

The Many Lives of Douglas Mawson

Volume One, Creative Work

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Abstract

The Many Lives of Douglas Mawson, the first volume of this PhD, is a collection of non-fiction vignettes about the Mawson family. As an exploration of ‘the many lives of Douglas Mawson’ from his public image as an explorer to his private roles as a husband and father, it considers the making and unmaking of myths surrounding a nationally iconic figure, and explores the impact of Mawson’s legacy on family lives across generations. The work, which consists of a preface and seven chapters, deals with different themes that open onto Mawson’s known and lesser-known histories. Inspired by objects and artefacts which have circulated over the years both within the family sphere and in the public domain, each chapter revolves around different material traces of Mawson’s legacy: public ones, such as his hut which still stands at Commonwealth Bay, and private ones, such as family letters and portraits.

Declaration

This is to certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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- ? Farewelling Douglas to UK 1928/29?
- ? Meeting Douglas on return from UK May 1929? (see fur coat in original photo)
- * ? Meeting Douglas on "Discovery" on return from Antarctica 31 March 1930 (p177, "News from Antarctica")
- ? Farewelling Douglas September 1929 on "Wedon" to join the "Discovery" in Capetown



Preface

Regrettably, the life of my paternal great-grandfather, Douglas Mawson, ended before mine had even begun. I came to know him through the things he has left behind: his reindeer-skin sleeping bag; his yellow snow goggles; his photograph on our mantelpiece bearing an uncanny likeness to my father. As a child I looked through his book *The Home of the Blizzard*, and other books about his expeditions, admiring the pictures: Cecil Madigan unrecognisable with a film of ice over his face; newly hatched baby penguin chicks; a bull elephant seal rearing up on a Macquarie Island beach; Mertz and Ninnis whose eyes somehow told me that they knew of their impending deaths. The photograph of Mawson leaning against his sledge, his head bowed waiting to set off on the journey only he would survive, has a look of sorrow about it, as if he too sensed something of the tragedy that awaited them.

As I grew up I randomly collected the small details of Douglas Mawson's life and personality. He had blue eyes and stood six foot three in his socks. He used to feed his fowls grapes through the holes of their wire enclosure. He had a habit of beginning lectures with a loud sniff. He liked musical comedies, poetry and biographies, fine furniture, trees and cats, rice pudding and crème caramel. He enjoyed shopping at the Adelaide Central Market and tossing pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Unsurprisingly, he had a strong constitution, a high pain threshold, and an astonishing resistance to the cold. He seldom drank, preferring a glass of milk. Uninterested in sport, he was intolerant of fools and kind to little boys, demanding of his men and ambitious for his daughters. An early riser he also worked late into the night, sometimes falling asleep on the sofa. He was a prolific letter writer; a bad driver; a good shot; a fast walker; a poor sailor.

Lying loose in family cupboards and drawers, boxes and envelopes, and in old dog-eared albums with insects mummified between the pages, were pictures of him in

many guises: on his wedding day puffing out his chest; on a river holiday assisting a laughing Paquita into a dinghy; clean shaven and serious by a camp fire, his hands on his hips; bearded and pensive in the cabin of a ship; in a Homburg helping the Duchess of York try on some wolf skin mitts.

From a family perspective, and from the perspectives of those who knew him, Mawson was a complex private figure as well as a publicly revered explorer. Seen through their eyes he is freed from being a face glued to envelopes, bought and sold, pigeonholed and pinned down. He floats out of the frame of his balaclava, out of the crinkled edges of the stamps enclosing his image, out of the one hundred dollar bill and comes to life and to light as a man who had many faces and many lives.

Flawed and contradictory like anyone else, he was at once resourceful and extravagant, organised and muddled, helpful and meddlesome, friendly and aloof. Some say he was humourless and a little dour; others remember his 'keen sense of fun'; his 'lusty sense of humour'. He has been described as a gentle man and unfailingly optimistic, whose enthusiasm was infectious; others thought him pessimistic, brusque, imposing, imperious.

Mawson's life, unlike his two sledging companions Ninnis and Mertz, did not end in the snow when he was a young man but in 1958 when he was aged 76. He spent fifty years at the University of Adelaide, thirty as Professor of Geology. He published more than one hundred research papers only a fraction of which were related to Antarctic science. He was a husband and a father, a farmer, a conservationist, an officer in the First World War, yet he is both remembered and forgotten because of his survival in the Antarctic in 1913.

Consistently defined and confined by the public status of his polar experience, he has somehow been pared down, simplified; reduced to the man who ate his husky dogs to

survive; who cut his sledge in half with his pocket saw; who fell down a crevasse and hauled himself to the surface. The objects and artefacts associated with him inevitably come back to this one story which has not only obscured and diminished other aspects of his life and work, but also the contributions and achievements of the men who went to the Antarctic with him, and the lives of Paquita and his daughters Pat and Jessica.

Mawson's reputation as an intrepid explorer had far-reaching effects on his whole family. Like a war wound, his title 'Sir' marked him forever as a man who had narrowly escaped death. It was a constant reminder of how he had fought the odds to make it to safety and also of how two young men had lost their lives under his command. The persistent speculation surrounding the sledging journey and the decisions he had made out in the ice in the summer of 1912-13 was something they all had to endure, and is something the family continues to be faced with. Why did the lid of the crevasse that swallowed Ninnis not break when Mawson first crossed it? Could Ninnis have survived had Mawson insisted that he wore snow shoes? Could Mertz have survived if he had eaten less of the husky liver that is believed to have killed him, if they had taken a different route, if they had travelled closer to the sea? Did Mawson cannibalise Mertz? Did he really fall fourteen feet down a crevasse and drag himself out or was it a dream?

As 'Lady Mawson' almost from the moment they were married, my great-grandmother Paquita also carried this bittersweet legacy. Her life was inextricably bound up in all things polar. Through their letters to each other during their engagement, she and Mawson expressed their love through images and analogies of ice, snow and cold. The theme of their wedding was Antarctica. At the reception the tables were dotted with sugar-coated penguins and models of his ship, *Aurora*; the wedding cake was surmounted on an iceberg and each tier decorated with sledge dogs and snow petrels. Their honeymoon was interspersed with Mawson's lectures about the results and discoveries of his expedition and

the writing of his book, *The Home of the Blizzard*, and saddened by visits to the families of Ninnis and Mertz.

Holidays the Mawsons took were always punctuated by Antarctic-related engagements. When she travelled with Mawson, Paquita's hand luggage consisted of boxes of glass negatives for lecture presentations. When travelling alone, she visited museums on Mawson's behalf where she delivered scientific specimens collected in the Antarctic. In her widowhood she wrote his biography, and attended launches and openings of places and events established in his honour. Even after he died his name followed her. Although she sold their house in Brighton and relocated to the Adelaide Hills where she lived until her own death in 1974, even today people mistakenly think that Mawson lived there too. Although Paquita called her house 'Casa Paquita' in memory of her early years in Spain, an attempt perhaps to reinvent herself in widowhood, the road leading to her house was later renamed 'Mawson Drive'.

By the time my great-aunt Pat was born in 1915 and my grandmother Jessica in 1917, Mawson was already knighted and so there was never a time when they did not live in the shadow of his heroic deeds. As children they were given toy penguins and seals; as adults the walls of their houses were adorned with the same Frank Hurley photographs they had grown up with. In later life my grandmother had penguins on her shower curtain, a penguin bag and a rubber stamp of a penguin standing with its wings held out. Like a family crest, this imprint appears on many of her letters to relations and friends. Even Mimi the Mawsons' cat was born in the Antarctic, and it has always struck me as strangely fitting that none of the family enjoyed the heat, as if their roots were literally in the Antarctic ice.

My grandmother said she could never tell whether the people she met were interested in her or in her connection to her famous father. This didn't stop after she was married and was no longer Jessica Mawson. The last years of her life coincided with a revival of interest in Mawson as the centenaries of his expeditions approached and she was taken back to the past. She worked as a volunteer at the Herbarium in the Botanical Gardens in Adelaide repacking into stronger envelopes the lichens Mawson had brought back from the Antarctic in 1913 and 1931. She said she felt her life had come full circle: she was again handling material from Antarctica, just as she and Pat had helped their father sort the slides for his polar lectures sixty years before. For articles and documentaries on Mawson, exhibitions and events, journalists sought her out and interviewed her in her home. The man my grandmother knew as a loving father was also a public figure whose every move and motive was judged and scrutinised. Until her death at the age of 87 in 2004 she was the last surviving member of the immediate Mawson family, and her memories of her father were invaluable to the perpetuation of the Mawson legend.

Yet like Douglas Mawson, Paquita and his daughters had lives and identities behind the inescapable polar veneer. A supportive wife both publicly and privately, Paquita, whose full name was Francisca Adriana, was also a mother, a writer, a community worker, a singer, a patriotic Hollander. Capable of appearing austere and intimidating on first meeting, perhaps partly because of her large build and great height, she is mostly remembered as flamboyant and extravagant, passionate and effusive, spontaneous, witty and warm. A gardener, a reader, a traveller, a practised public speaker, she loved swimming, long baths and sleeping late. She was always kind to Diprose her gardener, to her maids, and to her washerwoman Mrs Bailhache. She detested everyday cooking but loved catering for dinner parties, was fond of caviar, hock and champagne. Her favourite composer was Johannes Brahms, and she liked playing patience, doing jigsaw puzzles, and listening to mystery plays on the radio. A letter-writer like Mawson, she was also talented

at tapestry, lace-making, sewing and embroidery. Liberated in her widowhood as Lady Mawson without the Sir, she enrolled in a Spanish course at Flinders University at the age of seventy-six, and was often seen hurtling at great speed through the Adelaide Hills in her green Chrysler.

Growing up with a father who was a university professor and whose enquiring mind and love of science they both inherited, Jessica and Pat were studious children who inspected creatures under microscopes, dissected frogs, and collected rocks and jellyfish in jars. They were inherently academic, unworldly and unassuming; neither was the kind to flirt or to engage in small talk. Both tall like their parents, they had bright red hair and freckles which faded as they grew older. My great-aunt Pat was a no-nonsense type who seemed always in a rush. She had three sons, a little dog called Pongo, a marine biologist husband with a soft Welsh accent, and a position at the University of Adelaide in 'the zoo department'. She was an accomplished cook, a generous hostess, a hard worker and a half-hearted housekeeper. In her retirement she was an honorary curator of parasitic worms at the South Australian Museum. Awarded an Order of Australia for her contributions to Australian science, like her father she published over one hundred research papers.

My grandmother Jessica was softer and gentler than her sister. Never Jess or Jessie, she was most often called Jelly. A science graduate, she majored in bacteriology and specialised in the culturing of viruses. Later she married and had four children of whom my father was the eldest and the only boy. She liked doing the cross quiz at weekends as well as cryptic crosswords, and for answers she would refer to a huge encyclopaedia which rested on a stand in her living room. Its central position in the room seemed always to me to reflect the importance of learning for her. She was always improving her mind. Among her things when she died was a little exercise book full of notes about the religions of the world and the kings and queens of England. She was a capable but less sophisticated cook

than Pat, and like her mother she was clever at sewing and needlework (her ability to interpret patterns and to arrange patches suited her scientific mind). She loved scrabble and all kinds of card games, and was a great fan of Agatha Christie and Noël Coward. She was modest, stoic, loyal, inclined to worry and a little self-effacing. Like Mawson she was biased towards cats, and inherited his sweet tooth. Often vocal about the things she did not like, she had little time for sport or dogs, was largely uninterested in music, and declared coriander a ‘ghastly herb’.

None of the Mawsons is alive now. Their name went down with them when Mawson’s brother William’s only son Bob died childless in a plane crash in 1939. I often wish they were here for there are so many questions I would like to ask them. When my grandmother died I remember looking around her place, at the books on her shelves, at the pictures and photographs on her walls, and realising that I would never be able to ask her another question; that hence forward I was almost entirely on my own, left with only the material traces of her life as a means to understanding the past. Suddenly it seemed very important to preserve and to protect her things. I remember feeling a mild sense of terror as we began to throw out the food in her fridge, and to pack away her clothes. Somehow it felt that with everything we moved or removed that we were covering over her existence. I had the feeling that even if we put every object back in its place, it would never be the same again. I was afraid that we wouldn’t know the way back. Like the birds in Hansel and Gretel, we were eating the breadcrumbs that marked the path through the forest. I began then to think about the lives of my great-grandparents, my great-aunt and my grandmother through the things they have left behind before I forgot the way; while the scent was still fresh. It feels as though I am resurrecting them through their things—their spoons, houses, portraits, photographs, letters seem to have a life of their own. They are not static museum pieces; they are significant in a multitude of ways, whether perpetuating public myths or

opening up lesser known stories about the kind of people they were, about the way that they lived their lives, and about what they might have passed down.

The year 2014 marks a century since the end of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (1911-14). In the years leading up to the centenary of this event much previously unseen or unpublished material has been released, including the diaries of sailors and members of the expedition's land parties. The publication of this material has sparked new speculation about Mawson both as a man and as a leader, some of which sets out to challenge his long-held heroic status and the popular perception of him as a natural leader, as a stoic, friendly, modest man dedicated to science. For instance, in his 2013 book *Flaws in the Ice: In Search of Douglas Mawson*, David Day argues that Mawson was a seeker of 'fame and fortune' who found celebrity 'intoxicating'; a vainglorious man who actively promoted his own myth, and who suppressed, even 'handicapped' those who threatened to outshine him. Among Day's claims are that Mawson avoided conscription in World War I; that when a married man he enjoyed 'a mad summer of love' in 1916 with Robert Scott's widow, Kathleen; that his 'relative inexperience, over-weening ambition, and poor decision-making' caused the deaths of both Ninnis and Mertz; and that he was an ineffectual, overly-critical leader whose primary interest was 'territorial acquisition with science acting as a cover'.

It is perhaps inevitable that well-known historical figures become positioned as either hero or anti-hero, but either status is a feature of the dehumanising nature of myth. While acknowledging that 'there is room for careful questioning of some of Mawson's decisions', Antarctic historian Elizabeth Leane asserts that 'it would be a mistake... to swing belatedly from celebrating Mawson to excoriating him'. As complex a human being as any one of us, Mawson was neither entirely good nor entirely bad, and nor, like anyone else, can he be truly understood. Yet to appreciate his complexities and the effect of his

fame on those close to him, to engage with the tension between private and public personas, is to break open the limiting power of myth and bring to light what Virginia Woolf called 'the invisible presences' that play such an important part in binding together any life.



Transient Aliens: Shadowing Douglas Mawson's Ghost

When I was invited to go on a voyage to the Antarctic in the summer of 2008-9, I felt both excited and afraid. Douglas Mawson called it 'a wonderful, terrible place' and just thinking about going there incited similarly complex feelings in me. The continent has a strange allure and I wondered whether I would be drawn to it as he was, whether I would see my visit as a-once-in-a-lifetime-trip or whether I would want to keep going back. After accepting the offer over the phone in the back of my parents' car as we drove to the country on a hot summer day, I looked out of the window at the passing traffic and tried to imagine the cold, the isolation, the peril, and the silence that lay ahead of me.

Mawson went to the Antarctic four times, first as physicist on Ernest Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition (the BAE) of 1907-9, and then as leader of two Australian expeditions. Our voyage- 'Icebergs & Emperors – Mawson's Antarctica', from December,

2008 to January, 2009, would trace the route he took on his second visit to the continent, as leader of The Australasian Antarctic Expedition (the AAE) from 1911 to 1914. On this expedition he went to a virtually unknown area of the east coast which had been sighted seventy years before by Frenchman Admiral Dumont D'Urville but never explored. On his later visits on BANZARE (The British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions), over the summers of 1929 to 30 and 1930 to 31, Mawson went back to this area and added more territory to the map and to Australia's 'slice' of the continent. It's a very remote part of Antarctica, far from the much more visited Ross Sea region where Scott and Shackleton built their bases and from where they left for the South Pole. Even now it is seldom visited. In the 'expedition notes' I was sent in the weeks leading up to the voyage, I was warned:

This is not a conventional cruise. Please note that we will face challenges similar to those faced by early Antarctic explorers. Our itinerary will vary depending on the conditions we encounter and the opportunities that arise. Expect the unexpected!

The plan was to leave from Hobart, and head first to the sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island where Mawson left a team of five men before going on to Commonwealth Bay on the Antarctic continent where he and seventeen men established 'The Main Base' in early 1912, now known as Mawson's Huts. There was no guarantee that we would be able to reach Commonwealth Bay. The winds are terrific there, hence the title of Mawson's 1915 book: *The Home of the Blizzard*. Many ships before us had been forced to turn away without having landed. In January 1912 Captain Davis, the captain of Mawson's ship the *Aurora*, had landed another party 1500 miles west of Commonwealth Bay. This was later named 'The Western Base', where eight men led by Frank Wild lived for a year but we weren't going to venture that far.

The perils and unpredictability of Antarctica aside, I was under no illusions that my voyage would be anything like the one Mawson had led almost a century before, or even like his last two expeditions eighty years before. His were undertaken in very different circumstances and for very different reasons. While he was first to explore and name the territory I was bound for, I was to be about the zillionth passenger on a pleasure cruise with no particular purpose other than to marvel at the magnificent scenery and wildlife and to see where he had been.

Even so, from the very outset of the voyage, I had the feeling that I was shadowing his ghost. Almost literally walking in his footsteps, I felt close to him, partly because the Antarctic has remained largely unchanged since his lifetime, his hut being one of the few signs of human habitation. This helped bridge the gap of 97 years between our respective voyages. Even Hobart, a long-time gateway to the continent and from where we both set off, with its old buildings and strong historic atmosphere, is not hard to imagine almost a century ago. With its grim convict past, the town seems an appropriately solemn last port of call (Antarctica aside) for Ninnis and Mertz who lost their lives on the expedition.

The AAE was the first Australian-led expedition outside the country so there were huge celebrations leading up to and on the day of the *Aurora*'s departure. As I walked around the city the day before I left, I pictured the scene in late 1911: people travelling around on trams and by horse and cart; supplies being delivered in horse-drawn carts—lengths of timber, sheep, an aeroplane, and telegrams and parcels being couriered on horseback and by bicycle to the *Aurora*, moored at Queen's Pier. I envisaged the men inside the shed at the wharf collecting their set of clothes rolled up in sleeping bags and carrying them off to their bunks. I saw them sitting on the ground trying on leather boots under a row of oilskins hanging on a rope strung up across the shed; a row of rubber sea boots on the floor beneath it; boxes piled high, all colour-coded according to where they

were bound: black for Macquarie Island, red for Commonwealth Bay. I pictured men throwing away cans of split peas and tins of turkey that had rusted and gone rotten on the voyage from Cardiff; a frazzled Mawson wandering around with a clipboard, ticking off supplies; Frank Wild shouting orders to men scurrying from the ship to the shed. I imagined others congregating in the ward room around a portable gramophone and records donated to the expedition, studying the catalogue and choosing music as messenger boys arrived with telegrams of farewell.

They stalked the streets, giant figures on stilts. They were such heroes in the town that I imagine them like this. They tower over Hobart, coming and going from a cafe in Elizabeth Street where they ate strawberries and cream. Mawson gave two lectures at the Town Hall where expeditioners Cecil Madigan and Eric Webb also did a little show in their explorer outfits. I pictured them making their way to the hall dressed up in reindeer skin boots and Jaeger suits, wolfskin mitts and snow goggles. As I passed Hadley's Orient Hotel where Mawson invited them all to 'luncheon' the day before they set sail, I fancied I could hear cheers, the scraping of chairs, the clink of glasses, the jangle of cutlery and men singing to Mawson: 'For he's a jolly good fellow'.

They were given a grand send-off. Well-wishers followed the ship up the Derwent River in a steamer on the afternoon of December 2 1911. Cannons were fired as dusk fell. Sailors climbed the rigging, cooeing and waving, and threw coins into the water as 'only empty pockets bring luck at sea'.

