

GETTING TO KNOW THE ANTARCTIC

Discovery's Trip

LEADER REPORTS RESULTS

Hobart, March 22.

The achievements of the Antarctic expedition were narrated by the leader, Sir Douglas Mawson, at a State and civic welcome accorded to the personnel of the Discovery on Saturday night.

The welcome home was arranged by the Royal Society of Tasmania.

Sir Douglas outlined the achievements of the expedition, which, he said, had found unusual ice conditions. The icebergs this year were very much further north than usual, and in forty years icebergs had not been found round Macquarie Island. The expedition met them a degree north of Macquarie.

Value of Macquarie Island Tasmanians should treasure Macquarie Island very highly. It was the most populous part of

Tasmanian territory, owing to the millions of penguins and thousands of sea elephants. There was no island in the world that had such a population of bird and sea life. Tasmanians had the option of possible developments at Macquarie Island, but he suggested that they should be careful not to destroy what could never be put back again—the wonderful variety of life there. He considered that the island might be made a show spot.

Criticism had appeared in a newspaper, he said, that the expedition had come back without accomplishing what it set out to do. The same newspaper made the same statement last year. It knew nothing of the plans of the expedition and had made no enquiries. In these days they had to arrange the expedition to get the maximum result with the minimum expenditure.

The expedition had visited one area in the first year and another in the second year. When the results were published they would be struck with the immensity of them compared with the money spent.

An excellent method of obtaining results was the combination of ship with seaplane. The Scott expedition had sent out sledging parties and one of them had covered a good deal of new ground, but it took two years and the ship was operating for three summers. If the ship could not get in, the aeroplane could spy out the land and the expedition would probably be able to map in 30 miles of coastline while the sledging party was making hard work of perhaps a few miles.

The expedition had carried out a very extended scientific programme, and had obtained a great deal of geographic result through a little over one-third of the whole Antarctic region.

Large Area Covered

They had covered an area far in excess of any previous expedition. Where the land was known they hurried over it, but they were always doing their best to find new land. They had added to the map region, covering 40 degrees of longitude, and had worked scientifically known and unknown regions, about 125 degrees of longitude, but 40 degrees of land were still unknown. Part of the coastline was completely surveyed and portion of it was seen only from a distance. That was all that it was necessary to know about such remote land for the present.

One way and another the expedition had kept touch on the coast through one-third of the Antarctic Circle, and scientifically they had brought back a good account of the land. Spread over the two years, the cost of the expedition was not so great, and they were paying their way as much as possible.

The Discovery left Hobart at six o'clock this evening, carrying Sir Douglas Mawson and his fellow members of the expedition, with the exception of the ornithologist, Mr. A. D. Fallow, and the official photographer, Captain Frank Hurley, who sailed for Sydney by the Zealandia yesterday, and Mr. A. F. Howard, chemist and hydrologist, who is travelling to Melbourne by the Nairana.

The Discovery will conduct scientific dredging operations while proceeding up the east coast of Tasmania and across Bass Straits.

DISCIPLINE ON DISCOVERY

Bench Comment Challenged

Melbourne, June 26.

Referring to-day to comments made by Mr. E. W. Jackson, P.M., in the Williamstown Police Court on Tuesday, when he said that the bench was inclined to the view that there was a lot of laxity on the Mawson Antarctic expedition ship Discovery regarding stores and other material, the officer in charge of the Discovery (Mr. K. N. McKenzie) said that the inference was unjust and untrue.

It was the unvarying practice, he said, to observe strict supervision on board the Discovery. Regular ship routine was maintained, and watchmen were on duty day and night. Apparently drink had been brought on board and taken to the fore-castle by the man who had visited the vessel just before the trouble began.

PROVISIONING THE DISCOVERY

ENGINES OVERHAULED

Leaves Hobart On November 14

Although some additional men joined the Discovery on Wednesday, the main body of the crew will not do so until later in the month," said Sir Douglas Mawson yesterday.

Sir Douglas, who was discussing the plans for the second portion of his Antarctic expedition, which will leave Hobart about the middle of next month, said that during the winter the Discovery had been thoroughly overhauled. The engines had been taken down, and were now in first-class condition, and all necessary repairs to the ship had been effected. The members of the crew on board were engaged in taking in stores, equipment, and coal. The stowage of the stores and scientific equipment required a lot of thought, as the allocation of those goods to various parts of the ship where they would be readily accessible when required, was not an easy matter. Stores likely to be needed first had to be stowed after those not likely to be required for some weeks, and scientific equipment must be available at any time. Then again, provisions of a special character which might be required in an emergency had to be stored where they could be got at quickly. They had to take into consideration the possibility of the ship being crushed in the ice and the crew having to take to the boats. For such an emergency they would require supplies of concentrated foods that would enable them to support themselves in the Antarctic for at least 12 months. Such stores had to be readily accessible, but yet somewhere where they would not be in the way.

