foyer.



From My House to Antarctica, pages from the journal of artist Annalise Rees

**'Return doubtful' talk on 30<sup>th</sup> November 5.15pm for 6pm by Tim Jarvis - part of the Sprigg lectures at SAM.** An environmental scientist, adventurer and conservationist involved in many environmental projects world-wide, Tim is widely known for his polar exploits, and this talk will focus on his planned repeat of Shackleton's voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia. (Tim's title was also that of Shackleton's when advertising for volunteers.) Pre-lecture drinks, bookings essential: 8207 7377.

**Quest for the South Magnetic Pole** exhibition remaining touring details:  
**National Archives** (Queen Victoria Tce, Parkes, ACT), 6 December 2010-6 March 2011  
**Warrnambool Art Gallery** (165 Timor St,) 2 April-10 June 2011  
**Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery** 3 Mary Elie St, 16 July-4 Sept 2 '11

**FoM AAE Centenary AGM event in the SA Museum Mawson Gallery:** this 'night in the Museum' is currently planned for no later than 21<sup>st</sup> June.  
**Proposed Mawson AAE Centenary Exhibition** December 2011-early '14:

## Another Conference!



**27-29<sup>th</sup> June 2011 ANU Conference:**

This AAE centenary conference will look at collaborative work including the sonic medium with creative arts and other disciplines. It will highlight the importance of sound (or lack of it) and music as part of the unique Antarctic environment.

The Conference is open to papers encompassing all of the creative arts with topics to include -

- **Music and Arts in AAE diaries**
- **Influence of the Antarctic silence on human behaviour**
- **Antarctic sound recordings & Music**
- **Antarctic sound recordings & Science**
- **Multi-Media images from the Antarctic**
- **Sound tracks for Antarctic films**
- **The role of music in translating the natural environment**



Emperor penguins © School of Music, ANU

Contact [arnan.wiesel@anu.edu.au](mailto:arnan.wiesel@anu.edu.au) expedition in particular. The National

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Archives of Australia, with support from the Antarctic Division, SA and WA Museums and others, is driving this exciting development due to open in Hobart, December 2011.

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### **3rd January 2012 SAM-supported Orion Expedition departs Hobart.**

**Update:** Reservations can still be made on 1300 361 012 – make sure to quote “S.A. MUSEUM GROUP” when booking. Plans are now being made for some SA Museum events earlier in 2011 for those on this voyage. Watch this space, and suggestions welcome!

#### *Orion* technical specifications

**Length:** 103 metres

**Beam:** 14.25 metres

**Draft:** 3.82 metres

**Hull:** Ice-reinforced for voyages in the Arctic and Antarctic

**Ice Class:** E3 (Germanischer Lloyd)

**Gross Tonnage:** 4,000

**Engines:** Mak; 8M25; 3,265HP

**Speed:** 15 knots. Cruise speed: 13 knots

**Stabilisers:** Blohm & Voss, retractable fin stabilisers (aids passenger comfort)

**Manoeuvrability:** Bow and stern thrusters

**Built:** 2003 – making it very efficient and therefore greener than other vessels

**Delivery Date:** November 2003

**Builder:** Cassens Shipyard-Emden, Germany

**Staterooms and Suites:** 53

**Guest Capacity:** 106 (twin occupancy)

**Crew:** 75

**Elevator:** Yes

**Classification:** Germanischer Lloyd

100 A5 E3 Passenger Ship MC E3 AUT

**Additional Craft:** 10 Zodiac Heavy Duty MK5, 2x12 passenger tenders

**Communications:** Direct-dial satellite telephones; fax; e-mail; Internet access; internal telephone system.

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*Orion* in Commonwealth Bay, viewed from Cape Denison 2008 © Mark Pharaoh

These technical details do not include helicopters, as *Orion* is not equipped to accommodate such an aerial option. (This is in contrast with some of the larger, typically Russian, ice-breakers.) However, it is important to note that with our key objective being to visit Mawson's Hut, the transportation utilised is overwhelmingly zodiacs. And when blizzard conditions around this Cape prevent such a landing by sea, the same conditions also rule out any possible landing by helicopter.