Fifteen years later, when Mawson left for the Antarctic from Hobart for the last (and only other) time in November 1930, again hundreds of people, including Paquita, crowded the wharf. The expedition photographer, Frank Hurley, filmed the farewell from the foredeck. Frantically busy, Mawson was dictating to two typists within half an hour of

departure. When finally aboard, dressed in a sports coat and cap with his foot on the bowsprit, he called on his men for a final cheer to the people of Hobart, as the ship cleared the wharf and entered the Derwent River, swarming with yachts.

There was no such fanfare for us. We slipped away almost unnoticed on a grey Saturday morning in our Polish icebreaker, the *Marina Svetaeva*, just another cruise ship heading for the now well-trodden land Mawson had first explored and named.

It was stuffy inside the ship, especially in my cabin where the portholes were firmly closed. Temporarily overwhelmed with fear and doubt, I wondered if Mawson had experienced any second thoughts once on board. It felt as though we were heading into space. Engine trouble had delayed us and this had given me more time (and cause) to think about the enormity of what I was about to undertake. I fantasised about a last minute escape, knowing it was too late; soon after breakfast on December 13, we were moving out of port, a day after our scheduled departure date. I decided not to dwell on the possible implications of the number 13 as I looked back at a receding Hobart.

We didn't stop as the *Aurora* did, halfway down the river to collect thirty-eight husky dogs from Quarantine which were loaded on top of the cargo stowed on deck. Just hours out of Hobart the *Aurora* met a storm; the waves of the swelling Southern Ocean washed over the dogs, and over everything from wireless masts to biscuits to fowls.

All our food and belongings were safely inside the *Marina Svetaeva*. We had no animals, not even a ship's cat. And while we had the luxury of running water, those on the *Aurora* had had to fill every receptacle they could find with fresh water, every available bottle and bucket, and all the wash basins, later replenishing supplies with ice they collected from the top of the frozen sea, by a process they called 'watering' or 'icing ship'.

They would drive into the pack-ice, and men, armed with picks and shovels and baskets, would climb overboard to collect it.

Light rain was falling as we glided along but there was no sign of an approaching storm. I was anticipating a more comfortable voyage but prayed that I would be a better sailor than my great-grandfather, who seldom emerged from his cabin. Looking around at the passengers I noted that the large majority were well over fifty. One woman was in her early nineties. I couldn't help thinking, as I watched an elderly man walk frailly down the corridor, what a very different set of people they were compared to the party Mawson had taken. He chose mostly young men because, as he explained in *The Home of the Blizzard*: 'For a polar campaign the great desideratum is tempered youth. It is the vigour, the dash and the recuperative power of youth that is so necessary to cope with the extreme discomforts and trials of...exploration.' No one on our ship was going sledging; we weren't going to land and build our own accommodation. In fact, in contrast to the men of the AAE, most of our time would be spent on the ship with only brief and occasional landings. Another notable difference was that there were women on board our ship, both passengers and crew. There would be no need for toasts to 'sweethearts and wives'.

Small with curly brown hair, Estelle was my cabin mate. An anthropologist and archaeologist who specialises in forensic archaeology, Estelle has worked at the Mawson huts site at Commonwealth Bay on and off since the 1980s. She was the first archaeologist to work in the Antarctic and developed excavation methods specific to the icy conditions. When I met her she had almost finished writing a book on the AD 79 eruption of Mt Vesuvius at Pompeii where she had spent many years studying the human remains (since published in 2009 as *Resurrecting Pompeii*). She told me the skeletons were something that had been mainly neglected by archaeologists who were more interested in the artefacts

and frescos. Mawson's hut involves very different work but she likes it because, unlike Pompeii, she can match artefacts to names and faces, a rare thing in archaeology.

The hut, our prime destination, was still a long way off but I looked forward to being taken onto the site by Estelle, a recognised guide who had implemented the rule that only five people should be allowed inside it at any given time. This is to limit the impact of increased humidity caused by breathing and body warmth which can lead to the deterioration of the objects left behind by Mawson and his men. Also on board was a team of people who were going to work at Commonwealth Bay for six weeks recovering, cataloguing and restoring the artefacts inside the main hut and around the site: two heritage carpenters, a journalist, two conservationists, a doctor and a photographer. Their presence gave me greater confidence that we would get to the hut because, unlike the tourists, they had to be landed.

Two days out from Hobart it had become clear, even at that early stage, that I'd inherited the seasickness gene. My mobile phone was dead and I felt cut off from the world. All I could see out of the porthole were grey waves rising and falling. On the second morning I was sick in the shower, thrown from side to side in the cubicle by the rolling ship, and afterwards in the bathroom despite regular dosages of Phenergan, recommended by Estelle who assured me that three tablets would be enough to tranquilise a horse. Not this pony it seemed.

In 1907, on his first voyage to the Antarctic with Shackleton, Mawson lay in a lifeboat on the deck of the ship, paralysed with seasickness. First mate John King Davis (future captain of the *Aurora*) cured him with tinned pears, and for some reason I always imagine that Mawson was literally spoon-fed by Davis. This moment marked the beginning of their long friendship. My great-grandmother Paquita was an excellent sailor.

How I wished I'd taken after her. There I was, hopelessly sick on a ship that the crew had described as 'riding smoothly'. If that was calm, I dreaded rough seas. I felt I ought to have been revealing my explorer genes, my intrepid heritage, but all I wanted to do was to sleep, to pass into oblivion. People tried to console me by saying that it could not be helped, that it was a question of balance and 'inner ear'. Some suffer from seasickness; some don't. It crossed my mind that some have even died of it. Fortunately Estelle was my saviour. She brought me dry biscuits and tea. All the while I could hear Paquita en route to Europe in 1912 boasting in a cheery voice, 'I wasn't even sick in the Bight'.

Despite the apparent calm seas, the ship swayed and lurched and I ran into things; lost my balance. Black-browed and wandering albatrosses circled overhead, following the ship. I could see them when I sat up and looked through the porthole from time to time although I could only watch for short periods before I felt woozy again. The sky and the sea were grey. There was no land in sight. Sometimes this view of nothingness made me uneasy but I was conscious that I was meant to embrace every moment of the voyage as a grand and exciting adventure. On the few occasions that I emerged from my cabin, passengers sometimes looked at me as though they were looking for some sign of my genetic inheritance, some visible mark of courage and derring-do.

The temperature continued to drop, on average about two degrees a day, and the hours of light increased as we moved further south. Confined to my bunk, I missed seeing our first whale, as well as a pod of dolphins. On the third evening, I managed to drag myself down to the bar for the captain's welcome drinks. This was not the first function on the ship. Before leaving Hobart, we had toasted Mawson and his men with vodka shots on the main deck, as they had toasted those who had gone before them. Throughout the voyage there were many more special occasions like these. The New Zealand pastry chef baked bread every morning, and cakes and Danishes for afternoon tea. We were called up

on deck for hot chocolate with cinnamon and orange muffins one afternoon; on another, we ate ice creams and banana cake, presumably made from all the bananas that had begun reappearing in the fruit bowls at breakfast, each day blacker than the last.

Whenever a meal was disappointing, or when I craved a clear broth and was given thick soup instead, I tried to be thankful by reminding myself of the conditions on *Aurora*. Mawson and his men ate their meals standing in oilskins with water dripping through the skylights because there weren't enough seats for everyone. The trick was to call out 'ship ahoy' until someone curious enough would rush out on deck and in the meantime lose his place at the table. Often breakfast, lunch and dinner times came and went with no sign of any food. 'There is literally nothing cooked for us in the galley except an occasional joint, which is torn to ribbons as soon as it makes its appearance', complained Percy Gray, the second mate of the *Aurora*, a few days into their outbound voyage. 'We have not seen bread since we left Hobart, so we live mainly on tinned fruits, and fish, and meats, and biscuits and jam etc'.

A month into the voyage, the mood was worse: 'All the shore party are suffering in a horrible way from boils, the result of not being used to this sort of food I suppose', wrote Gray. He blamed the 'appallingly bad cook' who made 'nothing but sort of sloppy hashes and wet flabby bread'. Unsurprisingly, the cook was fired at Macquarie Island.

The joints Gray wrote of were from the sheep they killed en route which once skinned were strung up in the ratlines, out of reach of the dogs; sometimes they were so bruised from being flung around the deck that their blackened carcasses were thrown to the dogs or otherwise tossed overboard. Supplies were supplemented with seal and penguin meat once the men were in the Antarctic. These animals, in particular seals, which a starving Mawson had gorged on during his sledging journey to the South Magnetic Pole on

the Shackleton expedition, were so unpalatable that the men gladly accepted the donation of a variety of sauces and pickles as accompaniments.

We were expecting to arrive at Macquarie Island at about 9am on the fourth day at sea (Mawson's first stop in 1911), and so we had a zodiac drill after breakfast the day before. I sat next to a woman from the Adelaide Hills who was going to Macquarie Island for ten months to work on a five-year programme to eradicate the rabbits. The feral cats had all been killed off. Other introduced species, or 'transient aliens' as they are called, including the aggressive Maori Hen (otherwise known as the weka) which preyed on penguin chicks, have also disappeared. The sheep Mawson carried on the *Aurora* were let off to graze there and the party of men he left on the island had a spaniel called Mac. They also had three chickens which had been given to them as a gift in Hobart along with a rooster which didn't make it—his head got crushed in a storm before they landed. At various times there have been sheep, chickens, ducks, geese, goats, dogs, pigs, cattle, horses, and even a donkey on the island. Now it's just the rabbits, and the rats and mice.

The plan was to eradicate the rabbits and rodents in a variety of ways—by fumigating their burrows, shooting them with the help of trained dogs, setting traps and also attacking them from the air by dropping bait from helicopters. In the meantime, no one could shoot them because, for maximum effect, it is better to take them unawares. The multi-million dollar project was still two years away because the dogs had to be trained, not only to track the rabbits but also to not attack the penguins and other species native to the island.

Since my voyage, the aerial baiting has been completed (in 2011) and since then teams of dog handlers with 'trained rodent detection dogs' have been scouring the island for any remaining rabbits, rats or mice as part of a two-year follow up programme.

Mawson would certainly have approved of this scheme were he still around. On revisiting Macquarie Island in 1929 he commented on the depleted seal and penguin populations due to mass slaughtering: 'It is now an island of desolation indeed. The rabbits have been the last desolating factor'.

We sighted the island on the morning of Tuesday, December 16. It was a great comfort to see land. Ninety-seven years before Mawson had reached it at around the same time of year, in fact just three days before us, on December 13. It took him more than a week to get there from Hobart. It had taken us three days. As I showered that morning, I thought of his letter to Paquita in which he described himself as being barely respectable by this stage of his voyage. He had not changed his clothes or brushed his hair, and had rinsed his face just once. Sea water had contaminated their drinking water and there was hardly enough to spare to drink (they were allowed only half a cup of tea with each meal), and certainly none for washing. 'People now have half beards and all very dirty', wrote Percy Gray: 'I am still trying to hang on to cleaning my teeth, but it has dropped to every other day now, and salt water at that!' They had been through a severe storm and lost the starboard bridge, the ship's buoyancy seriously challenged by their excess weight. It must have been mayhem, with the dogs howling and leaving their excreta all over the deck, and water flooding everything, pouring into the galley, leaving the cook to chase floating pots and pans. 'This darned tub is beyond all reason', wrote sailor Stan Taylor. 'Roll, roll, roll ever since Browns River Hobart. If you could see me trying to write this you would take pity on me'.

I imagined Captain Davis, who loved the thrill of a storm and high seas, out on deck, singing above the roar of waves as he was apparently inspired to do. Our voyage had been very tame by comparison (it was difficult to imagine our burly Russian captain breaking into song). I was ashamed I'd slept through a great deal of the voyage thus far, a

luxury I would not have been afforded on my great-grandfather's ship. I'd have been out in the weather lashing down supplies and doing my share of night watch, or peeling potatoes in the biting wind, cleaning penguin skins; sometimes killing and dressing sheep, slipping around the blood-soaked deck, my feet wet through in leaking sea boots, my hands grasping onto ropes smeared in dog faeces; except, as a woman, I wouldn't have been allowed on board.

My gender aside, I wondered what Mawson would have made of me as an expedition member; what he might have written in his diary about me. Intolerant of fools and malingerers, he was quick to size up his men. On my bed again, I studied the wall of my cabin, occasionally looking backwards at the sea splashing up over the porthole. During these long hours in my bunk I couldn't help wondering how I would have fared on the AAE. In his diary Mawson classified men into four categories- 'the accomplished painstaking sticklers who are the backbone of things...the mediocre people who are not really good at anything but can assist under supervision...those who require winding up to keep them going happily' and those who 'don't fit in – who can't consciously say they are good at anything'. This last group he felt should never be sent on expeditions.

Aware that I was cutting a fairly pathetic figure (I was pale with dark rings under my eyes and could do little else but lie down), I was shaping up to be a strong candidate for the fourth category of expeditioner. Yet I felt sure things would be different on land, as they were for Mawson. He was so sick on Shackleton's ship that a fellow explorer described him as 'useless and objectionable, lacking in guts & manners' but once in the Antarctic he proved to be brave and hard-working. I pictured him on the BAE wading into the icy water to help the horse 'Chinaman' who had slipped off an iceberg into the sea, and remembered Captain Davis noting that he 'worked like a Trojan'. I understand Mawson's love of hard, physical work because I like it too. Drugged with Phenergan, fatigue

overwhelmed me but I dreamt of unloading boxes in the bracing Antarctic air. Mawson stood over me as I bent for a new box which I lifted and passed on to the next man. A line of men trailed from the motor launch to the beach, bending and passing, bending and passing. ‘Well done’ my great-grandfather said, turning and smiling at me as the last box was carried away through a row of outstretched hands.

As we approached Macquarie Island I struggled up to the bridge. Shrouded in mist, the island looked surprisingly green. Soon we were zooming towards Buckles Bay in black rubber zodiacs. The air was cool and refreshing and I felt instantly better. On arrival, Mawson had initially anchored at the south end of the island, at Caroline Cove, but later steamed to the north to Buckles Bay where he established his station.

Unlike Mawson and his men, we didn’t have to unload supplies or let off sheep to graze but I looked forward to stretching my legs. Some of the AAE men camped in a tent somewhere nearby. They cooked ‘devilled kelp’, killed penguins, and stole their eggs to eat for breakfast. We were instructed not to approach the wildlife, and not to leave any litter behind. If we needed to go to the loo, we had to either hold on or return to the ship. It is forbidden to remove anything from the site, even a pebble or a handful of sand.

Nothing remains of the station nor of the two shipwrecks, the ‘Clyde’ and the ‘Gratitude’ which had littered the beach on the *Aurora*’s arrival in December 1911, and which appear in so many of Frank Hurley’s photographs. One of his photographs which shows the wreck of the ‘Gratitude’, swept onto the rocks in 1898, hung above the fireplace throughout my childhood encased in a wide oak frame with inquisitive penguins in the foreground.

Rejected as too uninhabitable a site for a penal settlement, few people visited Macquarie Island before 1911 apart from sealers. Scott landed there briefly in 1901; Captain Davis stopped by in 1909 on Shackleton's BAE and met William McKibben who had hidden in the hills when his ship was due to leave and stayed for two years producing penguin oil.

A century ago, thousands of Royal penguins came up from the surf (much as they do now), past the 'Gratitude' and up a little creek to their rookeries. As AAE member Charles Harrison observed, on the way 'the fat ones' were knocked over with clubs by the resident sealers and put into digesters 'capable of boiling down 3000 birds a day'. Each bird apparently produced about one pint of oil. The Tasmanian Government, in charge of the island, discontinued sealing leases after 1916. When Mawson visited Macquarie Island again in 1930, he noted that 'the factory, where millions of penguins were boiled down for oil, has succumbed to the ravages of decay. Penguins now haunt the ruins and elephants [elephant seals] snore away peacefully amid the perished oil barrels'.

Populations have since recovered. We visited Sandy Bay where a King Penguin colony (one of the largest in the world with about 250, 000 birds over a 2-3 kilometre stretch of beach) occupies one end of the beach, and a Royal Penguin colony the other. The noise was incredible and there were only small sections of sand not covered by birds, a mixture of adults and moulting brown chicks. In between were groups of elephant seals sleeping top to tail. Every now and then a huge lumbering male (distinguishable by his proboscis) squeezed his way into the middle of a group, grunting and snorting, his wide-open mouth pink inside. Estelle informed me that breathing on other animals, including us, is a defence mechanism, and a very effective one as they have severe halitosis.

Baby elephant seals, called weaners, with their big black shining pools for eyes, snuggled up to our bag of life jackets, draped themselves over anyone sitting down on the sand, and nuzzled their ears. Observing this behaviour, I was not at all surprised to learn that they are related to the dog family.

At Lusitania Bay there is an even bigger colony of King Penguins, apparently totalling around half a million birds. The beach is just a seething mass of them, so densely packed that there are barely any vacant patches of sand. To determine the size of the rookery, a series of photographs covering the length of the beach are taken from the air and reconciled as one complete picture before each penguin is counted. It brought back memories of trying to count them in the Hurley photograph we had above our mantelpiece, and of how I always lost count before I got to the end of the beach. On the AAE they provided entertainment and company for the men; at the Antarctic bases the expeditioners longed for their return to land after the winter.

The station master took Estelle, the hut restoration team and me up to 'Wireless Hill'. The hill was named so by Mawson and his men because it was where they built a wireless station. We held onto a rope as we climbed a steep path to the sound of dozens of snorting elephant seals wallowing in the muddy shores below us like giant, fat slugs thrashing around in sleeping bags. It was hard to believe such lazy-looking, cumbersome creatures are fast and agile under water, swimming for hundreds of kilometres a day. It was also hard to believe that, along with 'a number of penguins', three baby elephant seals were taken from the island by an expedition team in 1948 and given to the Melbourne Zoo. Now protected, they were once ruthlessly slaughtered for their blubber oil and sometimes for food, their tongues minced, their hearts rolled in dough.

Walking up, I listened to the wildlife on the beach beneath us, a noise that Harrison likened to ‘the sound of a million frogs in the distance’. When we reached the top we were almost swooped by a skua gull protecting her chick which we noticed in the grass in the distance. I was very wary, remembering that these birds attacked Mawson’s men and gave them black eyes. They are scavengers and eat until they can’t move, disgorging their fill and flying away if threatened. George Ainsworth, leader of the Macquarie Island party, once found one immobile after a feast. He killed it in disgust, beating it with the rib bone of a slaughtered elephant seal. Like all the animals on Macquarie Island, they are also protected now. As we walked over the spongy ground, we passed small bundles of crushed bones and white feathers the skuas had regurgitated.

After a little while we came across remnants of the wireless station—bits of wood and rusty cable, as well as the remains of the wireless hut and engine room, built into the hillside. The members of the other two AAE parties had helped erect the station before continuing on to the Antarctic in early 1912. Hurley’s film footage of Mawson and the men walking in a long line like a centipede carrying the wireless masts on their shoulders, and hoisting the spars up the hill on a flying fox given to them by sealers played through my mind as I looked down at the ocean below. Although soundless, I knew that they had sung sea shanties as they worked, among them, ‘I’ll go no more a roving with you fair maid’ and ‘Ho boys pull her along’, partly to scare the swooping skuas away.

From the end of 1911 until February 1914 the Macquarie Island team had sent regular weather reports to Australia. They took it in turns to sleep in the hut and battled perpetual winds on their way down to breakfast in the mornings.

Fine rain began falling steadily. I looked at the pieces of metal and wood scattered on the ground and took photographs with the feeling that I was photographing a burial site,

as if these remains of the station were in fact bones. It was something about the way they were arranged, in a vaguely circular shape that suggested a creature that had curled up and died. Perhaps it was just that these broken pieces had once been part of a meaningful whole. They had communicated messages across thousands of kilometres, and now they were silenced.

The first wireless messages ever sent from Antarctica, from Mawson's base at Commonwealth Bay, passed through Macquarie Island to Australia. This was only ten years after Guglielmo Marconi had succeeded in sending radio waves over long distances. At Commonwealth Bay the winds frequently blew down the wireless masts and it was a year into the expedition before two-way contact was made. The first message was sent to the *Aurora*. Mawson had returned to the hut alone, the only survivor of his sledging journey and three weeks overdue. The ship had gone. He radioed to urge Captain Davis to return. His message to the ship read: Mertz and Ninnis dead. Return and pick up all hands. Mawson.' As I stood there in the rain, I thought about the bluntness of this message, the shock it must have been for those who received it; the necessity for conciseness imbuing this tragic news with an air of cold-heartedness.