Replenishment of Coal Supplies

They were taking every pound of coal they could carry, as the replenishment of their coal supply would be one of their problems. If they could obtain assistance in that respect from whaling vessels that might be operating in the western portion of the area they proposed to visit, the results of their trip might be enormously increased. Some help might be forthcoming from whalers working near the eastern extremity of the area under investigation, but that was not where it was most likely to be needed.

Sir Douglas said they were receiving a great deal of assistance from Australian manufacturers as regards stores, and Mr. MacRobertson had been the backbone of their financial arrangements. They were obtaining considerable revenue towards the cost of the coming cruise from showing the picture story of the last cruise. The film had been exhibited in Sydney, and was now in Melbourne. It would be in Adelaide in a week or two, and would be shown in conjunction with a lecture by Captain Hurley.

The expedition would leave Melbourne at the end of this month for Hobart, where the final supplies of coal and food would be taken on board. They hoped to depart for the south on November 14.

TO THE ANTARCTIC

DISCOVERY'S VOYAGE

Final Plans

Melbourne, September 26.

Final arrangements for the return of the British-Australian-New Zealand Antarctic Expedition to Antarctica, to complete the scientific work begun by Sir Douglas Mawson last year, were discussed at a meeting of the Expedition Committee to-day.

Sir David Orme Masson presided. Sir Douglas Mawson, Sir Edgeworth David, the first member of the Naval Board (Rear-Admiral W. Munro Kerr) and the new commander of the Discovery (Captain Mackenzie) were also present.

If arrangements can be completed in time, the Discovery will sail from Melbourne in the last week of next month and she will make direct for the Antarctic, after coaling at Hobart.

Sir Douglas is anxious to leave Australia as early as possible, so that he may complete his work and be clear of the ice before it begins to freeze. He expects to return to Australia by April. The new crew has been engaged. There will be only one alteration in the personnel of the scientific staff. Mr. Marr, the Plankton expert, will be unable to return to the Antarctic on account of ill-health. Another Planktonologist has not yet been selected.

ANTARCTIC BIRDS

Penguins on Macquarie Island

By R. A. Fallow, Ornithologist to the Mawson Expedition

There is still much to be learned of the distribution and habits of Antarctic birds, and one of the aims of the expedition has been to fill in gaps in our knowledge, as far as possible.

The first shore station occupied was at Macquarie Island. A thorough survey of this island and its wild life was made by the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-14. The opportunity was thus a good one to note the changes that might have occurred in 20 years, especially as at that time exploitation of penguins for their oil had greatly reduced the original numbers. During the intervening years the island has been a sanctuary under the jurisdiction of the Tasmanian Government, and this policy of protection has been abundantly justified by the results.

Colonies of Penguins

The Royal penguins, which are found nowhere else but on Macquarie Island, were nesting in huge colonies at the time of our visit, their total number being considerably over a million. At the Nuggets Beach, near the north end of the island, the visitor, on rounding a rocky headland, finds himself on a sandy beach thronged with penguins. On the seaward side of the throng are hundreds of penguins coming and going, expert surfers in either case. Landward, a tiny creek leads up to a gully between the hills, and the bed of this creek also is crowded with penguins, coming and going. There is endless amusement to be gained by following one of the ascending parties. The birds are obviously in a hurry, and flounder awkwardly over the slippery boulders. In more leisurely fashion, picking their steps, another party descends, and after a sociable exchange of squawks and flipper-wagging, passes on to the sea.

Thousands of Birds

About 100 feet above the sea, where the stream widens to a valley, the climbing birds reach the first nesting colony. Here sit several thousand birds indescribably congested, but apparently not hampered by the congestion. Several more of these colonies occur at various heights until in an amphitheatre of the hills over 600 feet above the sea tens of thousands of birds are found. The observer, tired with the climb, wonders what advantage, if any, these small birds gain by the choice of such an elevated nesting site. The stately King penguins, although not so numerous as the Royals, are nesting in fair numbers, and seem in no danger of the extinction that was once thought to be their fate. The only sub-Antarctic birds that seem scarce on the island are burrowing species of petrels, which have suffered from competition with rabbits and from the depredations of New Zealand woodhens or wekas.