So, while helicopters do provide a special additional experience (with it should be noted, certain additional if minimal risks), they do not offer any additional advantage or guarantee of succeeding in visiting Mawson's Huts.

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**Comment on Recent Events, News and Views**

***Adelie Blizzard* – Update**

The Deluxe is sold out, but the Standard version is still available at \$150 (less a discount for FoM members plus postage), and due to demand, a soft cover version is available at \$60.

The *Blizzard* has received wide acclaim as an excellent example of a fine facsimile of early exploration literature. Printed and bound in Australia on quality paper, it is a large foolscap size book of some 2kgs.

Carolyn Potts, of the Friends of the State Library of SA, is the best contact for further orders. 08 8207 7255 , [friends@slsa.sa.gov.au](mailto:friends@slsa.sa.gov.au) or go to [www.australianpublications.org.au](http://www.australianpublications.org.au)

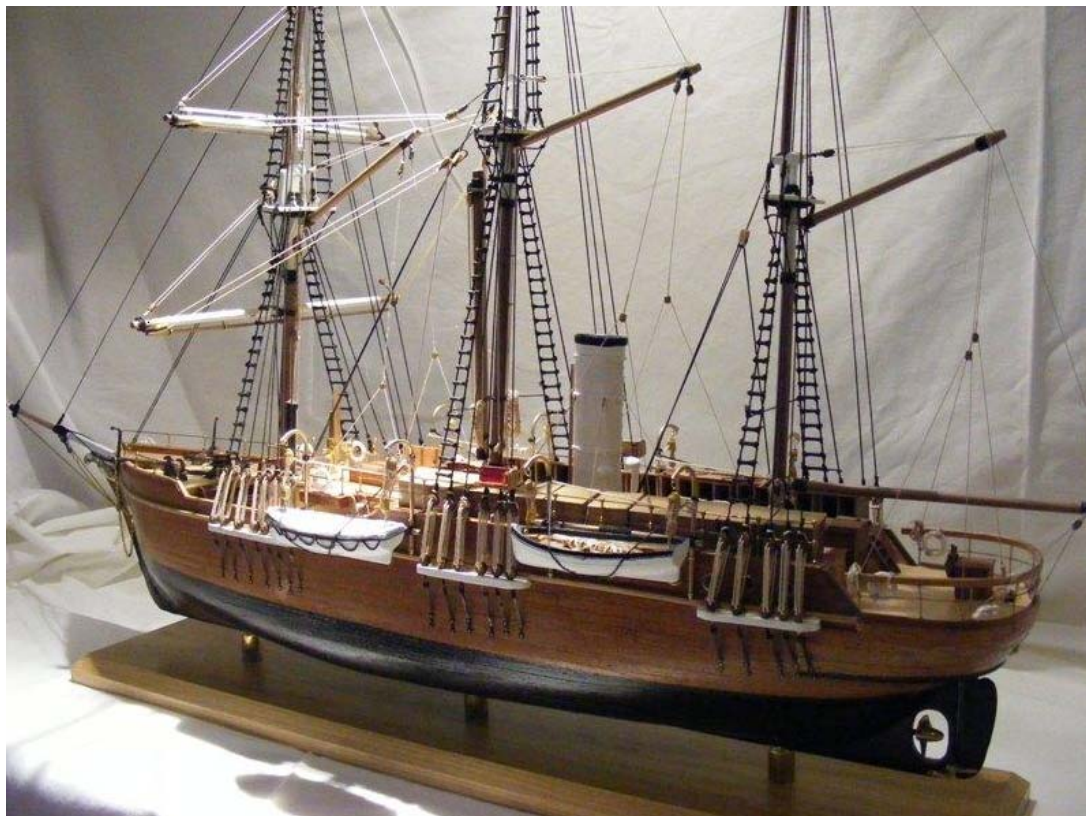


‘En route to Aladdin’s Cave’ – reversed graphic utilised as an impression in silver on the *Adelie Blizzard* outside cover

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**Model-making, and making *Adelie Blizzard* connections**

A model of Shackleton’s ship *Endurance* (1914-16) made by Chris Birkett, a UK model-maker now planning an *Aurora* model for Mawson’s centenary (photograph © C.Birkett).