Subsequent messages to Paquita were similarly brief and failed to provide her with the reassurance she craved. They rarely contained anything really personal because they passed through many hands before reaching her and were then published in the papers. Even so, technology also brought with it the expectation of contact. These bits of metal and wood echoed with sadness, with Paquita's disappointment at not hearing from Mawson as often as she had hoped. Tramping over the boggy ground, wending our way back down to the station at the bottom of the hill, I heard her voice on the wind: 'I want your love again. It has been hard to do without it so long'.

We returned to the ship for a lunch of seafood chowder followed by burritos with avocado sauce and a diced tomato and onion salad. I sat with Julia Butler, the granddaughter of Cecil Madigan. I had known Julia was on the ship early in our voyage but I'd been apprehensive about meeting her. Her father, David, son of Cecil, wrote a book about the Madigan family which includes some very strong criticisms of Mawson. Over lunch I discovered that Julia was a retired lawyer and was then editing Cecil Madigan's diaries which have always been so fiercely guarded by the family. She has since published them, and I have since read them.

At the time of this voyage I did not have access to the diaries but snippets of what Madigan had written, as relayed in David Madigan's account, came back to me as I sipped my seafood soup: 'it was Mawson first and the rest nowhere'; 'Mawson had done nothing but lose two men and make six others miserable'; 'his sledging journey was the most unexpected failure'. I winced at the memory of Madigan's delight when Mawson slipped and fell into the freezing bay in the winter of 1913; at how he had 'laughed for a long while'. I raised none of this with Julia. On being introduced to me she said: 'My grandfather was very fond of your great-grandfather'. Julia's opening remark to me set the tone for the rest of the voyage: we were two descendants paying tribute to our explorer ancestors. I decided over lunch that I would like to walk into the hut with Julia. It seemed only right that we should go in together.

Two days after leaving Macquarie Island we sighted our first iceberg through binoculars in the distance and later saw one up close, our Russian captain circumnavigating it for us. The following morning, I awoke to the sound of crunching and booming and looked out of the porthole to see a sea of ice. We were in the pack! It was snowing lightly and snow petrels were gliding around the ship. Every now and then we saw an Adélie penguin on a 'berg'; I missed a crabeater seal. Towards evening we neared Commonwealth

Bay and I took some photos on deck. I could just make out the hut, and pictured it as the scale model in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart. The roof was off and I was looking down on it from above at the tiny details; at the dogs in the veranda, at the miniature spectacles in Mawson's room.

In the days leading up to Christmas we tried to get into the site but the wind was too strong. The hut restoration team looked on anxiously as we hovered offshore. The longer it took to get there, the less time they would have to do their work as the days of waiting ate into their six-week time frame. One morning I awoke at 8am to find the porthole completely fogged up. We were told not to go outside as the deck was covered in ice and dangerously slippery. Later, when it was safe to go out, I went on deck and stood on the bow in a furry hat and watched the ship's nose break through the icebergs. It ploughed into them and sliced them into pieces. Their broken edges crumbled and fizzed and parted to reveal the dark blue, almost black water beneath, turning the sea into a giant shattered jigsaw puzzle. The sun hovered on the horizon, dipping and rising but never quite setting and it seemed a crime to sleep when the sea looked so magnificent in that light, the icebergs floating by like a surreal city of blue, green, purple, red.

Always the shadowy figures of the men seemed all around me, walking around the deck with ropes in their pockets for practising knots, pipes hanging out of their mouths. They whistled in Morse code, blew smoke rings; they boxed and played bridge. I saw flashes of them having a snowball fight, sitting on crates peeling potatoes, aiming their revolvers over the ship's sides and shooting at the seals and penguins on the icebergs below. I imagined them with coal-black faces and dry cracked lips talking in Antarctic lingo. 'Oh, there goes another berg'. 'Here comes a growler'.

During the night we drifted for a long time trying to find an anchorage but to no avail. I liked the sound of the ice grinding against the ship's sides when I was lying in my cabin. It was strangely comforting, like waking to the sound of the surf on a summer holiday. In the morning I awoke to rough seas. Out of the pack-ice, we were again at the mercy of the waves and the ship was lurching and swaying. I went back to the cabin and slept, I think partly out of despair.

In the early evening the winds ceased and conditions were then good enough for us to think about going to the hut. The weather changes very quickly there and you have to take advantage of calm moments for they're bound to be short-lived. I had been told to get ready to go out in the second zodiac. Estelle was to go in the first to open the hut. We didn't know if others had been before us that season. The hut gets choked with ice over the winter and sometimes, to clear the entrance, it's necessary to use electric chainsaws to cut through the layers of snow. Completely buried in 1997, it took three days just to unearth the roof.

I put on my thermals, ski pants, tartan rubber boots, puffer jacket, a replica of an AAE balaclava, (brown with a pompom on the top), and got ready to leave, my excitement building during that process of preparing to go outside. I had butterflies in my stomach. After many endless days at sea and waiting around in the wind, we were finally going. As we zoomed over the cold grey sea, the two ship helicopters whirred overhead, crates of equipment swinging on long ropes beneath them.

The pilots were transporting supplies to a conservation lab on the same site where the hut restoration team were to live and work. As the summers are becoming increasingly warmer, artefacts are becoming harder to preserve, particularly anything made of metal, and things are sometimes difficult to find and extract from the ice. A mummified seal

appeared one year and not the next, only to reappear another summer, in a completely different place.

The team was also going to look for the aeroplane Mawson took down in 1912 with the help of special equipment that can detect things under the ice. They knew it was only a few miles away, buried somewhere in the ice where it was abandoned by one of the sledging parties in November, 1912. A Vickers monoplane, the first ever made by the Vickers company in Britain, it was never a great success because the engine seized up in the cold. The pilot crashed it in a test flight in Adelaide only a few weeks before it was due to be taken down on the expedition so it was never flown in the Antarctic but it was the first plane to be taken there. Its wheels were replaced by sledge runners so it could be used to pull sledges and supplies across the snow. The summer following our voyage the remains of the plane's fuselage were found by chance by a carpenter. It was in among some rocks in a few centimetres of water.

As we approached Boat Harbour, I recognised it instantly from photographs and film footage. We were looking at an almost identical scene to the one the men of the AAE had encountered. The penguins were diving off the ice edge in exactly the same place and the Weddell seals were basking on the same side of the harbour.

The pyramid-shaped hut was visible from the zodiac, just metres inland, much closer to the shore than I had imagined, and the whole scale of the site is much smaller than I had pictured. You can take it all in at one glance—the ruins of the magnetograph house (for measuring the earth's magnetic field), the transit hut (for star-gazing), the absolute magnetic hut (for more observing of the earth's magnetic field), Azimuth Hill with the memorial cross to Ninnis and Mertz, all a short walk from one another.

I once measured the dimensions of the hut, 18 feet by 18 feet, one quiet afternoon at the Adelaide Central Market where I was working. It extended a little longer and a little wider than the fine food stall which confirmed for me how very small it was for eighteen men to live in for a year. Ironically based on an Australian house design with surrounding veranda (now gone), it took ten days to put together from named and numbered parts that had travelled down on the deck of the *Aurora*. The men banged in nails with fingers numbed by the cold wind and struggled to put the roof on with planks warped by the seawater that had constantly washed over them on their voyage down.

Now the original roof timbers, some of which have been worn down by the wind from 25 to 10 millimetres, are covered over with new ones made of Baltic pine sourced from the same supplier Mawson used in Finland. It will take a long while before the new reddish-brown roof blends in with the original silken-grey walls but, with the roof secure, the snow can't get in and the artefacts inside are protected, even though some say that this new overlay compromises the visual integrity of the hut. Although it was deserted for half a century, the fate of the hut has been debated since the late seventies, some suggesting it be removed from the site and relocated to Australia. For now it remains there under constant restoration, its survival always threatened by the fierce winds and the changing climate.

Before the hut was recognised as an historic site and monument under the Antarctic Treaty in 1972, it was not protected and visitors removed artefacts. One US collector, who visited the hut on a tourist ship in 1971, stole a spoon and two planks of wood with the AAE insignia on them which ended up in a New York auction house. They have since been returned to Australia, 'donated' back by the thief. It is not possible to discern how many things have been removed from the site over the years and, even now, due to its isolation, it is difficult to manage and police. Yet its remote position is one reason for its

uniqueness: unlike the other five huts which have survived from the Heroic Age (circa 1901-1921), the artefacts inside and around the main hut have remained, for the most part, in their original context. They are preserved on site through a process of what Estelle calls 'managed decay'.

The front door is very low. We (the first group, including Estelle as our guide, Julia Butler, a cameraman and me) had to bend down and half-crawl (we couldn't stand upright) through an icy tunnel to get to 'the workshop', which once contained the wireless set and a lathe and other tools for repairing equipment. The work benches are still there but the wireless set was dismantled and taken back to Australia. We crawled through the winter entrance; to get in and out that way the men had to regularly shovel ice to keep the tunnel clear. In fact, there was quite a labyrinth of tunnels around the hut, most leading to food supplies.

A doorway leads into the main hut where the men lived and slept. I went in with Julia. We held hands as we walked through and our emotions got the better of us. I felt a mixture of relief to be there after the long build up and the days of seasickness, and a deep sadness that my great-grandmother, Paquita, had never been there and that my grandmother and her sister only ever flew over the site in the first commercial flight to Antarctica with Dick Smith in 1977. 'Some men came out of the hut and waved to us', I remember my grandmother saying. This is the closest she got to a place that was so significant in her father's life and so much a part of hers, and all of their lives. My father Andrew, the eldest Mawson grandchild, has also never been, and it felt wrong to be skipping a generation. And yet, it gave me a sense of completion, to finally be there after years of writing about a place I'd not visited. Although not in quite the same way as my great-grandfather, I felt that I was breaking new ground in being the first of my generation and the first woman in the family to visit the Antarctic.

I wondered how Mawson would feel about my being there. Twenty-five women applied to go on his 1929 expedition but were rejected on the grounds that despite being, as he described it, 'fired with the novelty of adventure', 'conditions would be too severe for them'. Yet he did say that some women had the right qualifications and 'the right temperament' and that he could see 'no reason why they should not go when proper bases were established'. My great-grandmother admitted that she would love to go with him, and that she thought women 'would probably stand the cold better than men'.

Confident that Mawson was forward thinking enough to feel glad of my presence I almost wished his ghost would appear as Shackleton's had for Sir Edmund Hillary when he visited his hut at Cape Royds. Hillary said he opened the door and Shackleton walked towards him to greet him. I wanted the same special welcome, to be recognised as family, for my great-grandfather to spot me in the crowd as a rightful guest. Some say I have his eyes. Would he see the family resemblance?

The hut is very untidy, as if the men had left in a hurry as they no doubt did, desperate to get back to civilisation when Captain Davis finally came for them in the *Aurora* at the end of 1913. In the late 1990s, a team cut through the ice that had built up over the years, and entered Frank Hurley's darkroom which no one had been inside since 1913. Even so, five inches of ice cover the floor (it was 18 inches thick in 1931), making the living area seem smaller and lower than it really is. A pair of trousers hangs from a rafter, a dead petrel lies under one of the bunks. Bottles of pickles and medicines line a ledge beside a pile of Penny Dreadfuls (the title *To Pleasure Madam* catches my eye), and other abandoned books, these things they left behind telling us as much about them as the things they didn't. It would not have seemed out of place to see the remains of their last dinner there. A candle still in its holder, half burnt down and covered in spilt wax, might

have been snuffed out just minutes before. They felt so close, as if we had just missed them.

Bunk beds line three of the four walls. I drew a map of the layout, marking where each man had slept, according to their initials, written in black paint on the wooden sides of the beds. Knowing that many of the men had been very tall I was surprised at how short the beds are. In the second year, when there were fewer than half the original number of men, the ones remaining moved to beds closer to the stove but the bunks of Ninnis and Mertz were left respectfully empty, where at night, in the bed above Mertz's, Frank Bickerton could be heard crying over his dead friends.

Mawson had his own room, separated from the main area by a partition against the wall directly opposite the doorway leading into the hut from the workroom. The ground was cold under my completely numb feet (I don't recommend rubber boots in Antarctica), and so slippery that I had to tread very carefully to go inside this small room which had also served as the library. The bookshelves still hold some books and faded pictures of women.

I sat there for a while, in silent communion with Mawson. In that tiny cramped space he had tried to reason with Sidney Jeffryes, the wireless operator who had threatened to shoot them all in the night. I imagined Mawson sitting in the now ice-encrusted chair, saying 'Look here, Jeff, you need to pull your head in', not quite knowing how to handle him, and an unwashed, unkempt Jeffryes staring back at Mawson with mad black eyes. I imagined Mawson alone there too, writing letters to Paquita about how he longed to hear her sing again; about how much he was looking forward to starting a life with her.

Just outside a queue of people in identical aqua jackets was waiting to come in, to take dozens of photographs, as if by photographing things they could own them, the click, click of their cameras like the smear of dirty fingerprints all over my family history. Suddenly I wanted to barricade the door, to be alone inside. I felt an urgent need to protect my family heritage and an unwillingness to share it. I wanted them all to get back in the zodiacs and return to the ship and leave me in peace. Our common experience of ship life had brought us close but there they were strangers. They didn't belong. Their presence was an intrusion, a violation, and I wanted them gone.

I wanted to sleep there to see if someone would come. I wanted to know if Ninnis circles the hut calling for help, for someone to save him, even though I know he disappeared without a sound. I had this idea that if I could be there without the others, something extraordinary like that would happen. Conversations the men had in the hut would be played back if I listened carefully. Mawson would appear and tell me all the things he had never said, all the things he had never written down. I just needed silence, and for the others to go.

But of course I had no power to order anyone off the site. I was just another tourist who has to adhere to the rules much as a part of me resented this. There were areas where I couldn't walk, things I wasn't allowed to touch. I wanted to send everyone away but instead I sat there a while longer, my eyes watering and my breath steamy in the cold air. Eventually I had to go and let the others in to poke around my great-grandfather's house.

Outside my water froze in the bottle. At -15°C it was the coldest night since the beginning of the voyage. Light snow began falling and I caught the snowflakes. The night was magical and there was no sign of the wind that had caused so much trouble in 1912-13. The midnight sun peeped over the slope behind the hut where Mawson had emerged

after the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey, somehow having found his way back in blizzards with an unreliable compass and virtually no landmarks. It occurred to me that had he not found his way back I wouldn't be here, and that without the shelter of the hut, he would have been doomed. Now, having survived for almost a hundred years in winds that exceed two hundred kilometres an hour, the hut, both a refuge and a prison to him, has come to symbolise his will to live. I looked away and then looked up again, half-expecting to see him staggering down in his homemade crampons, dragging his half-sledge behind him. I could almost hear him breathe, in long, slow pants. Beyond lies a vast expanse of ice stretching inland, leading to where Ninnis fell to his death and to where Mawson buried Mertz in his sleeping bag. It's dangerous to walk there; the harmless-looking snow hides deep crevasses. I'd sleep in the hut and talk to ghosts but I wouldn't venture there.

I walked over to Azimuth Hill, covered in grey rocks and littered with Adélie penguin carcasses in various stages of decay, most just a pile of white bones polished clean by the wind. I reached the memorial cross and looked down across the sea to the ship and then west to the ice cliffs that lined the coast. Someone took a photograph of me standing beside the cross fashioned out of a table and bits of wireless mast over the winter of 1913. The crossbar blew off sometime after 1913 and was reattached in 1931 when Mawson revisited the site for one day on his last expedition, and again by a restoration team in 1997. I couldn't decide how to look. Smiling seemed inappropriate, and as if reflecting the uncertainty of my emotions, the photograph of me under the cross was so dark that the expression on my face was obscured.

From my position on Azimuth Hill I would have been able to see the *Aurora* arriving on January 13 1913 to pick up the men. Six parties of three men had set off to explore in several different directions in November. The understanding was that they would all be back at the hut by January 15 to meet the ship. When the *Aurora* arrived, three

parties had already returned but three were still out on the plateau. Mawson was still twenty-six days from reaching the hut. Mertz and Ninnis were already dead.

It was early on that January morning when the *Aurora* crept into Commonwealth Bay. Through telescopes, the men on board could make out one solitary erect wireless mast, and another lying on some rocks which explained the breakdown of wireless communication in 1912. They could see no men anywhere. When the ships' officers went ashore in a motor boat in the afternoon men with long hair and snow-bleached beards poured out of the hut waving their arms like windmills and screaming 'ship, ship'. Stores of pineapples, (one of which was later left in Aladdin's Cave for Mawson's missing party), fresh mutton and oranges were landed, and letters were delivered to the expeditioners, as many as one hundred for some. I pictured them with their shirts off soaking up the sunshine on the deck of the *Aurora* reading and catching up on old news—the death of Scott, Amundsen's success, the sinking of the Titanic, the first Balkan War. In the hut, which was described as 'most comfortable' by the expedition's secretary, they feasted on penguin and raspberry sponge made with powdered milk and penguin eggs.

Madigan's party appeared on the 16th. Two days later someone said that he could see men with dogs coming towards the hut. Thinking it was Mawson, Davis said 'Thank God it is M' but it was the Western Party led by Bickerton. In Mawson's absence, Davis had to make a decision about what to do. There are mixed reports about what really happened. Davis said six men volunteered to stay another winter to look for the missing men and to look after them if they came back but according to Madigan, 'no one wished to stay, and several spoke of leaving'. Meanwhile Davis lingered in the hope that Mawson would appear.

From there on the hill I would have been able to see the *Aurora* threading her way through icebergs three miles offshore firing distress signals and flying a kite from the poop in the hope of attracting the attention of Mawson's missing party; the officers and sailors scanning the ice and surrounding islands with binoculars and telescopes and going aloft to the crow's nest; the motor launch going back and forth from the shore with bags of coal and scientific specimens to take back to Australia as huge sections of ice broke off the face of the glacier and thundered into the sea.

They waited and they searched for three weeks. Everyone speculated about the fate of the party; they did not know that Ninnis and Mertz had died but some already spoke of the missing men in the past tense. 'This rotten suspense still hangs on', wrote Percy Gray, adding that 'the uncertainty of what has happened to them is one of the worst parts. If they don't turn up, nobody will ever know'. Five days later, Gray had 'given up all hope', and felt that everybody else had too. 'For myself I feel at present as if the bottom had been knocked out of the world...For Dr Mawson, I feel that he was a brave man who risked his life willingly for service and his own honour...'. The day before the *Aurora* left Commonwealth Bay, sailor and fireman Stan Taylor wrote, 'I think Dr Mawson has made his last trip to the Antarctic and taken a longer trip'. Sailor Bert Lincoln felt similarly: 'Mawson is now a long time overdue and there is very little chance of him going back to Australia if at all'.

On the morning of February 8 1913 Captain Davis made the decision to leave to pick up Frank Wild's party 1500 miles away before the sea froze over and trapped them in the ice. The weather was calm and the sea like glass. The six left behind to look for Mawson, Ninnis and Mertz waved the ship farewell from the top of Azimuth Hill. 'I am afraid the last glimmer of hope is gone' wrote Gray as the *Aurora* sailed away. 'As I dipped the ensign to them I thought of last year when we left them all well and full of

hope, pulling away and cheering in the old whale boat'. Sitting there I felt that I could see everything from a multitude of perspectives: I was a sailor on the *Aurora* looking back at the hut; I was one of the six left behind, waving my balaclava in the wind; I was Mawson's great-granddaughter in tartan Wellingtons with the ghosts of his men all around me.