Petrels and Gulls Scavengers

An interesting feature of Antarctic bird life was the concentration of birds in the vicinity of whaling factory ships. Giant petrels and skua gulls, both scavengers by nature, were present, as one would expect, but there were also large numbers of Antarctic petrels and others feeding on the floating scum of oil. In one case only a large number of Wilson petrels were seen similarly engaged, flitting like black and white butterflies over the oily water. Large colonies of Adelle penguins, which had been discovered by previous expeditions, were re-visited, and found to be in a healthy state. In addition, many new ones were found along the newly-discovered coasts charted by the expedition. On the coast of MacRobertson Land, one bold headland a thousand feet in height provided nesting shelter for more species of birds than any other single cape or island in the Antarctic, with the exception of Haswell Island. Here were groups of moulting Emperor penguins, thousands of Adelle penguins, Antarctic, Silver-grey, Snow, and Wilson petrels, Cape pigeons, and skuas. The total quantity of food brought from the surrounding sea to feed the downy chicks must have been enormous, a fact indicative of the rich marine life on which all the birds depend. In addition to the resident Antarctic birds, we saw and collected also terns, which are migrant visitors from the regions about the North Pole.

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AUSTRALIANS FOR ANTARCTIC

DISCOVERY'S CREW MAY BE PICKED HERE

Canberra, May 14.

Australian seamen may comprise the crew of the next Antarctic exploration cruise of the Discovery, as the crew which sailed south with the ship from England has now been paid off.

A decision will not be reached by the Government for several months, as it will not be necessary to choose a crew until October — a month before the Discovery will again sail south. It is possible that the ship will be manned by naval ratings who will be stretched as the result of the decreased defence vote.

AMAZING GROWTH OF WHALING

Many Fleets and 1,000 Men in Antarctic

42 FACTORY SHIPS

A story of the amazing growth of the Norwegian whaling industry—and that of other foreigners—in the Antarctic, where he estimates that 42 mother factory vessels and 250 chasers employing 1,000 men, are engaged, is told by Sir Douglas Mawson in a wireless message to Australia on March 12.

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Now we are in the forties, under sail, pleasantly wending our way eastward and home after a summer's cruise in the icy realm of the far south, the happenings of the past months may be reviewed in calm retrospect.

To one who has known the Antarctic before the recent invasion of whalers, by far the most outstanding feature of the voyage has been, not the immensity of the ice world nor the glimpses of glittering lands never before seen by man, but the intensity of the present whaling campaign and the extent to which this exploitation of fisheries is being pressed.

With an increase in number of craft operating, these have pushed out into new areas to such an extent that our recent experience has shown that heretofore pelagic factory ships may be met with anywhere along the margin of the pack.

"Greedy Guest"

Where once the squawk of a friendly penguin, or the snort of a drowsing seal, greeted the passage of an exploring vessel, the transient population of commercial invaders, now pursues a greedy quest. Reminiscent of the days of historic gold rushes, feverish activity is being directed to the Antarctic seas in an effort to participate in the golden opportunity presented by these fabulously rich fisheries.

Vessels of many nations, notably Norwegian superannuated cargo ships converted into crude boiling-down factories, colliers, oil tankers, and modern 25,000 ton mother ships, each with its flotilla of whale chasers, are all embodied in this ruthless competition.

Eight Millions a Year

We learned from reliable sources about the ships that there are no less than 42 mother factory vessels in Antarctic waters this season, and associated with them an aggregate of some 250 chasers, collectively employing about 1,000 Norwegians alone.

The annual value of the catch has recently risen to the neighborhood of £8,000,000. The whale is paying for all this. In these days of high taxation the whale holds the unenviable record of being the most highly taxed creature on the earth—taxation even more ruthless than that imposed upon John Citizen of our own suffering communities, for these colossal creatures, fat and thin, male and female, all go into the melting pot and appear as margarine and fertilizer, or other lifeless commodities of world trade.

May Become Rare

So, with such concentration of activity in quest of these leviathans, it will not be surprising if they should soon become rare.

With ships in Antarctic waters so numerous as to be capable of extending a cordon around the entire margin of the Antarctic pack zone, with chasers spaced only fifty miles apart, progressive, and probably rapid, depletion may be expected.

The whaling personnel is constituted of a fine body of men, which is to be expected, because the work is arduous with a spice of danger, and, in the case of those manning chasers, not only comfortless, but exhausting.

Friendly and Cordial

A pleasing spirit of friendship and cordiality was extended towards us by those with whom we came in contact.

In the case of large factory ships there are installed many items of equipment to provide reasonable degrees of creature comfort for those operating so much of the year away from home and under abnormal conditions.

Indeed such ships, apart from the penetrating odor from the flensing decks, offer a comfortable home even in the midst of icy desolation.

Women in Antarctic

On one occasion, emerging from a belt of sparkling pack, we came upon two vessels lying side by side coaling in a calm, ice-girt pool. This prosaic business provoked little interest, but as we drew near enough to distinguish those on board, much astonishment was excited by the dramatic appearance on their decks of two women-folk attired in modes of civilisation.

Their's is a unique experience. They can make much merit of the fact that they are, perhaps, the first of their sex to visit the Antarctic.

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