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Ship Dimensions: L 920mm x H 650mm x W: 380mm

Hull: plank on frame construction , mahogany strip  
Deck : Oak veneer  
Super structure and Kennels: Walnut and Mahogany  
Masts: Walnut  
Funnel: plasticard and brass work.  
Brass and copper rails, pipes, chain etc.

She is, in model builders parlance, a semi scratch build: that is he used some commercially available fittings, anchors and chains, winches, capstan, portholes and stanchions, the rest being fabricated by him. The hull was built using drawings of a typical Whaler of the period, the stern being altered to suit, and the whole model was completed drawing on Frank Hurley's photographs and drawings from various internet sources.

As well as looking forward to seeing 'Mawson's *Aurora*', the making of such a model will also compliment the *Endurance*, as both ships were utilised on the ill-fated Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, though they were never physically alongside each other in their later careers as polar explorations vessels.

Other areas of commonality shared by the *Aurora-Endurance* Expeditions included plans to utilise 'air-tractors' – Shackleton's never made it to the continent – as well as expedition members such as Frank Wild and Frank Hurley. (John King Davis can also be added to this list as Captain of *Aurora* on a later relief voyage, as well as Ernest Shackleton himself as passenger on the same voyage, and initially back in 1910, the leader of what became the AAE.

Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of this overlap between the two ventures however, is an item related to the man charged with the responsibility at the Main Base of keeping the air-tractor operational: Frank Bickerton – whose artistic and literary contributions to the *Adelie Blizzarc* newspaper have recently been acknowledged, was himself inspired by another literary work, that of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. He kept a volume for sentimental reasons, and when eventually Bickerton declined to sign on under Shackleton, he donated the volume to the Expedition. Frank Worsley valued this so highly that he kept a page from it after everyone had been instructed to abandon all non-essentials. It even survived Elephant Island, and is a tangible reminder of the power of the written word.

### **Half a Dozen glaciers named**

Six glaciers in the Australian Antarctic Territory have been officially named in honour of historically significant figures and groups who have played an important role in the Antarctic region or Australian history.

The new names were recommended by the Australian Antarctic Names and Medal Committee chaired by Joe Johnson.

"These glaciers are all situated in the area explored by Sir Douglas Mawson during his Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1914."

Dr Johnson said "The names chosen reflect the contributions to Antarctic exploration in the first part of the twentieth century, and especially some members of that first Australasian Expedition whose contributions have not yet been recognised,"



Antarctic glacier  
[Photo](#): Eric Woehler

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The newly named glaciers are;

- **The James Forbes Glacier (69°12' South, 158°0' East)** Named after early Antarctic expeditioner James ("Sails") Forbes who took part in four Antarctic voyages from 1892-1927, including the 1912-13 *Aurora* voyage and the first voyage of the BANZARE. James Forbes originally came from Dundee in Scotland and started his sea going career as a whaler in the Arctic. He was a member of the first Antarctic expedition to be conducted on a ship equipped with steam engines – the Dundee Whaling Expedition of 1892-93. On the *Aurora* voyages he was the sailmaker in addition to performing other duties as an able seaman.
- **Williams Glacier (68°24' South, 149°35' East)** Named after Gus Williams, the Chief Steward on the *Aurora's* 1912 Macquarie Island voyage and two Antarctic voyages in 1913 and 1914. His role included provisioning the vessel and catering, as well as maintaining the various messes and accommodation for the scientists and officers.
- **Jeffryes Glacier (67°4' South, 143°59' East)** Named after Sidney Jeffryes, the wireless officer for the second winter of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition at Commonwealth Bay in 1913. He was described by Mawson in *The Home of the Blizzard* as being "...assiduous at all times, sending and receiving wireless messages (and had) applied himself to work with enthusiasm and perhaps an over-conscientious spirit".
- **AAE Glacier (67°35' South, 145°37' East)** Named after the Australasian Antarctic Expedition led by Sir Douglas Mawson in 1911-14. The expedition was the first mounted by personnel from Australia and New Zealand with a purely scientific focus and is widely regarded as the most successful of the 'heroic age' expeditions.
- **ANZAC Glacier (66°52' South, 109°28' East)** Named after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps formed during the First World War. The name is in recognition of the camaraderie and military achievements of the many young Australian and New Zealand troops who gave their lives in the conflict, including an early casualty at Gallipoli, Lieutenant Robert Bage, who was a member of the 1911-1914 Antarctic expedition.
- **BANZARE Glacier (66°45' South and 108°17' East)** Named after the British-Australian-New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition in 1930-31 led by Sir Douglas Mawson. The expedition made an outstanding contribution to both the contemporary knowledge of the Antarctic continent and to the oceanography of the region. It proved the existence of a continuous undersea land-platform around at least a third of Antarctica, reinforcing the theory that there was a continent beneath the ice plateau, rather than a series of islands cemented by the polar ice cap.