In the style of a Shakespearian tragedy, the ship had only been gone a few hours when the lone figure of Mawson emerged over the hill behind Commonwealth Bay. In his absence the wireless had been erected so Davis was immediately sent a message to say that Mertz and Ninnis were dead but that Mawson was alive and could he turn the ship round and pick up all hands. At the hut the men began to pack in anticipation of rescue. The ship came back but in another Shakespearian case of mistiming, the wind began 'freshening' and a violent change of weather made it too dangerous for the *Aurora* to put out a launch. Mawson and the six on shore watched the ship beating up and down in the bay. They sent another message saying that they hoped the *Aurora* could wait a few more days. There was no reply because at that stage they did not have two-way wireless. After a while the seven at Commonwealth Bay retreated inside the hut. The following morning the ship had gone. It had slipped off unobserved by all on shore. By the afternoon of that day the weather cleared but the *Aurora* was well away by then and Mawson and his six companions were condemned to another year in what Bickerton called that 'breezy hole'.

What a different space the hut was in 1913. The entertainers were gone: Herbert Murphy and Frank Hurley. Mertz and Ninnis were dead. Early in the year Sidney Jeffryes would lose his mind. His erratic behaviour partly explained the infrequency of wireless messages in 1913. He smuggled vital pieces of the equipment to bed with him and slept when conditions for receiving were at their best.

It was during this second unexpected year that resentments built up. When the *Aurora* left for Wild's base Madigan had been put in charge at the hut while Mawson's party was missing, but it was a position he held for only a few hours as Mawson returned to the hut on the same day and was immediately reinstated as leader. (Perhaps Madigan felt that he had lost his chance to make a name for himself.) It was during this second winter that he wrote his harshest things about Mawson. He saw himself as sacrificing another year of his life, and wrote that he particularly resented staying for Mawson, the implication being that he wouldn't have minded staying for Ninnis and Mertz. His Rhodes scholarship was deferred for another year, as was his marriage to his fiancée Wynnis Wollaston. They must have all resented staying and I wondered if they had walked out onto the rocks and shouted their frustrations to the penguins; if they had gossiped in the veranda. If only the wind were like a seashell, I thought. If only it captured and recorded sounds and voices like shells do the roar of waves, I could cup my hands over my ears and listen in to the past.

After another long winter there Mawson and those six men were finally rescued by the *Aurora* in December 1913. Sighting the ship in the distance, they climbed onto the rocks by the memorial cross and built a smoke signal. Before leaving, they battened down the windows of the hut, filled the chimney with bags, boarded up the veranda entrance (no longer there), and left an invitation 'for future visitors to occupy and make themselves at home'.

A blizzard was raging. With a dragging anchor and the loss of their motor launch in the winds, Davis wrote in his diary: 'Our departure from Commonwealth Bay was certainly in keeping with the various troubles we experienced there. Fortunately we had completed our work, and are not obliged to return to this windy spot again.' In an interview on his return to Adelaide after enthusing about the discoveries made there, Mawson was asked if 'the sojourn in Adélie Land' had been 'a blessing in disguise'. 'It was no blessing,

I can assure you', he replied, stating in the same interview that every man who came back would 'commit suicide rather than stop another year'.

It was Christmas Eve 2008 on *Marina Svetaeva*, the very day in 1913 that Mawson had left the hut for good, apart from his brief visit in 1931. Over the ensuing days, I hardly slept. The sea was so beautiful that it was hard to go to bed knowing that soon we would leave that surreal landscape. On Christmas morning I went for a walk across the sea ice with Greg, a passenger friend. The captain had deliberately wedged the ship in the pack and let the Jacob's ladder down the side. I crept, lightly like a cat, across the uncertain ice, known as 'fast ice', formed when the sea freezes. I took care to avoid the 'blue ice' (the most unstable), half-expecting to fall through the thin surface at any moment into the freezing water beneath. With no grip at all, my rubber boots were useless. Greg was marching on ahead in much better shoes, impatient with my cautiousness. I remember thinking that if I were to fall I'd have a maximum of eight minutes to get out before freezing to death.

Two days before a passenger had slipped at the entrance to the hut and broken his arm and this was in the forefront of my mind. We were heading for the coast but already we could see we wouldn't get very far because the sea was starting to break up. Deep channels of water, fast-becoming too wide to cross were closing in on us. Suddenly we were completely stranded. Soon our floating ground would dissolve and turn into open water again. 'It was like a terrible unseen force waiting for a chance to pounce'. That's how Charles Laseron described the Antarctic. I felt then that I had caught a brief glimpse of its potential power, of its unpredictability. I thought of it as a tiger, its long claws suddenly emerging from under its padded paws and snatching at its prey.

Steve the helicopter pilot rescued us and took us back to the makeshift helipad. The resident artists had marked a spot on the sea ice with beetroot juice, jelly crystals and Worcestershire sauce. From there we walked back to the ship across firmer ice and climbed up the ladder to a traditional Christmas lunch.

Mawson spent a total of seven Christmases in the Antarctic although lunch was never roast turkey. In 1908, on his way to the South Magnetic Pole on the *BAE*, it was hoosh (a mixture of pemmican and ground biscuit) and cocoa. Christmas 1912, he and Mertz dined on ‘dog bone stew’ with a few scraps of biscuit, and ‘wished each other Merry Christmases in the future’. Christmas dinner on board the *Discovery* in 1929 was Emperor penguin, followed by a two-tiered cake with marzipan in between, decorated with emus, kangaroos, boomerangs and penguins. In the morning they received wireless messages (by then a more reliable technology), and opened presents from my then adolescent grandmother and her sister, Pat, and other students from their school.

I opened a present from my family, alone in my cabin, and called my parents on the satellite phone. They were going to call me but with visions of them hanging on the line while I wound my way along the passages and up the stairs to the bridge, the dollars quickly accumulating, I got in first. Calls cost \$3 US a minute. Similarly, in 1913 wireless transmission from the hut was expensive: business messages took priority over private ones because of the high cost, another reason why Paquita had seldom heard from Mawson.

Despite the splendour of the icy landscape, the thought of being stranded in the Antarctic terrified me. While I longed for the bustle and comfort of civilisation, Mawson seemed to like the isolation. To Paquita he confided: ‘I sometimes think that I am much better out upon a lonely trail for nature and I get on very well together—I feel with nature

and revel in the wilds'. Maybe it's a generational thing. Percy Gray liked it so much that he didn't want to leave. On Boxing Day, 1912, he wrote: 'At present I am planning on spending most of the rest of my life down here, so is Ninnis'. Ninnis literally did of course and I wondered what had happened to his body. Had it floated out to sea or is it preserved somewhere deep under the snow? I saw a flash of his face. His eyes were closed, the rims of his lips purple.

In the afternoon, I went for another ride in the helicopter and the place where Greg and I had walked only a few hours before was by then mostly dark blue sea. A leopard seal on a lone iceberg reared its reptilian head and roared up at us as we flew overhead. Adélie penguins ran in a line across the sea ice, leaping from berg to berg, some slipping into the channels of water in between as they tried to jump across them. It disturbed me to see them so frightened, fleeing as if they were being chased, startled by the deafening noise overhead in their otherwise peaceful environment.

A few days later we went up in the helicopters again, and flew about 40 miles inland, to Madigan's Nunatak (Inuit for a rocky exposure in the ice) which is about twenty miles from the hut. Named after Cecil Madigan, it is described in *The Home of the Blizzard* as 'a jagged crest of rock 160 yards long and 30 yards wide, 2,400 feet above sea level'. Being a natural landmark, it was also used as a food depot in case anyone got lost on the plateau and supplies were left there in 1912.

When Mawson was thirty miles from Commonwealth Bay on his return from the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey, and by then two weeks overdue with just two pounds of food left (a few ounces of chocolate, half a pound of raisins and a few small chips of dog meat), he saw Madigan's Nunatak. He wrote: 'I felt for the first time there was a really good chance of making the Hut'. It was too far off course to head for but later that day he

found another food cache which more or less saved his life as he was by then, as he described it himself, 'reduced to the last stages of starvation'. His skin, hair and nails had all started to fall out. The cache was left in a bag on top of a snow cairn by three of his men who went looking for him. A note from them, written in pencil, was left inside a tin in the food bag and is now in the South Australian Museum.

When we landed at the nunatak, an unremarkable brown peak in the snow, we were given just a few minutes to walk up it. Later, in the afternoon, I learnt that a blue kerosene tin had been found there. Estelle was flown out to see it and she confirmed that it was an AAE artefact. It contained three calico bags, two half open, one which looked to have flour in it and the other, a brown stuff, probably pemmican (concentrated dried beef).

That night the 60-mile long Mertz Glacier Tongue (a tongue being a large section of ice which extends from the edge of the coast into the sea), came into view. The icebergs looked spectacular, a maze of high walls that the captain had to navigate his way through and around. They were pink in the midnight sun with dark patches of blue which looked like spilt ink, and across them fell the shadow of the ship. Every now and then an Adélie penguin passed by on a floating ice floe.

After breakfast on a stunning day, our best up to that stage in the voyage, I went up in the helicopter again, to the Mertz Glacier. Situated 250 metres above sea level, it is huge: 72 kilometres long and 32 kilometres wide. Mawson crossed this with Ninnis and Mertz on their outward bound sledging journey. There Ninnis almost lost his life when he broke through the lid of a crevasse fifteen feet wide only to die in another two weeks later on the subsequently named Ninnis Glacier. When halfway across it, on his way back alone, Mawson fell fourteen feet into one, his escape from which he described as a miracle. We were only there for a very short time, around fifteen minutes, and we weren't allowed to

walk far because of the threat of crevasses. I lay on the snow, which was dry and crunchy like sand, and looked up at the blue sky above. There was no sign of the wind and the drift and the poor light that had made the going so hard for Mawson's party in late 1912.

On our return flight to the ship we landed briefly on an iceberg, catching sight of a Minke whale; we flew low, swooping through deep valleys of ice and then soaring up out of them. For me, that was the last significant day on the voyage because the following day we left the Antarctic for the Auckland Islands, and so left Douglas Mawson. The helicopters were put away and we left the pack-ice for the open sea where we encountered a storm and ten-metre waves. From that moment on I was again a victim of seasickness; my cabin a washing machine on spin cycle, my porthole its door. The ship doctor gave me two litres of saline through a drip which made me feel marginally better for a short while. On occasion I dragged myself out of the cabin. Green and pasty, I wandered the corridors passing jovial passengers. Holding up glasses of red wine they loomed towards me with their red-stained teeth. In the kitchen the lasagnes set on an angle taking on the shape of the wave that made them that way. Crockery slid off the tables in the dining room, and the drawers in my cabin flew open and shut as the ship lurched across the mountainous Southern Ocean.

Lying on my bunk, I pictured the hut standing in its lonely spot, snow already building up and choking the entrance for another year. So few can visit it because of where it stands yet it is hard to imagine it on North Terrace in Adelaide's Mediterranean climate thronged with visitors in shorts and t-shirts wiping their brows in the heat. When organizing a visit to 'Haworth', the home of the Brontë sisters, Virginia Woolf realised that she would be arriving in the middle of a snowstorm, and that if she were to wait for better weather, she would be 'rubbing out half the shadows of the picture', for blizzards were commonplace in the Brontës' lifetime. Similarly, the weather—the snow and the cold are

part of the experience of visiting Mawson's hut, so too the long voyage to its isolated location and for some, like me, the relentless seasickness as well.

Yet for us there had been no trace of the violent weather for which Commonwealth Bay is so well-known. We had not left with the same sense of relief having only been there for a few hours over two days rather than two years and two winters but I had looked back with an uneasy feeling that I was abandoning my great-grandfather as he had been abandoned that first time Davis went back there in early 1913; that I was leaving him, if only his soul and his reputation, in a place I am not quite sure he has ever truly been allowed to leave.



‘Jerbii’ Resurrected

During especially strong blizzards Douglas Mawson half-expected his hut to be lifted up by the winds and blown across the sea. On visiting it again, on his last Antarctic expedition, he was surprised to find it had ‘withstood twenty years of ceaseless violent wind’. Before it was deemed an important Australian monument that ought to be saved, the hut was deserted for a further thirty years, and left to disintegrate. After all, it had been built as a convenient structure for a temporary purpose. Yet it survived and is now a national heritage site. Ironically, Mawson’s house in Adelaide, which he designed to be the permanent family home, and in which he lived for thirty-nine years, has long since gone.

A few years ago, one rainy afternoon in winter my friend Barbara was walking along the Brighton esplanade when she sat down on a park bench to rest. When she stood up again, she noticed that she had been resting her back on a plaque which read: ‘In

memory of Sir Douglas Mawson (1882-1958) world renowned Antarctic explorer, geologist and teacher. He resided in King Street, Brighton until his death and was buried in St Jude's cemetery, Brighton.' Looking up, Barbara saw that King Street was just ahead of her. Excited, she set off at once in search of the Mawsons' house. However, much to her disappointment, she found no sign of it. She called me then, and I explained that it had been demolished a long time ago, in the mid-1960s. When she wanted to know why, I told her that my great-grandmother, Paquita, sold it a few years after Mawson died. 'She didn't want to go on living at Brighton', I said. 'The sea air was bad for her sinus, and there were too many memories. The new owner wanted to demolish the house because it was on a big block.' To this, Barbara replied: It's such a pity it wasn't saved.'

Later, considering Barbara's words I reread a letter to the editor in my grandmother's scrapbook which had appeared in *The Advertiser* shortly before the house was destroyed. The writer argued that it would be 'a great pity' if the State Government were to let the opportunity of purchasing Sir Douglas Mawson's house and setting it up as a museum for future generations 'slip through its fingers'. 'In England and America they honour their "greats" by preserving their homes, their books and their equipment. But do we?' he asked. Then I began to think about what it means to preserve a house, and why we place so much importance on 'things'. What do things tell us about a person?

In her essay on the Brontës' home, Virginia Woolf observes that because the parsonage is virtually as it was in Charlotte Brontë's lifetime, it is easy to imagine her living there, and because her personal relics have outlived her, 'trifling and transient though they are', 'Charlotte Brontë the woman comes to life, and one forgets the chiefly memorable fact that she was a great writer'. With the destruction of his home at Brighton, has Mawson 'the man' been dismantled as well, and is he now only remembered as a great

explorer? The hut still stands, a shrine to his super-human feats, but where do we commemorate his humanity? Is this why it's a pity that his house wasn't saved?

Had it survived, it would doubtless be a museum now, another Cook's Cottage or Dickens' house. It would contain a combination of personal relics and Antarctic artefacts because it would be a meeting place for both Douglas Mawson the explorer, and Douglas Mawson the private man. It would perhaps offer a rounder impression of him, and give the objects of his life greater significance if left in their original context and not sold off, broken or lost, or scattered around in various public and private spaces, as they are now.

Of course, as a museum, everything would be arranged and contrived, with certain things on display. It would not be left in situ like the hut. How well did the Mawsons keep house? How tidy were they? This is something we would be unlikely to discover. It would not be possible to walk into Mawson's bedroom and find a sock on the floor as I had found a dead petrel under a bunk in the hut, but by inhabiting their private space, we would at least get some sense of how they lived, of how Mawson lived when he wasn't climbing out of crevasses or scooping the brains out of a husky dog's skull.

The house was demolished before I was born, but when I asked my father whether he thought it was a good house (perhaps I was really asking if he thought it worth saving), he said he thought it was a wonderful design, a little dark but the kind of house on which he would choose to base his own, should he ever choose to build. When she was alive, it never occurred to me to ask my grandmother more details about it, perhaps partly because I felt I knew it somehow from her descriptions, but recently I have begun to regret that I didn't find out more, and I've been calling my father to find out what he remembers as a twelve-year-old boy. I have the plans so I lay them out in front of me when I call. 'There's a ladder in the hall that leads to the roof', I say. My father had forgotten all about this

ladder until I mention it, and ask what it was for. 'There was storage space up there', he replies. A hoarder of everything, my great-grandfather stored there, among other things as I later discovered, the propeller of the Vickers monoplane that he took to the Antarctic in 1911. 'Actually, once he fell through the ceiling', my father adds. Now, whenever I think of this ladder, I picture Mawson climbing up and falling through in a cloud of dust and debris and landing almost on top of Paquita, who I always imagine is talking on the telephone in the hall.

By studying the plans, I have slowly started to build a clearer picture of the house and grounds. Each room and each part of the garden has a story, and I really feel as though I am walking into every space, venturing into the Mawsons' private world, as I look at the fixtures I know were there and imagine the rest, such as the photographs on the walls. The land on which the house was built, three blocks back from the Brighton esplanade, was a late wedding gift from Paquita's father Guillaume Daniel Delprat (GDD). In 1919, when the Mawsons returned to Adelaide from England where Mawson had worked during the war, they immediately began looking for somewhere to live. At the time, houses were scarce with many returned soldiers and their wives and families looking to settle down. Paquita's parents had moved from Adelaide to Melbourne and Paquita and the children (Jessica then aged two and Pat four), lived with them while Mawson stayed in Adelaide, in a room at the South Australian Hotel on North Terrace. From there he walked to the University during the week, having resumed his lecturing position after his return from the Antarctic and from England after the First World War. At weekends he went house-hunting. He looked at properties all around the city and in the Adelaide hills but he never seriously considered any of them. He complained that the blocks were too small and that he would never find a house he liked. He kept going back to the sea, to Henley and to Grange and surrounding areas. He had already looked at his father-in-law's land on his house-hunting travels and written to Paquita a month before GDD gave it to them (it was

one of five blocks GDD owned in King Street) to say that it was ‘about the best piece of land unbuilt on in Brighton as a house site’.

In the Antarctic, years before, he had spent the winter of 1913 drawing up plans for a house, and ‘Jerbii’ was partly based on his designs. Reading his letters to Paquita during this time, and in particular his descriptions of the house in which he hoped they would one day live it is possible to see his ideas in the final plan. It would have a veranda, he explained, a long driveway, and it would all be on one level making housework easier for the maids who wouldn’t have to climb stairs. His designs also reflect his feelings at the time, specifically his longing for a home at last that could be spacious and comfortable, and not purely functional, and that did not have to be shared with other men. ‘Indeed a home will be very nice’, he wrote to Paquita from the hut. *I have* been a wanderer and home *will* be novel.’ The thought of his own house with her helped him to endure the last miserable months: ‘I have been trying to think that I am back and we are fitting out a home. Advertisements for furniture attract me where they used never’.

Coming back to Australia on the *Aurora* in 1914, in one of his last letters to Paquita before their reunion, he wrote: ‘My domestic life has been very miserable now for 2 years and I long for a clean up—ordinary clothes and a good bed—above all a carefree sleep—not dozing with one eye open as it has been for so long’. Then thirty-two, he had spent much of his adult life living in tents in the snow and in the jungles of Vanuatu, in water-logged cabins on ships, in boarding houses and hotels. Even as a child, in his Sydney home, where his mother had taken in boarders, he had shared his living space with others, with people who were not family. On the British Antarctic Expedition (1907-09), he hadn’t even had his own bedding, but shared a three-man sleeping bag with Professor David and Dr Alistair Mackay on their four-month sledging journey to the South Magnetic Pole. Privacy was therefore something he longed for. He liked the idea of his house being a

retreat from the city and from the University. He wanted it to have high windows so that no one could ‘peer in’, and the location of Brighton, seven miles from the city, suited him because it meant ‘unwanted visitors’ were unlikely to drop in unannounced.

To get to the house, which was not visible from the road, there were two entrances off King Street, one a drive, usually accessed by car, which led to the garage, and the other, a walkway, which the Mawsons called ‘the curly whirly path’, made of gravel and flanked by hedges, Pine trees, She-oaks and Poplars. There was a brass sign on the gate, which said ‘Jerbii’. The name was invented by my grandmother when she was very young, hence the unusual spelling and pronunciation- J’bye and not Gerbi as in gerbil. Mr and Mrs Jerbii were her imaginary friends who regularly came for afternoon tea. She would open the door to them. I picture her doing this with a flourish and making small talk as she took their hats and their coats. ‘The Jerbiis are here’, she’d announce. Anxious to make them welcome, she would get very cross if the rest of the family ignored them (I have always imagined that Mrs Jerbii was very sensitive and cried easily). Eventually Mawson said that, since the Jerbiis were around so much, it made sense to name the house after them. Later, he made the brass sign for the gate. This was in the early 1920s, soon after the house was built.

The curly whirly path led into the garden. To the right was a glasshouse and ahead was the house made of stone with a red-tiled roof, built on a sand hill which brought it above the level of the garden. The sea was to the west. While the house was still being built, the Mawsons spent an exhausting summer establishing the garden, walking each day from a nearby rental property. At the time they did not own a car. I recently came across a house for sale on the Internet purporting to be ‘the temporary residence of Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson’. However, the house was number 23 King Street, and their rented home, which still stands, was on the esplanade ‘on the other side of the Brighton Pier’, a mile from their new house site, number 44 and later number 36 King Street.

How much the area has changed struck me when I read the advertisement for 23 King Street. It is described as being ‘in an expansive private Botanic garden setting’ near ‘a cosmopolitan café scene’. When the Mawsons were walking to and from their new home, the esplanade was just a row of sand hills and bald hills stretching all along the seafront to Seacliff and Marino. The sand hills made building difficult; there were few houses and they were scattered between vacant blocks. Gardens were hard to establish in the sandy soil. In *Mawson of the Antarctic*, Paquita describes their temporary home as having no garden at all, ‘only a piece of sea-blown lawn’. They were not then connected to the main drainage system of Brighton; the trees and flowers at their new home only survived because of Mawson’s clever irrigation system. He was, by his own admission ‘rather gadgety’, and his handyman skills at home were the skills that had ensured his survival in the Antarctic.

Paquita planted orchids and tulips, not so well-suited to Adelaide’s Mediterranean climate but, succumbing to the harsh summers and dry soil, she also planted cacti and other succulents, which eventually grew to quite a height around the house, shielding ‘Jerbi’ from view like the hedges and trees. She gardened in culottes and a pair of Mawson’s sandshoes and whenever she received an unexpected visitor she would rush inside explaining that she needed to make herself respectable, only to return soon afterwards in the same shoes and clothes but with the addition of a pair of pendulous earrings.

There was a sunken garden along the southern side of the house, a vegetable patch, and some acacia bushes under which, when children, my great-aunt Pat and my grandmother sometimes slept on hot nights. There were fruit trees Paquita’s father had planted in 1909, and a grass tennis court where they threw sherry parties in summer. They had a cow that grazed on the court and it was milked every day by a local man who had cows of his own in a paddock in Hove. Sometimes my grandmother and her sister had a

cup of milk after school and Paquita milked the cow despite her fear of ‘horned animals’, having once been chased by a bull as a child during the running of the bulls in Cordoba. Beneath the windmill in their garden was a birdcage Mawson made for Paquita’s canaries. When it rained, my great-grandmother would dash outside and cover the cage with a rug. When the birds died, my great-aunt Pat, by then a science student, took their tiny skeletons to the University to study them.

The garage was on the eastern side of the house. If you kept going along the driveway you would eventually reach it. There were two rooms above it, one of which was used for storage. This was where Mawson kept, among other things, the poisonous spears he brought back from Vanuatu, his first expedition in 1906, which are now in the South Australian Museum. It was a very hot room, and so my grandmother and great aunt called it ‘Muspelheim’, Land of Brightness, one of the nine worlds in Norse Heathenism. The other room was particularly cold and named ‘Niflheim’ after the opposing world, ‘Land of fog and ice’. It was where they studied throughout the winter with rugs over their knees.

A grapevine stretched along the back fence, and there was a fowl yard nearby. Mawson loved to feed the fowls grapes through their wire enclosure. He would cross the lawn to feed them on returning home from the University in the evenings. Being so fond of them, he did not like to chop off their heads, and when the time came to kill one, he left this job to Diprose (‘Dippy’) the gardener. To enter the house, you climbed some steps to a covered veranda. This was where the orchestra played for my grandmother’s debut party in May, 1935. Coloured lights hung in the trees and a marquee on the lawn was decorated inside with baskets of persimmons. It was reported in the local paper that ‘Jessica Mawson’, in ‘fine white taffeta’ and ‘a circlet’ of azaleas in her ‘red-gold hair’, had the first dance with her father.

When 'Jerbii' was being built, the government was felling gum trees in Kuinto Forest in the Adelaide Hills and replacing them with pines. Mawson bought some red gum to make the frame of this veranda and the pergola frame on the northern side of the house, as well as three fireplaces inside. Recently I met a man quite by chance who had overheard me mention the name Douglas Mawson in a bookshop; he rushed out after me to tell me that his family had bought the veranda beams from the Mawsons' house and that the toilet had been thrown in. He said that he used to sit on it as a boy and dream of going to the South Pole, and as he told me this story I pictured him being sucked down through the pipes, his crumpled trousers left behind at the base of the toilet bowl.

At the top of the steps, you turned right and walked along the veranda to the front door which opened into a hall with a parquet floor, also made of Red Gum. The clock and the barometer from the *Discovery*, the ship Mawson took to the Antarctic in 1929, and again in 1931, were both kept in the hall. The walls were white with dark wooden picture railings, above which hung Frank Hurley photographs in oak frames, of penguins and icebergs, elephant seals and weary men with frostbitten faces. Of course, I don't know exactly which pictures hung there but if it were a museum, the photograph of the wreck of the *Gratitude* on Nuggets Beach on Macquarie Island would certainly be among the exhibits. 'Mac' the Spaniel is sitting among the penguins milling around the wreck but she is not obvious, and not the kind of animal anyone would expect to find in the Antarctic. There would probably be a notice saying, for example: 'There is something unusual in this picture. Can you spot it?'

The first room on the right was the den with more Antarctic photographs, including one of the bow of a ship breaking through a sea of icebergs, and two brown leather chairs which now belong to my parents and which have since been reupholstered. Mawson bought them in England and had them shipped to Adelaide. My grandmother remembered

the day they arrived. She sat on the steps leading up to the rooms above the garage and watched her father unpack them. He carefully removed the nails on the wooden box they had been transported in and lay each one neatly on the ground beside him, all the while joking and laughing with her. Although he was a frugal man, he was a homemaker and did not mind spending money on furniture. According to Paquita, they 'had always been in agreement' about their 'preference for Chippendale, Queen Anne and William and Mary furniture', and Mawson had appealed to the Australian Government, along with Dame Nellie Melba and others, to allow antiques into the Commonwealth duty free.

In the den beside one of the chairs was a tall ornate wooden chest, a lion's face carved on each drawer which my grandmother later had in her house, and where she kept her best silver cutlery for dinner parties. There is a photograph of Mawson sitting beside this chest in one of the leather chairs with his daughters Jessica and Pat either side of him, perched on the arms, looking down at a picture he is holding. This photograph appeared in the November 1929 issue of *Home Beautiful* in an article entitled 'the Mawsons at home'. Paquita featured on the front cover making a tapestry of the *Discovery*. Unfortunately this tapestry is now minus its rigging after a restorer removed it, mistaking it for loose threads.

On the other side of the passage was the drawing room, large with pale-patterned wallpaper and dark skirting boards. I know this was also where there was a tall glass cabinet (since sold at auction) because there is a photograph of Mawson and Paquita in this room standing in front of the cabinet. It was taken just before they met the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in Adelaide in 1954. Mawson, then 72, is standing tall, his polar medals pinned to his suit jacket. Paquita's piano was also kept in the drawing room. When he was away in the Antarctic, she played and sang 'For those in peril on the sea', and when alone in the house, she played long into the night.

After the drawing room was the dining room. It was here that my grandmother and her sister sometimes laid out their rock collections and waited for Mawson to come home and help identify them. There was a button on the floor under one end of the dining room table which Paquita pressed with her foot when she wanted the maids to take the plates away or bring in the next course. The maids, who wore black and white uniforms, changed over the years, from Olive ('a slip-shod lazy beggar' according to Mawson) to Frances to Dora to Edie and many others afterwards and in between.

Further along the passage was the black and white tiled bathroom. Paquita retreated to the bath on hot days. Filling it with cold water, she would sit in it and play cards or write letters. She rested everything on a board that stretched the width of the bath. She rang a little bell when she wanted a cool drink or something to eat. She was very private, and when the maid arrived, she would ask her not to look. I always imagine the maid backing into the room and trying not to trip (or slip) on anything as she balances food and drink on a tray which she puts down with an awkward twist of her back.

Beside the bathroom was the kitchen, large with a big workbench in the middle of it. If the house were now a museum, there might be a notice explaining the pancake stain on the ceiling. It might read something like this:

Douglas Mawson always celebrated Shrove Tuesday, and on Sundays he often made pancakes. He taught his daughters how to toss them by getting them to practise with two books, one representing the frying pan, and the other, smaller, representing the pancake. He told them that the higher you threw the pancake, the more time you had to place the pan underneath to catch it. One day, he threw a pancake so high it hit the ceiling and made the stain above.

The house was shaped a bit like an 'h' and to cross to the other side of it, you would have to go back along the passage, back up the southern leg to the middle of the house to the horizontal section of the 'h', (in the form of another passage) which led to the northern leg, along which were the bedrooms. Paquita's bedroom was at the front of the house, in line with the drawing room and den on the southern leg. It was a huge room, bigger than the entire living quarters of Mawson's hut. This was where Paquita taught my grandmother and great-aunt at home, in the early 1920s, before they started at Hopetoun School, housed in St Jude's church a few streets away.

Mawson's bedroom was further along the passage, considerably smaller and very austere. It contained only the bare necessities. His needs were small and he was often frustrated by Paquita's extravagance. 'We don't need any more candlesticks' he would write when she was away in Europe, dreading the things she might bring back. He and Paquita slept in separate bedrooms because he liked to work well into the night, and, unlike her, he liked to rise early. Paquita was not a fussy housekeeper, and he used to write her messages in the dust that settled on his chest of drawers.

Beyond Mawson's bedroom was the library. For museum purposes, here would be the ideal place to have a glass-topped cabinet displaying excerpts from his original Antarctic diaries, written in pencil because ink freezes in the cold, scrawled all over the small pages. They would be open at key dates. For example, December 14, 1912, when Ninnis was lost down a crevasse:

A terrible catastrophe happened soon after taking latitude...I looked back & saw no sign of Ninnis and his team...hurried back to find a great gaping hole in the ground...no sign of Ninnis...our ropes not long enough to go down, or the sledge to span the crevasse...we called and sounded for three hours...Reviewed our position: practically all the food had

gone down...we considered it a possibility to get through to Winter Quarters by eating dogs...May God help us.

And February the 8th, 1913, on the day of his return to the hut:

What a grand relief! To have reached civilization after what appeared utterly impossible.

What a feeling of gratitude to Providence for such a deliverance.

Here there might also be pictures of the dogs, including the pup, 'Blizzard', with her head cocked to one side, all reminders of Mawson's struggles in the Antarctic, somehow making his survival even more remarkable in the context of the ordinariness of his family home. The telegram he sent to Paquita offering to release her from their engagement would be here too, and her response telling him that she still loved and wanted him. Their love letters would be on display, for after all 'Jerbii' was where their love continued to a happy ending, and where they were at last able to share a life together.

When he was older and needed more care, Mawson moved from his bedroom across the passage to a bigger room with a fireplace, where my grandmother and great aunt used to sleep. In the last few years of his life, he suffered from acute arthritis. I often wonder whether dressing himself, which he eventually could not do without Paquita's help, ever reminded him of dressing in the Antarctic, of the difficulty of doing up his clothes with numb fingers. He faced old age with the same stoicism he had shown on expeditions and with the same determination too. In *Mawson of the Antarctic*, Paquita recalled how she had admired his persistence in regaining his memory after he lost it temporarily following a stroke, by painstakingly writing things down.

It was in this room in front of the fire when he was an elderly man that he told Jessica that he wished he'd spent more time with his family. He was not good at relaxing. 'He was working all the time', according to my great aunt Pat who said that he was never seen sitting with a book unless he was ill; that he was so completely committed to his work that 'he did very little else'. My father remembers him always working too. When he visited 'Jerbii' as a child, he and his sisters had to be quiet and not disturb their grandfather. I picture them creeping along the passage, my father with wide eyes whispering 'shhh' with his finger to his lips.

It was in this room that Mawson died. He fell into a deep coma and never woke up, unaware that he was in the house he had designed almost fifty years before, and unaware that Paquita would sell it, unwilling to go on living there without him.

On the plans of 'Jerbii', the architect wrote: 'The prevailing impression of the house is reticence'. In this way it has remained true to its objective. 'Jerbii' has gone but it was captured in a family film made in 1929 for the golden wedding anniversary of Paquita's parents. Silent footage of the Mawsons at home, it shows my grandmother and her sister, teenagers in school uniforms playfully pulling each other's plaits and playing with their rabbit and their black and white cat; a smiling, middle-aged Mawson with a comb-over; Paquita holding a watering can and laughing as she trips on something in the glasshouse.

Mawson is buried at Brighton, in St Jude's church cemetery. A boulder from Arkaroola in the Flinders Ranges lies beside the grave, unveiled in 2008 in a ceremony to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Paquita, who outlived him by thirty years, lies there with him. Their graves and the plaque on the park bench Barbara stumbled

upon on the Brighton esplanade are among the few indications that the Mawsons ever lived there.



Penguins on Horseback and Douglas Mawson's Iron Gut

Wandering through the Mawson collection at the South Australian Museum one winter afternoon, I stare through the glass at the enclosed reconstruction of Douglas Mawson's room in the hut, the sound of a moaning blizzard in my ears. This eerie sound of the wind coming through the installation, so familiar to Mawson and his men, is strangely alluring. There is something calming, almost hypnotic in its rhythm and its repetition, as if I am literally being drawn into their world and their time. Yet, I am aware of its destructive force. John King Davis, captain of the *Aurora* on the AAE 1911-14, likened it to 'the shriek of a thousand angry witches', its constancy keeping them 'for a seeming eternity the

pitiful, worn out impotent prisoners of hope'. Some entries in Mawson's diary comprise only written one word: blizzard, followed by successive days of 'ditto'.

Beside Mawson's 'bedroom' is a small section of the main living area in the hut which he shared with seventeen other men on the AAE. There is a replica of the table where everything happened, from bottling biological specimens to mending clothes to reading to dining. Through the blizzard I can hear the distant barking of the dogs. I hear the scraping of spoons as I look at a pile of white tin bowls with blue rims. They remind me of the zigzagging stack of bowls in the Frank Hurley photograph 'Washing up after dinner, Winter Quarters, Cape Denison'. I recall Robert Bage, the magnetician and astronomer, to the right of the picture, a pipe hanging out of his mouth and a tea towel in his hand as I bend to look at a tin of Dutch cocoa. There is another of Ceylon tea, some Horlicks malted milk, and a box of Symington's soups. In one cabinet there is a tin of pemmican, and a note beside it warning that it is 'well-past its expiry date'. They are all samples remaining from a staggering total of 100 tons of food supplies taken by Mawson to the Antarctic in 1911.

Most of the food in and around the hut was removed at the end of the AAE, primarily because it was needed on the month-long oceanographic cruise before the return to Hobart. Some ended up in museums. Some was left behind in the hut: a tin of Colman's mustard, golden syrup, Heinz India relish. They are probably still edible in their frozen state, so too the pemmican and flour in the blue kerosene tin that were found at Madigan's Nunatak on my voyage to the Antarctic in 2008. Foodstuffs, ordinarily perishable, have survived as relics of polar history, preserved in the ice and cold.

More than once my grandmother told us the story of the Christmas puddings. It was Midwinter's Day, 1912, and the men opened a box of plum puddings donated to the

expedition by a Yorkshire firm. ‘Daddy was able to recommend the puddings, having tried one in England the year before’, explained my grandmother:

Everybody licked their spoons clean after the first course as cutlery was short and then they started eagerly on the puddings. However, no one enthused about them. No one asked for a second helping. Daddy kept quiet because he had to admit they certainly weren’t as good as he’d remembered. Then someone commented that they tasted a bit peculiar and soon they all agreed. One man slipped off and examined a piece under the microscope and found that it was riddled with mites and their excreta. The *Aurora* had sailed through the tropics from England. The men concluded the puddings were not properly sealed. They thought the heat probably only affected the top layer but no one was keen to try the rest so they buried the case somewhere near the hut as no one ever throws anything away in the Antarctic.

At this point in the story, my grandmother would pause for effect before delivering the punch line. Forty years later, a French expedition visited the hut and spent a few nights there. The snow had blown away and uncovered the buried case and the Frenchmen dug it up. Not long afterwards, Mawson received a radio message from the Antarctic thanking him for the delicious plum puddings. ‘The point of course’, said Leonard Huxley, Professor of Physics at the University of Adelaide from 1949 to 1960, who had heard this story from Mawson, ‘on whom was the joke? Had Mawson’s party overlooked some good puddings or had the French enjoyed the maggots?’

That was in 1950. Now a hundred years has passed since the Heroic Age of exploration and boxes of food items continue to be unearthed. In 2011 five cases of whisky and brandy, thought to be still perfectly drinkable, were found buried under Shackleton’s hut at Cape Royds where Mawson spent his first Antarctic winter. Some food artefacts sell for high prices. In 2011, a perfectly preserved 104-year-old Plasmon biscuit from

Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition (1907-09) sold for £1250 at Christie's. In 2006, the remaining crumbs from a biscuit taken on his *Endurance* Expedition (1914-17) fetched £7637.

I wonder how much the tin of cocoa or box of Symington's soups would fetch today. Valuable relics now, they were worth much more at Commonwealth Bay a hundred years ago. In *The Home of the Blizzard* (1915), Mawson said that 'the food-stuffs were selected with at least as much consideration as was given to any other of the requisites', because, he argued, 'the successful work of an expedition depends on the health of the men, and good and suitable food reduces to a minimum the danger of scurvy'. On sledging journeys, rations were calculated very carefully in terms of their weight, as well as their 'chemical composition', the latter being to ensure that each man had an adequate intake of energy foods and nutrients. As this left virtually no room for error, insufficient supplies due to loss or bad organisation often determined the failure of expeditions. Of the seventeen deaths during the Heroic Age, a third was due to lack of food or complications associated with diet.

Variation was important too. To relieve the monotony, 'ever the bugbear of winter life in the polar zones', along with the staples of flour, sugar, canned fish, meat, vegetables, and fruit, Mawson advocated the benefits of 'luxury foods', albeit 'in moderation'. He included in the provisions 'fancy biscuits', and 'sweets' such as assorted nuts, chocolate and crystallised fruit. For dessert in the hut, preceded by pudding, it was nougat on Sundays, 'lollies' on Mondays and Fridays, figs on Tuesdays, and toffee on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Along with their monthly ration of candles, matches and tobacco, the men were also given chocolate, squares of which were often used as bartering chips when estimating

the average velocity of the wind for the month or for predicting the day the first penguins would return after winter. Reg Sprigg, Mawson's student and friend, claimed in his book *Geology is Fun* that the chocolate rations were a way for Mawson to assess the characters of his men. There were those who gambled with them, some couldn't resist 'gorging on them right away' and some hoarded them; 'the hoarders', in Mawson's view 'proved best in subsequent field operations' because the ability to conserve rations could end up saving lives.

The usual custom on Antarctic expeditions was to hire a cook. Mawson didn't do this and instead drew up a roster for kitchen duties so that the men all took their turn as cook or messman. This way they had an opportunity to gain experience in preparing meals, a necessary skill once they were out on sledging trips. It was also another opportunity for Mawson to observe character as well as a way of democratising life in the hut. Although always the leader, Mawson was known to get involved in any job that was going. According to Alec Kennedy, magnetic surveyor at the Western base under Wild and also a member of BANZARE, he 'spared himself nothing', and 'did his share of the work, sledging, cooking, everything else, and more'. Once on BANZARE Mawson shamed the senior biologist, Harold Fletcher, into peeling potatoes by picking up a peeler himself and setting to work when Fletcher complained that the job was beneath him.