<http://www.aad.gov.au/default.asp?casid=37938>

### **A trip to the Aircraft Museum – Clive Wilson-Roberts**

As a part of an ongoing study of Sir Hubert Wilkins, a group organised by the Burnside Library came to the Museum and the Mawson Centre. Another activity by this group was a visit to the Aviation Museum at Port Adelaide on the 30<sup>th</sup> September. Mark Pharaoh and I attended.

We were given some information about this totally volunteer-run museum, followed by an account of early South Australian aviators. After a morning tea, during which we had an opportunity to chat with some of the volunteer personnel and the notable local flier Jon Johanson we were given a guided tour of the exhibits. Johanson has, among many other things done in his single-engine home-made aircraft, made a solo flight over the South Pole.

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One of the earliest exhibits relates to the first flight in South Australia. The flight was made by an engineer Bill Wittber who had been employed to assemble and test an imported Bleriot monoplane. (Bleriot was the first man to fly across the English Channel.) The first flight was accidental - the aircraft 'taking to the air' while being taxied. It was only seen by a few people, and was barely recorded. This happened a matter of days before the much publicised 'first flight in Australia' by Harry Houdini. The motor of this aircraft is on loan from the S.A. Museum.

In this era, learning to fly was largely a seat-of-the-pants experience, and aircraft were not very reliable.\* It was a 1911 test / demonstration flight of Mawson's REP aircraft at Cheltenham racecourse that resulted in a crash and its being taken south to be used as a land-based 'air-tractor' instead of as an operational aircraft. With the extreme conditions they were to encounter at Commonwealth Bay, the accident may well have prevented a later disaster.

Wilkins, this little-known South Australian flew some notable 'firsts' in both the Arctic and the Antarctic, a story well worth reading in one of several biographies, the most recent being by Simon Nasht, which was being read by the Library group. Although Wilkins did not get more than a passing mention during our visit, there is a small display space dedicated to him. His exploits took on new meaning in this setting, where one has an opportunity to recognize the experimental nature of flying in the early decades. It was Wilkins who later sold his Fokker tri-motor aircraft to Kingsford Smith, which became the Australian aviation icon the *SOUTHERN CROSS*. Pride of place at the Aviation Museum was their *Avro Anson*, which our guide pointed out, was built around a box-like frame that was originally a Fokker tri-motor fuselage.

Of direct relevance to the Mawson story, a *Gipsy Moth* of 1928 vintage is on show – a contemporary of the aircraft Mawson took south on the (1929-30) B.A.N.Z.A.R.E. voyage. Mawson had it set up as a floatplane, with pontoons to support it in the water. The Australian Air Force provided the pilots. Frank Hurley's cinematography of it in use is to be seen in the Museum's third-floor Mawson display.

\* "Skyward, man's mastery of the air," a book by Admiral Richard E. Byrd, an early U.S. Naval flyer, and later, Antarctic Expedition leader, illustrates the difficulties of early flying and the problems of as yet unreliable aircraft.





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