Cooking for eighteen men was no small feat. John Hunter, biologist on the AAE, remembered that his first day as messman 'was a pretty formidable task'. His duties started after breakfast as assistant to the Chief Storeman, Herbert Murphy, who was cook. It took them until 11am to wash the dishes, which was 'no light task' wrote Hunter in his diary, 'especially as we had fried seal's liver and bacon – a most greasy and gory spectacle'. The dishes done, he was kept busy until 12.30 cleaning out the stove, washing down the table and sweeping out the hut. Lunch, which consisted of 'tinned fish & corned beef', was not

difficult to prepare but the washing up took him until 3pm to complete. He then had half an hour's break before starting on preparing the customary three-course dinner for 6.30pm—on this occasion, 'soup, curried seal, & sweets – stewed plums & tapioca pudding, vegetables – cabbages & carrots, tea and ginger bread'. Washing up for the third time, 'a nightmare of dirty dishes', took until 9.30pm after which he spent a further hour filling up all the 'melting tanks' with ice, emptying the ashes and dirty scrap buckets, bringing in a supply of coal and sweeping out the hut again.

To keep the men occupied was undoubtedly a further reason for making them do these domestic chores. Despite being exhausted, Hunter admitted that he had enjoyed his day as messman, noting that 'time went quickly'. 'Meals are great events in the day' and 'contriving meals gives a fellow diversion occasionally' wrote the AAE doctor Archie McLean in his diary.

Taxidermist and biological collector, Charles Laseron, remembered in his book *South with Mawson* that Mawson 'made a great feature of the cooking' and took his turn as cook along with everyone else. Because he had had some previous experience he had a habit of 'butting in' which 'made him somewhat unpopular with the cook of the day', particularly, wrote Laseron, 'as we gained in skill and began to fancy ourselves'. Initially, though, everyone made mistakes, which were referred to as 'championships'. The few things we know about Belgrave Ninnis include the mess he made of Mrs Beeton's salmon kedgeriee when he misread the recipe and added more than 200 grams of salt and an equal amount of pepper.

Sometimes the cook served up roast penguin or mutton that was frozen solid in the middle, or forgot cans of fish he had put in the oven to thaw, only to remember them when they exploded. No one was allowed to forget their mistakes—at lunch time on Midwinter's

Day, 1912 Mawson presented Archie Mclean with ‘a special medal (of a penguin) with 17 clasps... as a record of his famous 17 championships’.

Those in the secondary category of chefs belonged to ‘The Crook Cooks Association’. In his book *Argonauts of the South*, Frank Hurley wrote that, in order to qualify as an ‘Unconventional Cook’ (which he defined as ‘a chef with imagination who scorns reference to the pages of “Mrs Beeton”’) ‘[chefs] must have qualified for initiation by producing six approved original dishes and as many topical songs’. A cook could ‘dodge criticism’ if he was a good entertainer—“‘An Unconventional’ must not only be a master of his art but a minstrel as well’.

Most of the men became adept at cooking something. Mawson was known for his excellent scones; Charles Laseron and the meteorologist, Cecil Madigan, for their puff pastry; Alfred Hodgeman, the cartographer, for his tapioca pudding; Hurley for his ‘elaborate menus’ and fancy presentation; Xavier Mertz for his penguin omelettes. ‘The meals we are having are really first class’, wrote Hunter in his diary, noting that their kitchen equipment was fit for a restaurant. As early as April 1912 he claimed they could ‘beat any cooks at home’ at tapioca pudding and felt experienced enough to say: ‘I am afraid that when I come back home again, I (like the rest of us) will be criticising the cooking’.

Mid-winter’s Day was the most important occasion but almost anything warranted a celebratory dinner—birthdays, Easter, Empire Day, the anniversary of the *Aurora* leaving England for Tasmania, American Independence Day; even the anniversary of gaslighting in London. Among the exhibits in the museum, beside a tin of Quaker rolled white oats, is their 1912 mid-winter menu designed by Hurley. To bind it, he used wood from packing cases and ‘fur-covered leather’ (sealskin I suspect). The front cover photograph is the well-

known one of the silhouettes of surgeon Leslie Whetter and assistant collector, John Close, collecting ice in a blizzard. This picture encapsulates the difficulty they had carrying out the daily chore of collecting water for cooking and washing, virtually crawling around in near darkness, what they labelled ‘hurricane walking’, with ice picks and a box. Written in French, the menu includes ‘Pingouin à la Terre Adélie’ and ‘Champignons en sauce Antarctique’ with accompanying wines—Burgundy, port and claret. Conscious of the continuous sound of the howling wind here in the exhibition, I notice a footnote at the bottom of the menu which says: ‘During dinner the Blizzard will render the usual accompaniments—“The Tempest”, for Ever and Ever etc’.

I wander on to a glass cabinet containing a Nansen cooker inside which there are apparently ‘seal blubber remains’. Although Mawson took a small quantity of preserved meats to the Antarctic, his intention, from the outset, was to ‘rely chiefly upon seal and penguin flesh’, both on sledging journeys and at the hut. The weekly menu at Commonwealth Bay suggests that he and his men ate a lot of these animals. It was penguin on Mondays and Thursdays, seal on Tuesdays and Fridays. The only days they didn’t eat penguins and seals were Sundays when they had mutton (from sheep killed en route to the Antarctic), and Wednesdays, which was ‘canned meats’, Saturday being ‘variable’.

The Adélie penguin nests were regularly raided in summer. Over a thousand eggs were collected in the days leading up to the return of the *Aurora* in 1914. I shudder at the thought of so many penguins being killed—more than 300 in early 1913 in preparation for the second winter at the hut. Some were ‘secured’ after a chase (‘What sport we had catching it’ wrote Archie McLean of an Emperor), ‘demolished’ or ‘despatched’ on the ice and dragged back to the hut on a sledge. For museum specimens like these that stare back at me now, the seals were skinned on the kitchen table in the hut, the Emperors pinned to the ground and ‘pithed’ with long needles, and their brains chiselled out. (There is a little

tin here containing stones that were extracted ‘from the gizzard of a penguin’.) At other times, they were cut up and fed to the dogs and, inadvertently, the scavenging skua gulls, their liver and tastier parts saved for the men. Even the skuas were occasionally eaten but were more often challenging targets in shooting excursions with the Winchester rifle.

When I think of how strict protective regulations are now in the Antarctic (according to the ‘General guidelines for visitors to the Antarctic’, visitors should ‘not use guns or explosives’, and should never be closer than five metres from wildlife), it is horrifying to think how Mawson and his men treated the animals. They would toboggan down slopes on the backs of penguins; creep up behind them, grab them by their wings and toss them into the sea; turn them into pate, black pudding, sausages, even ‘penguin in the hole’. In an attempt to jazz them up, they often gave the dishes elaborate names in a mixture of French and English with an Antarctic twist. For instance, roasted penguin was ‘Roast fillet of dux à L’Adélie’.

‘Penguins on horseback’, penguin breasts wrapped in bacon, were given to the passengers and crew of the *Aurora* when the ship returned to collect the party at Commonwealth Bay in 1913. (Mawson was meanwhile still on his way back from the sledging journey and, on this day, dining on one biscuit and dog flesh.) The expedition shore party had mutton instead, after which McLean concluded: ‘Mutton is splendid for a change but give me penguin breast every time’. While penguin meat was considered as good, if not better than chicken or turkey, and ‘quite equal to grouse’, and penguin broth, according to Archie McLean, ‘just like beef tea’, spices and sauces were used to mask the flavour of seal. It was most often curried to disguise its ‘objectionable tang’.

In the cabinet in front of me a silently roaring leopard seal spies me with its carnivorous blue glass eye. I think of how he, but more often his hapless relatives, were

killed for food, clubbed to death with ice axes, and of how the trusting Weddell seals made no attempt to escape their captors when my attention turns to a neighbouring cabinet enclosing two stuffed husky dogs, 'Ross' and 'Serai'. Dogs were never on the menu, at least not at the hut but when Ninnis fell down a crevasse Mertz and Mawson were left with no choice but to eat them.

The story of how Mawson was forced to eat his huskies is one of my strongest childhood memories, the story that repulsed and fascinated me the most (apart from the one about the soles of his feet coming away). That the dogs had names was particularly disturbing—he ate Pavlova, George, Mary, Ginger, Johnson and Haldane. (It was inevitable that I imagined having to eat Bonnie, our black Labrador.) Back in the cabinet housing the stones from the gizzard of a penguin is the little black doll the dancer, Anna Pavlova, gave to Mawson's expedition 'for good luck'. In return a dog was named after her. I always imagine this was something quite spontaneous. I can picture Anna Pavlova standing on the deck of the *Aurora* 'christening' it by smashing a bottle of champagne against its side while a husky puppy is darting around her legs, its horrible fate unimaginable then.

I distinctly remember my grandmother telling us about 'paw soup', which brought with it an image of paws and claws floating in an evil-looking broth, superimposed with an image of Frank Hurley's photograph of Blizzard the pup with her head cocked to one side. I later looked this up to see if it was true and found that it was—'The paws took longest to cook', wrote Mawson, 'but treated to a lengthy stewing, even they became quite digestible'.

Equally disgusting was the account of how Mawson and Mertz boiled Ginger's skull whole, drew a line down the middle of it dividing the left and right halves, and

scooped out the thyroid and brain. Since most of their cutlery was lost in the crevasse with Ninnis, they probably did this with the wooden spoon they carved out of timber from a discarded sledge they retrieved soon after Ninnis died. This spoon is on display in another glass case here in the museum beside the half-sledge and Bonza tool kit containing the very knife that was probably used to kill Pavlova. The second-to-last dog to die, she was slain in this gruesome way because by then the gun had been thrown away to lighten their load. Later she was made into 'a delicious soup', her bones 'cracked open' with the mended spade propped up here beside the sledge.

Roald Amundsen seemed to thrive on the flesh of his dogs on his return trip from the South Pole. In his book *The South Pole*, he declared the meat 'excellent, quite excellent', and claimed that 'one cutlet after another disappeared with lightning-like rapidity'. However, he had counted on eating them and they were in much better condition than the six left to Mawson and Mertz. The weakest of the pack (Pavlova and co) were very scrawny at the time of death. Haldane was so skinny that he slipped out of his harness and was nearly lost in a crevasse. 'At that first repast on starved-dog', Mawson recalled in *Home of the Blizzard*, 'we got little satisfaction for...the meat proved so stringy as to tax our powers of mastication to the utmost...All the dogs were thin and miserable when they reached the stage of extreme exhaustion. Their meat was tough, stringy and without a vestige of fat'.

I can't help wondering if, for ever after the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey, on encountering a dog and perhaps bending to pat it, Mawson saw flashes of George's liver 'frizzling' on the lid of his cooker. 'Ross', the darker of the two dogs in front of me, is described as 'a Mawson family pet' but my great aunt Pat said this wasn't true, that her father didn't ever want a dog as a pet because of what happened in the Antarctic even though for a time he did have a husky, 'Admiral D'Urville', which was brought back from

the AAE on the *Aurora* in 1914. Incidentally, Pavlova, a favourite of Mawson's, was dark like Ross.

It is no wonder that Paquita Mawson and Jessica and Pat were not overly fond of dogs either. My grandmother tried to like our Jack Russell, Millie, but she didn't ever quite forgive her for biting her. Although she didn't like dogs, Paquita became attached to her friend Isabel's dog during holidays in Scotland when taking a break from *Mawson of the Antarctic* in the early 1960s. On her return to Australia she acquired a Chihuahua; a big dog would have been quite another thing.

My grandmother said she never asked her father about the sledging journey, about Ninnis and Mertz or about his having to kill and eat the huskies. (I think she must have read about the paw soup in *The Home of the Blizzard*.) How much of an impact it had on him emotionally in the future is difficult to discern. Eric Webb, chief magnetician on the AAE, described Mawson as 'a marvellous innovator and improviser' who was 'always extremely resourceful in the most practical way'. Webb wondered if 'perhaps these qualities led to the saving of his life'. This resourcefulness can be seen in the museum in the sledge that he cut in half with his pocket saw when Mertz died, and in the crampons he fashioned out of old nails and screws and wood from boxes. On his journey to the South Magnetic Pole on Shackleton's BAE with Professor David and Dr Alistair Mackay, he constructed a frying pan out of empty paraffin tins. To save paraffin, he used seal blubber oil as fuel for cooking. 'It was seal cooked with seal' Mawson commented on his return.

In his account of their return journey from this Pole, when their rations were so low they were having to raid old camps to reboil used tea leaves, Professor David described Mawson as 'a bold culinary experimenter' whose 'cooking experiments' were 'highly successful and entirely satisfactory to the party'. It was on this journey that Mawson first

tried seal meat in the field, and he came up with a variety of ways of cooking it. He would boil down their blubber in his improvised frying pan and then drop slices of meat or liver (which he sometimes crumbed) into the oil. After further trials, he added their blood, which he poured rapidly into the oil to form 'a kind of gravy pancake', improved with the addition of some biscuit crushed with a geological hammer.

Hunger, which Mawson admitted developed into 'the most alarming mania', drove him to be experimental. 'We twisted our menu into as many possible shapes we could think in terms of seal', he explained in an interview after the expedition. Similarly, on the AAE, after the death of Ninnis and the resulting loss of weeks of rations, he wrote: 'We racked our brains thinking how to make the most of the meagre quantity of food available'.

Mawson's obsession with eating is reflected in his diaries, which are filled with lists of food, recipes and whole menus. As he, Dr Mackay and Professor David grew hungrier, they began to dream of food and this happened again on the AAE with Mertz. Interestingly, their dreams were similar in that the food or feasts they imagined were seldom realised. 'We would scarcely ever have a chance to satisfy ourselves', said Mawson in an interview following the BAE. He dreamt most often of giant cakes 'as big as washing coppers' which he had to reach via long winding staircases. 'Just as we would be about to tackle a delicacy, away it would slide into nothingness, and another beautiful course would be spread before us'. Suet pudding was something they especially craved (something Shackleton admitted to also having 'a wild longing for' on his Pole journey), so much so that as their hunger intensified, trifles and fruit salads were struck off their lists of most desirable dishes in favour of it.

At his welcome home from the BAE at the Adelaide Town Hall in March, 1909, Mawson described a dream he had about a giant cake:

I seemed to be travelling in a train in South Australia. Curiously enough I wanted some cake, and somebody in the train, whom I had never met before, gave me the address of a shop that had something special. I got out at a country centre and found it. The manager was sent for, but it appeared that the cakes were so large that he was alarmed at the fact that I was anxious to tackle one myself. I climbed up the fire escape of this three-storey building, and there were the cakes as big as washing coppers. I was anxious to test them, but the proprietor objected. Somehow he hurried me out of the place and said he would send one to me. I got down from the roof only to see the fellow driving away in an aeroplane. The cake came, however, and the instructions with it were to set a match to it and the whole thing would come out ready cooked.

He had an almost identical dream on the sledging journey with Mertz which he relates in *The Home of the Blizzard*. Once, again, reminiscent of the scientist in him, the meal is only properly appreciated if lit with a match, as if it were a kind of experiment. Again he dreamt of cakes and again they eluded him:

Lying in the sleeping bag that day I dozed off into the land of food once more. This time it was a confectioner's shop, decidedly grandiose and apparently opulent....I commanded the attention of no less than the proprietor himself who courteously led me up a winding stairway to the roof, where, he explained, his primest productions were stocked. There to my amazed gaze were two long rows of gigantic cakes, each about four feet in diameter...it was explained that they were no ordinary cakes but that each was fitted with a fuse to be lighted just before serving, when the whole of the ingredients would react chemically... In rapture I ordered one ... I remember paying the money over but, my next consciousness was the realization, as I walked down the street, of having omitted to carry off the prize itselfWith all haste I returned ...discovering the door shut and on it the placard "early closing".

Mawson perhaps always had a sweet tooth but his Antarctic experiences must have intensified his love of cakes and desserts. As a result, Paquita became very good at them, in particular milk based desserts like baked custard, crème caramel (her signature dish which she most often served with stewed apricots), and rice cream, which Mawson claimed he could live on. Those times of extreme hunger also had a lasting impact on his relationship with food; it accentuated his natural abhorrence of waste and informed his approach to cooking forever afterwards.

Interestingly, it seems that cooking was something that Mawson enjoyed, not something that was just a necessary skill in the Antarctic and on geological field trips. Paquita mentions in *Mawson of the Antarctic* that as a child he was ‘full of interest in everything’ and that, unlike his brother, Will, this included an interest in the house. With his mother’s encouragement he was allowed to buy household goods in bulk and sell them to her singly which ‘gave him quite a good idea of finance and household management’. He was also ‘allowed to help make cakes and to try his hand at other cooking’. William Ingram, medical officer and biologist on the BANZARE voyages, remembered that Mawson was a man ‘who could do all the household chores himself’ and that if staying at his house, ‘he’d be cleaning your shoes for you, making the morning cup of tea, and doing all that sort of thing’.

Recently, when sifting through some family archives, I came across an old book with ‘Recipes’ inscribed in gold lettering across its battered green cover. There are some recipes by Paquita towards the back but a loose page with ‘D Mawson’ on it and recipes written in his hand in the front pages suggest it was at least initially his. Not surprisingly, almost all are cake and biscuit recipes. There are also several for jam—orange, lemon and melon, pineapple and melon, as well as lemon, and orange marmalade, indicating that it

was possible this book dated back to his childhood. For a short while his father ran a jam-making business before starting a fruit cannery.

On geology excursions into the Flinders Ranges or to the Adelaide Hills, his students remembered that 'eating was always an event...with Mawson usually in charge of the cooking pot'. In the mornings he served a 'generous helping' of porridge for breakfast, followed by eggs and bacon and he would go around taking orders for hard boiled eggs in his Jaeger wool pyjamas. At the end of meals the students would be told to 'up plates and lick them', an Antarctic tradition that preceded a 'more thorough washing up'.

Mawson is remembered for his dislike of waste as well as his generosity. Arthur Alderman, a student who later succeeded Mawson as Chair of Geology at the University of Adelaide remembered that 'food was allotted each day and it was planned on a sort of dietetic basis'. Eric Rudd, another student and later Chair in Economic and Mining Geology at the University from 1949 to 1970, recalled that on camps they lived on 'Antarctic rations', including some 'currant-slice biscuits which had been left over from Antarctica'. Madigan, as a lecturer in the geology department at the University, also led some of the science excursions. Keith Johns, a student of both men in the 1940s remembers Madigan as 'more of an army man' who treated them as though they were in the army with 'rations in fairly short order'. By contrast, Mawson was 'more liberal with the food' (they could always ask for seconds), and was more sympathetic towards the students. Johns said that they 'had the feeling that he was looking after them' and 'had their wellbeing in mind'. Alderman remembered that when they came back to camp Mawson would 'put on an enormous billy of tea. He would brew the tea and drink a fair proportion of it too'.

After reading the manuscript of *Mawson of the Antarctic*, Pat wrote to Paquita in England: 'I think you could describe the trips to Flinders much more. The way he organised the stores and doled out the food and saw that they cooked it properly, and in fact wet-nursed them, the lazy blighters (not the nice ones of course...).'

Similarly, on the AAE Mawson comes across as the overarching provider and carer, especially when he saw that food could offer comfort or boost morale. On the *Aurora* on Christmas Day, 1911, Walter Hannam notes in his diary that, despite being seasick, Mawson 'didn't forget to deal out some wine, liqueur and cigars'. John Hunter often mentions him cooking for them, particularly in the first days at Commonwealth Bay when they were working long days building the hut. 'Our chief was engaged in baking scones when we arose' he writes on February 1, 1912, and a few days later: 'Afternoon tea of 'A1 raspberry tarts made by the Doctor'. According to Hunter, Mawson gave them each a dose of Kepler's malt extract with cod liver oil 'to fatten them up for sledging'. On reading this, I pictured the men queuing up in the hut like school students visiting the nurse in the infirmary. When John Close, Cecil Madigan and Leslie Whetter set off on a reconnaissance journey, he gave them a bottle of wine and 'special treats' to celebrate John Close's birthday.

There are many references to him making the men cups of tea or cocoa when they were working late or on night watch. In the second year, when there were only seven of them, it seems he took over the cooking in the first weeks of their long year waiting for the *Aurora* to come back, and later in the year as Jeffryes' condition worsened he cooked on Jeffryes' allotted day. McLean noted more than once in his diary in February and March: 'The Doctor usually cooks breakfast'. In the middle of the winter in 1913, when spirits were low, he made yeast. 'Yesterday the Doctor was successful in turning out some yeast bread', wrote Archie Mclean on June the 10th. 'For the past week he has been

experimenting in the growth of yeast from mouldy potatoes and stout... tonight he turned out some muffins. It is a welcome change and we appreciate it’.

Mawson’s cooking extended into the home. My grandmother told me that he used to cook for Paquita when she was ill, and that he had taught her how to make a roast and how to make gravy early in their marriage; at that time he was more experienced in the kitchen. Paquita recalled that during the war in England in 1914, Mawson commented that they hadn’t had a cake for a long time. Paquita replied that she couldn’t make a cake because of rationing. They were only allowed one ounce of butter, a small amount of sugar and eggs were very expensive. Mawson didn’t see this as an obstacle and he set about making a cake from equivalent ingredients and ‘made a beautiful cake with half a tin of condensed milk, no eggs and one or two other things’. I have always liked the story of him showing my grandmother and my great aunt how to toss pancakes, one that had even greater appeal after I discovered a reference to Mawson and Mertz ‘experimenting’ with pancakes in the hut. Had he taught Mertz how to toss them? Or had Mertz taught *him*?

The idea of Mawson the modern father and modern husband began to take shape in my mind. I was intrigued by the story my father, the eldest Mawson grandchild, told me of how Mawson enjoyed shopping at the Adelaide Central market on his way to ‘Harewood’, the family farm in the Adelaide Hills, and that he tended to buy too much. Perhaps he had an underlying fear of running short of food but this story is contrary to perceptions of him as a frugal, resourceful man whose ‘digestive powers were legendary’. I suspect Mawson ‘the extravagant shopper’, ‘the big spender’ was not often seen, and was very much outweighed by his otherwise natural frugality, a trait he passed down to his daughters. My grandmother would scrape the fat from the frying pan and store it for another day or leave it lying in the frying pan on the stovetop until the next meal. Early in their marriage my

grandfather made her fried eggs for breakfast. She was horrified when he tipped the fat down the sink afterwards. Waste was torture to her.

Paquita was quite different. Where the rest of the Mawson family was practical and prudent, she was inclined to be extravagant, perhaps partly because she had not had the same Spartan childhood or suffered the same privations Mawson had. Although she became a good cook, she never grew to like everyday cooking, preferring instead to cook for dinner parties and other special occasions. Whenever she was away, Mawson, my grandmother and my great-aunt would keep to a fairly tight budget and exist on cheap dishes. One of their favourite meals was tripe and onions. During such times, Pat was appointed 'chief housekeeper' and she would have to present her father with a list of foodstuffs and their prices. These lists are among their letters, neatly written out in columns, and from my observations of both my great-aunt and my grandmother, budgeting to them was a challenge, sometimes even a thrill.

I wasn't thinking of any of this when, a few days after my visit to the museum, I decided to try Mawson's legendary Irish stew. I was going camping and had offered to provide dinner and I thought it best to prepare something in advance that could be easily reheated in a pot over an open fire. Swept away with notions of bonding with my great-grandfather intrepid explorer turned chef extraordinaire, I felt it was the perfect occasion to try his stew, which dates back to his Antarctic days. To celebrate its completion, the first meal inside the hut was Irish stew. 'The way we can put away the irish [sic] stew is...simply astonishing...' wrote John Hunter. Reading this should have been warning enough. The expeditioners had been working hard for days in the cold. As I later realised, it was an advantage to be very hungry to appreciate this stew, but I was wooed by Professor Edgeworth David's description of Mawson as 'a bold culinary experimenter',

and impressed by accounts of him turning out such dishes as whisky omelettes, strawberry tarts and blanc mange with creamy port-wine sauce.

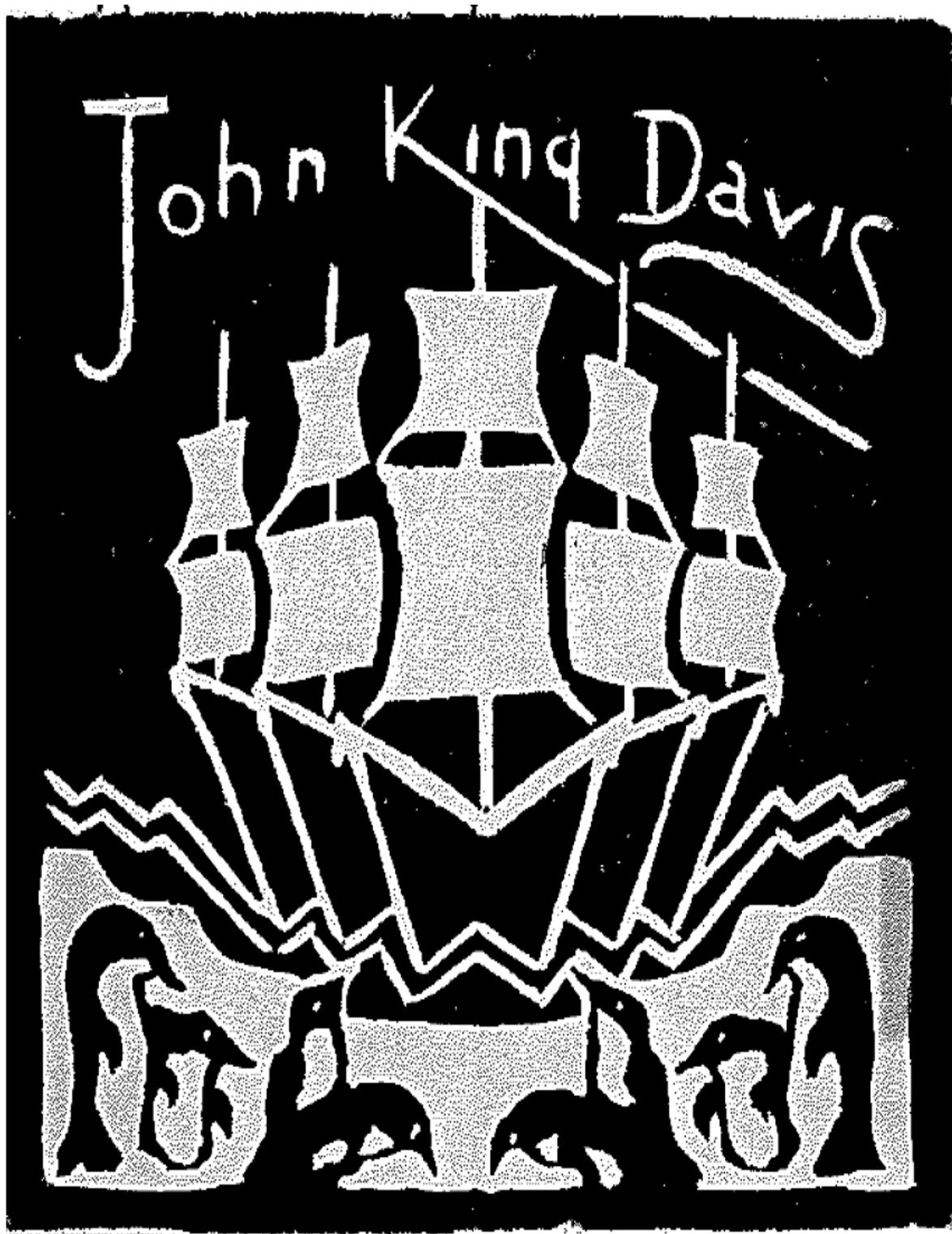
My grandmother, who sometimes went on field trips with him to the Flinders Ranges, as did Pat and Paquita, as chaperones for women students, recalled that ‘every camp had its Irish stew day’. The students had to learn to cook over an open fire; the stew had to be cooked to her father’s ‘satisfaction’ and ‘woe betide the student who proudly served chops in a puree of potatoes and onion’. Here is a glimpse of his nurturing side but also his tendency to be interfering—it calls to mind Laseron’s comment that, in matters of cooking, he had a habit of ‘butting in’. I was relieved I wouldn’t be cooking under my great-grandfather’s instruction.

After further reading, the idea of cooking Mawson’s Irish stew began to lose its charm. He was ‘an awful cook’ according to Reg Sprigg. ‘His idea of a culinary delight’, said Sprigg, was ‘a witch’s cauldron of stew’. His habit of adding ‘masses of fat’ was more suitable for Antarctic climes than the Australian bush in summer, and ‘the pot was never emptied, just refilled with potatoes, onions, meats, anything that would come along’. Keith Johns remembers that being young and hungry, some would order four eggs for breakfast, others as many as six but their eyes were bigger than their stomachs and they would be encouraged to eat what they had ordered or the eggs would end up in the stew the next day, along with any leftover porridge. Images of a pot bubbling over the fire continuously for several days in the height of summer surrounded by swarms of flies further discouraged me.

In the end, I had to be honest. A kilogram of neck mutton chops simply boiled in water did nothing to inspire me and, whichever way I looked at it, was not representative of Douglas Mawson the ‘bold culinary experimenter’. Perhaps his cooking only worked in

extraordinary circumstances or on a low university budget. Ultimately, the key to appreciating his culinary genius was that you had to be on the edge of starvation. ‘I will always remember the wonderful taste that the food had in those days’, wrote Mawson in *The Home of the Blizzard*: ‘Acute hunger enhances the taste and smell of food beyond all ordinary conception. The flavour of food under such conditions is a miracle altogether unsuspected by the millions of mortals who daily eat their fill’. I realised that I was not only one of those average mortals but that I had not inherited the ‘Mawson grit’, the legendary iron gut.

Eventually I reneged on making the Irish stew. Instead I settled on beef bourguignon for our camp dinner—rump in red wine, mushrooms and herbs seemed far preferable. I thought, as I cut the meat, of how much my grandmother (and Mawson) would disapprove of my buying rump and cutting off every scrap of fat, and of how glad I was that she (and he) couldn’t see me. I was also pleased to escape any potential disapproval when later, around the camp fire, refilling my wine glass for the third time I recalled reading John Hunter’s account of how the men in the hut had spent one evening engaged in ‘violent discussions’ on morality and drunkenness, ‘the Doctor [Mawson] in the lead’.



Jessica and the Linocut

One morning in the summer of 2003, my grandmother Jessica went to a secondhand bookshop to sell some of her old paperbacks. While the owner was valuing her books, she was perusing the shelves of volumes behind him when she noticed a copy of *Mawson of the Antarctic*. For some time my grandmother had been slowly collecting copies of her

mother's book for all her grandchildren, so she bought this copy with the proceeds from her paperbacks. Of course the shopkeeper was curious to know what interest she had in Douglas Mawson and she explained her connection.

Several months later she returned to the shop. The owner was excited to see her: he had found another copy of *Mawson of the Antarctic* which 'had something in it'. The copy was in good condition, its dust jacket picturing a silvery Antarctic landscape protected by a plastic covering. When my grandmother opened it, she immediately recognised her mother's handwriting. In blue biro, Paquita had written: 'With love to Vina from the writer Paquita Mawson'. Underneath, attached by a small piece of yellowing tape, was a linocut my grandmother had made when she was fourteen. It pictures a ship and a group of penguins, with the words 'John King Davis' etched across the top. She was amazed to be faced with her own fourteen-year-old self, as well as surprised that the print had survived.

The linocut dates back to BANZARE, the British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions, two oceanographic cruises which Mawson led over the summers of 1929-30 and 1930-31. The imprint of the ship and penguins is reminiscent of how much the Antarctic had featured in all the Mawsons' lives. It reminded my grandmother of a number of things: her mother, the author; Vina, to whom this copy had once belonged; how she came to make linocuts; and her godfather, Captain John King Davis.

Soon after the book's appearance, my grandmother and I sat down to afternoon tea and talked about Paquita. I have always felt a huge sense of disappointment that I was too young to really know or appreciate her. She died a few days after my sixth birthday. I visualise our different lifetimes crossing at a train station. I'm on a platform running alongside a train and Paquita is on the train, in one of the front carriages. I only catch a

glimpse of her as she pokes her head out of the window and waves to me. She is wearing her art deco spectacles and she is dressed in black as she almost always was after Mawson died, as if forever in mourning. I can hear her little dog Trinnie's muffled yapping growing fainter. And then she is gone.

The youngest daughter and sixth child of Dutch parents, Henrietta and GDD, Paquita was born in London in 1891 and spent the first years of her life in Cordoba, Spain. She grew to be almost six feet tall and inherited her father's dark hair and eyes, a reflection of the Delprats' Basque ancestry. From an educated, accomplished family, two of her sisters studied medicine, both her brothers became doctors and her sister Carmen was a concert violinist of international repute. All the Delprats were musical. Paquita studied singing and piano at the Conservatorium of Music in Adelaide before her marriage to Mawson, and continued to perform at charity concerts throughout her life.

Mawson's protégé Reg Sprigg described her as 'an individualist, a very complete woman with a tremendous sense of fun'. I smile when I think of her learning to ski at the age of fifty in Iran on skis Mawson took to the Antarctic in 1911. She looks elated in photographs, sporting his Burberry trousers, the snowy Elberz Mountains behind her.

In my dining room I have a Persian rug she bought in Tehran. I think of her every time I vacuum over the blue and brown patterns; of her bargaining with a man in a crowded street market and walking off with it slung over her shoulder. Every morning when I open my cutlery drawer I see her Dutch teaspoons. My parents still have the ancient Roman miner's lamp GDD found in a silver mine he unearthed in the Sierra Morena mountains in Spain in the late 1800s. This little lamp, which he brought all the way to Australia on the *RMS Himalaya* in 1898, is somehow representative of Paquita's displacement. She was eight when her family migrated to Australia from Europe. She

didn't return to Europe until she was 19 and engaged to Douglas Mawson. I suspect my spoons were part of her trousseau.

Even when very young I was aware that she was not Australian; her furniture, her linen and lace, her embroidered tea towels and sheets all told stories of another culture. That she had a Chihuahua and not a Kelpi or a Labrador made her different, and that she called him Trinidad Lopez Manelli (Trinnie), and not 'Spot' or 'Scamp'. Her name was foreign and she looked foreign with her dark colouring, and her large physique. She retained an accent all her life. Some say that she cultivated it, that it was a statement of her allegiance to her European heritage.

In a little box in my bedroom I keep a miniature ribbon my grandmother gave me. It is representative of the award Paquita was given in 1946 in recognition of the work she did during the Second World War: she was appointed Officer of the Order of Oranje Nassau. My grandmother described to me what Paquita had done to earn this title, seldom bestowed on women and rarely bestowed on 'a foreigner'. In 1942 she and her Dutch optician, who had changed his German-sounding name to 'Holland', opened the Oranje Club in Gilbert Street, Adelaide, a refuge for Dutch refugees sent to Australia following the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies. The name 'Oranje' was in honour of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands who was a descendant of William of Orange and whose portrait hung in the club's tea room.

The Oranje Club was 'a sanctuary for Hollanders', a place where they could leave their parcels, write letters, enjoy a cup of tea, have meals and 'entertain in a small way'. Paquita organised social events and arranged accommodation for the families that came. 'Dutch women had a reputation in Australia for being very good housekeepers', explained my grandmother. At the time there was a thing called "Dutch Cleanser" for cleaning out

the bottoms of saucepans and on it was a picture of a Dutch girl in a bonnet chasing germs around with a broom. 'Because of their reputation for being hard-working, people didn't mind providing accommodation for these evacuees' explained my grandmother. 'What they didn't know', she added, 'was that the women who arrived were of the second generation Dutch in the East Indies and having been brought up with servants, most of them had no idea how to look after a house.' As we laughed about this, I couldn't help thinking that 'the Dutch Club', as my grandmother called it, was a sanctuary for Paquita as well, a place where she could speak her native language.

Neither my grandmother Jessica nor her elder sister Pat learnt Dutch partly because Mawson wasn't very good at languages and Paquita didn't want him to feel left out. She was sensitive to the fact that he was in a family of women but in many ways I see Paquita as being on the fringe. Like her mother and her siblings, she always owned a piano but neither of her daughters inherited her love for music. In this way, they were more like Mawson, who once spent the duration of a concert counting the pipes in the organ. 'Music didn't mean very much to him' recalled Paquita in a radio interview in the 1960s. 'He couldn't understand that music might be something to relax and refresh you'. Pat admitted in an interview in the 1980s that she 'never quite got into it', and my grandmother was similarly unable to really comprehend music. She admitted to me that she could never suspend disbelief in operas. It made no sense to her that the heroine, most often dying of consumption, rose from the dead and sang at the top of her lungs. I envisage Paquita sitting alone at the piano while the rest of the family, brought together through their passion for science, is poring over rocks and specimens in jars.

When Mawson died Paquita leaned more towards her family and her Dutch roots. A Dutch friend and artist Fred Dankbaar painted a mural of The Hague for her, of a canal scene showing the Houses of Parliament. Sir Robert Menzies, a friend in later life, wrote

and congratulated her on this ‘ingenious’ way of overcoming her longing for Holland. It was later destroyed in a fire but it used to hang in her dining room in Crafers in the Adelaide Hills. She would sit at the head of her table with her back to it. She had a huge map of the world in the hallway of this house as if to remind herself of her origins, of her bearings, like a child who asks for the light to be left on. Did she ever stand in front of it and run her fingers over the Netherlands, or over the hills of Andalusia? While on her last visit to Europe in 1967 she wrote to ‘Dumps’, her solicitor and friend Dorothy Somerville¹, from The Hague where she was staying with her sister Mary to say that although she ‘longed to be home’, in The Netherlands she felt ‘surrounded by family + the language’, adding: ‘I’ll never have it again I know’.

Paquita called Antarctica ‘the other woman’ but it seems that the Netherlands were the equivalent of ‘the other man’ for Mawson. While he was on the AAE Paquita travelled to Europe for the first time as an adult. She came to know her elder sisters Carmen and Lica whom she had hardly known as a child. Left to finish their schooling in Amsterdam when the family moved to Australia, they were both studying in Vienna in 1912. This trip strengthened Paquita’s ties with her family and her heritage. Sensing this, Mawson wrote from the Antarctic in 1913: ‘Let me tell you, I am getting a little envious- sit down Holland! Where do I come in?’

As Mawson was very involved in his work and often away, I see Paquita’s gravitation towards her family as a response to the realisation that she would have to develop a degree of independence from him, and build an identity of her own. She did this through her association with all things Dutch, and through her voluntary welfare work. Early in her marriage she became a member of the Mothers and Babies Health Association

¹ Dorothy Catherine Somerville (1897-1992) was the third woman to be admitted to the Bar in South Australia in 1922. She and Mary Kitson formed the first women’s law practice in Australia when they went into partnership in 1925.

(now The Child, Adolescent and Family Health Service) which involved educating mothers about how to care for their babies. The infant mortality rate in South Australia had halved by the time she retired almost thirty years later. During most of World War II she was director of the Red Cross Civilian Relief Department in Adelaide which supplied clothes and food to air raid victims in Britain. So she carved out a career as Lady Mawson, community worker, but she always had to balance this with her role as Lady Mawson, wife of Sir Douglas. Deeply committed to supporting him, his work became a large part of her life, from cleaning glass negatives for his lectures to delivering biological specimens to scientists to writing his biography.

On Mawson's return from the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey in February 1913 without his two companions who had both died, Paquita told him that she believed he had been 'miraculously spared to do great things' and she pledged to 'help [him] do them'. Initially, she hadn't wanted him to go to the Antarctic in 1911 but once she realised that 'he was going whether [she] liked it or not', she claimed that 'he had no keener supporter'. In the evenings leading up to his departure she helped him check off lists of supplies, and sewed calico food bags, which the expeditioners referred to as 'Paquita bags'. She also kept a scrapbook which began with the announcement of their engagement in 1910 and followed the plans and events surrounding the expedition.

Yet, when Mawson left for the Antarctic in December 1911, she was not among the crowds in Hobart, to wave him goodbye. As she explained in *Mawson of the Antarctic*, 'both my mother and Douglas felt that my emotions, not always under control, might be embarrassing'. When Mawson returned in 1914 she did not meet him at Port Adelaide but instead waited in the South Australian Hotel on North Terrace. Mawson had earlier confided to her that he felt he would be 'much too shy' to meet her 'under the public gaze'.

That she did not say goodbye to him or greet him on his return was something she later regretted.

Paquita became much more involved in BANZARE fifteen years later. While she couldn't see Mawson off on the first cruise in 1929 because he left from South Africa, she was there on Queens Pier at Hobart to farewell him on the second voyage in November 1930. She spent a few weeks in Hobart leading up to his departure and was on the ship every day by 9am stacking books and stores. An accomplished seamstress, she also made adjustments to the clothing. I picture her down on her knees with a pin between her teeth taking up the hems of the men's trousers.

Paquita was there to greet Mawson on his return from the first cruise in April 1930 when the *Discovery*, which had taken Scott to the Antarctic in 1901, crept into Port Adelaide. Jessica and Pat were there too, in their school uniforms and hats. They boarded the *Discovery* where she lay at anchor and cruised to the McLaren Wharf further up the river with a flight of Aero Club planes flying overhead. There's a picture of them in a newspaper cutting in Paquita's scrapbook standing at the ship's helm with long plaits and freckled faces.

Paquita recalled in *Mawson of the Antarctic* that 'waves and cheers followed us as we drove to the town with Douglas' and that it was her children's first experience of their father's fame. They had been given an insight into the enormity of the occasion in the preparations for BANZARE. Mawson had been given a Remington typewriter, a gift to the expedition. Days before he left he typed away in his office at the University while Paquita manned the telephone 'protecting him from unnecessary calls' and Jessica and Pat sorted through a pile of correspondence which stood two feet high on his desk.

Paquita was there again to welcome him home at Williamstown, Victoria, in March 1931, at the end of the expedition. The first to step across the gangway, she was presented with a black and white kitten. Before the *Discovery* had left Tasmania the previous November, Captain McKenzie had ordered a search for stowaways before the mooring lines were cast off. All hands, including the cook, searched the lifeboats and the cabins by torchlight. None was discovered but that night, their first at sea, one of the sailors climbed into his bunk after coming off watch and felt something warm at his feet. 'Stowaways!' he cried. Pulling back the covers he found a litter of five kittens with their mother, the ship's cat.

The kittens' mother, who had fallen overboard and been rescued from the icy sea by Seaman Martin on the first voyage, had disappeared off the east coast of Tasmania on the *Discovery's* return from the second cruise. She was last seen sunbathing on the forecastle head. Her adventures and eventual disappearance had been tracked in the newspapers during the expedition and Paquita kept the cuttings. In one article the cat is pictured sitting on Seaman Martin's shoulders.

The kitten Paquita was given was one of the four that survived from the litter born on the *Discovery*. She and Mawson took her back to Adelaide on the Melbourne Express in a basket, and it was reported in the paper that it ate 'most of Lady Mawson's breakfast' along the way. Jessica and Pat met them at the Adelaide Railway Station. Another clipping shows the Mawson family standing on the platform. Paquita is holding the kitten which Jessica and Pat later called Mimi after listening to Puccini's 'Mi Chiamano Mimi' on the gramophone one summer afternoon. Mimi was very confused by flies, which she'd never seen before, and her habit of running up the curtains, was, my grandmother surmised, due to being accustomed to running up sails. Mimi appears in a number of other linocuts my grandmother made around the time of BANZARE. Two of her designs survive inside her

copies of Noël Coward plays. One depicts a cat spread out under a tree, the other a cat sitting upright cleaning its paws.

Although BANZARE was the last time Mawson went to the Antarctic, for years afterwards he spent long hours in his study working on the collections and results of the expedition. They were still not finished when he died in 1958, and the story of the cruises, which he had intended as a book separate from the science reports, had not been written. For the surviving Mawsons, Paquita and Pat especially, BANZARE and Mawson's polar work continued to be central to their lives.

Pat, a lecturer in zoology at The University of Adelaide, had been working on the scientific results for some time. She was commissioned to take over from her father as editor of 'Series A', the biological reports. Paquita, who wanted to honour Mawson's wishes commissioned the geographer and historian Archibald Grenfell Price to write the human story of the expedition. It was published as *The Winning of Australian Antarctica* in 1962. Grenfell Price was given an office at the University of Adelaide where he could work closely with Pat who was appointed 'general editor'. Paquita gave him access to the *Discovery* logs and Mawson's books and diaries but she did not wish to make Mawson's private diaries available, because, she explained, 'I will be writing his life myself'.

Today there are many books about Mawson but Paquita's was the first, and for many years the only biography. It was published in London in 1964 after many hard years of writing and rewriting, and a long struggle to have it accepted by a publisher. In early 1959, Paquita, then only recently widowed, went to London to write it, partly for research purposes but also because she wanted to expand Mawson's reputation beyond Australia.

When she had accompanied him to functions in London, Paquita had most often been introduced as ‘Lady-Mawson-whose-husband-went-to-the-Antarctic’, and the first question from whomever she was being introduced was always, ‘Did he go with Shackleton or Scott?’ This frustrated her. As well as an international recognition for Mawson, she wanted to achieve a more complete portrayal of him as a person whose life was not confined to the Antarctic. ‘I want people to know D was so wide in his interests + didn’t spend all his time crawling in + out of crevasses’ she explained in a letter to ‘Dumps’. Later she wrote: ‘Douglas’s name is so generally connected with geology, uranium and the Antarctic that many other matters absorbing his interest, and on which he was an authority, are overlooked’. This is possibly why she chose to include as a frontispiece the H J Haley portrait of him in his academic gown (1933), even though among the forty illustrations in the book only one aside from this portrait is not related to his expeditions, and her title *Mawson of the Antarctic*, invites the narrower interpretation of him that she was keen to discourage.

She wrote most of the manuscript in a cramped bedsit in West London comforted by a radiator, a wireless and an electric ring to make tea. For the first few months, before she could afford to buy a table, she wrote on a board balanced across the arms of a chair. On finishing the manuscript in early 1960, Paquita wrote to Dumps: ‘I really think... that this is going to be a good seller! Douglas always said we would make some money out of his biography’. She also admitted that she had ‘not exactly enjoyed doing’ it and that at times it had been ‘nearly impossible to go on’.

This period of Paquita’s life was lonely. My grandmother acknowledged this that day we sat over afternoon tea. The serene photograph of Paquita on the inside sleeve of the dust jacket of *Mawson of the Antarctic* reveals nothing of her unhappiness. She missed Mawson and there were days when she would have ‘given anything to have him back’. She

confessed to Dumps: 'I am getting reconciled to his going from his point of view but not from mine'. Everywhere there were reminders of his absence, and that their life together was over. From Australia Pat sent Paquita pictures of gravestones to choose from to mark her father's grave in St Jude's cemetery, Brighton, and wrote of clearing out her father's office at the University. The Mawsons' house in Adelaide had been rented out to the Browns, an American family who had been quick to make the house their own. As if to announce their residency there was a mat at the front door which said 'The Browns', and Paquita's room had been turned into 'the lumber room'. When the Browns had their own furniture shipped to Australia and put hers into storage, Paquita confessed to Dumps that 'the emptying of 'Jerbii' had made her 'too depressed for words', and she regretted that she hadn't 'said goodbye to it properly'.

I first read *Mawson of the Antarctic* in London in 1990 after tracking down a copy in the Kensington library. It seemed right to be reading it in England where Paquita's life had begun. On her honeymoon in 1914 she and Mawson stayed in a serviced apartment in St James's Court. During the First World War they lived for a time in a house in Kensington where my grandmother was born on 28th October 1917. As I walked the streets of London I imagined Paquita with Mawson on Armistice Day in a crowd of thousands watching the fireworks in Hyde Park, wending around Trafalgar Square and along Whitehall.

At the time I didn't appreciate how difficult Paquita had found it to write *Mawson of the Antarctic*. Later when I read her correspondence from this time, I thought back to my own days of poverty in London; of long days walking everywhere when I couldn't afford to catch the tube, and of miserable cornflake dinners. I could easily picture her bedsit; it was probably very much like my own. In her letters home she mentions frequently how lonely she is and there are echoes of her letters to Mawson when he was in the Antarctic

during their prolonged engagement. After hearing from Dumps after a long interval she wrote: 'Please try hard not to leave me so long!! I am a bad "waiter"'.

Between completion of the manuscript of *Mawson of the Antarctic* to its eventual publication by Longmans Green four years later, Paquita approached several publishers without success. Every time the manuscript was rejected she felt she had failed Mawson, and she became depressed by the criticism—that it was not 'sufficiently objective'; that she was too close to her subject to do him justice; that her writing style was 'flat and toneless'; that she had failed to produce 'a living portrait' of Mawson. Even Pat, who had been sent a copy of the manuscript, commented that there was 'very little of Pa himself', only what he did. In describing Mawson's achievements Pat felt her mother had been 'too praising' of him. She criticised the biography for being too 'panegyric', and felt that there was too much quotation and not enough reflection or interpretation. Paquita had received similar responses from publishers who read her first manuscript, a biography of her father, which was published in 1958 as *A Vision of Steel*. This biography was criticised for being 'too personal', for including 'too many picnics' and 'too many quotations', and for being 'broken and staccato'.

Paquita seemed unable to write Mawson's biography (or the earlier one of her father) with the ease that she wrote letters. She had won the Tennyson Medal at school but she remained sensitive about her English because it was not her first language. At primary school, at the Convent of Mercy in Broken Hill, she had been teased for being 'a foreigner'. When other students did worse than the Delprat children, the teachers would try to shame them by saying: 'You don't want to be beaten by foreigners'.

In November 1960, she heard from a London-based publisher who had read her manuscript but would not consider publishing it in its 'present form'. The publisher

explained that he had sent it to an ‘adviser’ in Australia whose opinion he valued. Among Paquita’s papers is a letter to this publisher which she never sent. Interpreting his wish to consult an adviser as a way of checking up on the accuracy of her research she assured him it was ‘all true’. Suspecting also that the content was not interesting enough she wrote: ‘If I could say with truth that my husband had several mistresses, that I had a few illegitimate children, and that we based our married life on *Lady Ch’s Lover*, my book would doubtless be a howling success’.

Paquita felt an enormous sense of responsibility to do justice to Mawson’s memory; she saw the writing of his life as her last duty to him, and so it was a relief when the manuscript was eventually accepted. In her acknowledgments she wrote: ‘Several wished to write his biography but he always demurred. He said that we would do it together—later he said I should do it and gave me many details. So I have done it—would it were better done’. On the whole the reviews were favourable. It was described as a ‘readable’ book that presented Mawson as a family man and as a scientist, as well as an explorer. Most, if not all, subsequent biographers of Mawson have drawn on Paquita’s biography of him, especially for information about Mawson’s childhood. According to Mark Pharaoh, senior collector at the South Australian Museum, ‘it provides wonderful details of his life’s interests’ and ‘is well worth tracking down’.

It was almost four decades between Paquita’s success in publishing *Mawson of the Antarctic* and the appearance in an Adelaide bookshop of the copy including my grandmother’s linocut. The copy had once belonged to Paquita’s friend, Vina. Her full name was Vina Barnden and I remember her staying with my grandmother when I was a child. She was very glamorous, always heavily made up and richly bejewelled. She never looked quite right in the country, beside us in our muddy rubber boots and old clothes. (We lived on a farm and my grandmother lived in a cottage across the paddock from our house.)

She reminded me of Eleanor Parker, the actress who played the baroness in *The Sound of Music*. She was cool and refined, and as uninterested in us as the baroness was in the Von Trapp children.

Paquita and Vina first met in the 1930s. Vina was studying piano at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in Adelaide and Paquita became involved in setting up a trust fund to help her pursue a musical career in Europe. Vina left for London in 1937, where she studied at the Royal Academy of Music, and later made her debut at the Royal Albert Hall.

After many years in England, America and Bermuda, Vina returned to Adelaide in 1971 and reunited with Paquita, with whom she hadn't been in touch since 1937. It happened by chance. My grandmother and her sister were worried that Paquita was lonely on her own in her house in the Adelaide Hills and they advertised for a carer. Vina answered the advertisement seeing it as a chance to repay Paquita for the help she had given her in the past. Paquita and Vina shared many of the same interests, and the same love of extravagance. They often threw dinner parties. (One hundred guests were invited when the Dutch mural was completed.) Sometimes they played duets together on the piano, a French baby grand. It was as if Paquita's life had come full circle.

Vina died in the 1990s and I suspect her family sold some of her things which might explain why her copy of *Mawson of the Antarctic* ended up in a bookshop. While the biography was published in 1964 my grandmother's linocut, included in Vina's copy, dates back to 1932. How it came to be there and to stay there is the most extraordinary part of this discovery.

In September, 1932, an accident happened at the Mawsons' farm in the Adelaide Hills which resulted in Jessica missing six months of school. Mawson, who had rated 'Marksman' in the Sydney University Volunteer Rifle Corps when an undergraduate, taught his daughters how to shoot, and apparently insisted that Paquita slept with a pistol close to hand whenever he was away. Jessica and Pat would practise shooting at a target but always under Mawson's supervision. That spring day, without her father's permission, Jessica decided to teach her school friend Betty how to shoot. 'I was evidently doing a poor job' she confided to me because it wasn't long before Betty shot her through the left thigh. One of the Bulgarian farmhands was nearby and rushed to find Mawson who came and carried Jessica into the house. I always picture this scene in slow motion: Mawson sweeps up my teenage grandmother in his powerful arms with 'Mi Chiamano Mimi' playing in the background. The song builds into a crescendo as Mawson approaches the house, my grandmother's leg dangling limply in his grip.

He lay her on the sofa and checked the wound. There was a hole where the bullet had gone in and another where it had come out the other side. My grandmother remembered her father seemed calm and unruffled in the crisis—according to Frank Hurley 'nothing ever astonished Mawson; he just grinned at us with a sparkling eye'. Paquita and Pat were on a walk somewhere and Betty was given the unenviable job of finding them and breaking the news. She met them on the drive and burst into tears.

Jessica was immediately taken to hospital in Adelaide where she spent several weeks. The Mawsons were warned that their daughter might never walk again. In a desperate attempt to get her leg muscles working, Paquita would put on the gramophone and waltz Jessica up and down her bedroom, a remedy she recommended, years later, to Sir Robert Menzies when he was learning to walk again following a stroke. 'Find a pretty nurse to dance with' she wrote.

To help her nerves grow again, every morning for many months Jessica was given a spoonful of vegemite for its vitamin B. In later life she always maintained her vitamin B by smearing a thick blanket of vegemite on her toast. She did walk again but the accident made one leg slightly longer than the other, and her feet were never again the same size. She used to wear something on one of her big toes to help scrunch her foot up to fit in her shoe, and although she never limped, sometimes her leg ached.

During the months when she was recovering at home in Brighton, various teachers came to tutor her. For some of the time Mawson taught her and she remembered enjoying his lessons. In fact she described him as ‘a born teacher’ and said he had a wonderful way of inspiring interest in a subject. To make her recovery more interesting, Paquita arranged for her to have private lessons in printmaking with Adelaide artist and art teacher Mary Packer Harris. That’s when my grandmother made the linocuts of Mimi the cat and the one of the ship that had carried her father to the Antarctic. It was inscribed with the words, ‘John King Davis’, captain of the *Aurora* on the AAE and of *Discovery* for the first of the two BANZARE cruises, 1929 to 30.

Paquita and Captain Davis were good friends. After he retired from a life at sea they would meet in Melbourne and Davis would drive her around. She noted that he drove ‘well but slowly’ which suggests the cautiousness he was known for as a sea captain. He apparently had a poor sense of direction which Paquita found intriguing and amusing in a man who had such an excellent reputation for navigating ships through icebergs in poor visibility, and who had worked in Australia as ‘Commonwealth Director of Navigation’ for almost thirty years.

Sometimes when Jessica and Pat went to Melbourne, Captain Davis would take them to the Wattle Seed Tea Rooms, which my grandmother remembered as being ‘very

swish'. She said he 'once made the mistake' of taking them to the cinema to see *A Tale of Two Cities*. They 'wept from beginning to end' and Captain Davis spent the duration of the film passing a drenched handkerchief between them.

On hearing of the shooting accident, he wrote to Paquita: 'I cannot express how sorry I am to hear of the wretched accident...it could so easily have been fatal...please give my love to Jessica and say how sorry I am and also how proud I feel of her pluck and fortitude in such circumstances. When she gets well you must bring her over here for being "a little brick"'.

Davis, a tall, thin man with a red beard, had earned the nickname 'Gloomy' because he seldom smiled, but to my grandmother he was 'quite fun'. That day over afternoon tea she plucked her copy of his autobiography *High Latitude* (1962) from her bookcase. Attached to the inside cover is a photograph of Davis and Paquita in later life sitting somewhere together. It looks like a special occasion because they are both dressed up: Paquita is in a dress and hat and is holding white gloves in her hands; Davis is in a suit and cap. They are obviously sharing a joke. He is smiling admiringly at her. This could be the last picture ever taken of them because their friendship ended suddenly and mysteriously a few years after Mawson died.

It seems that it all stemmed from BANZARE. Davis resigned as captain of the second BANZARE cruise because he and Mawson had fought so much on the first voyage. Mawson was leader of the expedition. Davis was his second-in-command; he was also captain of the ship but because the work of the expedition took place almost entirely at sea, he was only master of *Discovery* when Mawson was not on board. Davis, whose first concern was the safety of his vessel, wanted to save fuel while Mawson wanted to go as far and as wide as possible to increase his territorial claims, but more particularly, to expand

the scientific programme. They argued non-stop, mostly over coal. Davis resented Mawson's interference in navigational matters and thought him disorganised, overly ambitious and a hard task master. Mawson accused Davis of being 'a supreme pessimist'. 'There is, unfortunately, no doubt that the unhappy division of authority... affected both the outlook and the personnel and the conduct and results of the voyage', wrote Grenfell Price in *The Winning of Australian Antarctica*.

Soon after he had been commissioned to write the story of BANZARE, Grenfell Price wrote to Paquita in Europe to warn her: 'we may have trouble with Davis'. To avoid possible libel action he explained that he was going to 'cut out most of [Mawson's] rows with Davis'. Paquita approved, for she was afraid that the arguments between the two men would detract from the scientific achievements of the expedition. When *The Winning of Australian Antarctica* was published in 1962, Davis and Paquita were still friends. *High Latitude* was published in the same year and in it Davis writes warmly of Mawson. He describes the 'intense relief' that he experienced on shaking Mawson's hand when in 1913 he arrived to pick him up from the Antarctic at the end of the AAE, and confessed: 'My life has given me few moments that have been more rewarding'.

When *Mawson of the Antarctic* came out two years later, Paquita sent Davis a copy. He wrote back to say that he had enjoyed her 'account of bygone years' but later that year he declined an invitation to meet her in Melbourne with the message that he was 'otherwise engaged'. More rejections followed until Paquita wrote to ask him why he had 'so suddenly and hurtfully removed the gift of [his] friendship'. In another letter she wrote: 'My life has not always been easy but one of the things I...rested on was having what you have taken away'. Davis, without whom Paquita claimed she would never have 'got through her honeymoon', did not reply to her letters. In despair, when Jessica was going to Melbourne on a holiday, Paquita gave her his address, certain that he wouldn't

turn his goddaughter away; Jessica walked up and down the street until it grew dark but she could not find him.

Davis died in a boarding house in St Kilda in May, 1967. Paquita was in Europe at the time. Jessica wrote to say: 'probably J.K.D. has forgiven you now darling'. Davis's papers, which were donated to the La Trobe Library, included an unsent letter to Paquita which offers an explanation for his coldness: 'When you made Mawson's private papers available for publication you told me it was for the purpose of writing a scientific report. I did not realise that they would consist of gossip from the passengers on the *Discovery* and that my report to the Committee would be omitted'. Davis was referring to The BANZARE organising Committee; his report, as explained by Grenfell Price in *The Winning of Australian Antarctica*, outlined 'his reasons for exercising his rights as captain of *Discovery* and leaving the Antarctic Coast' when coal supplies were down to 120 tons.

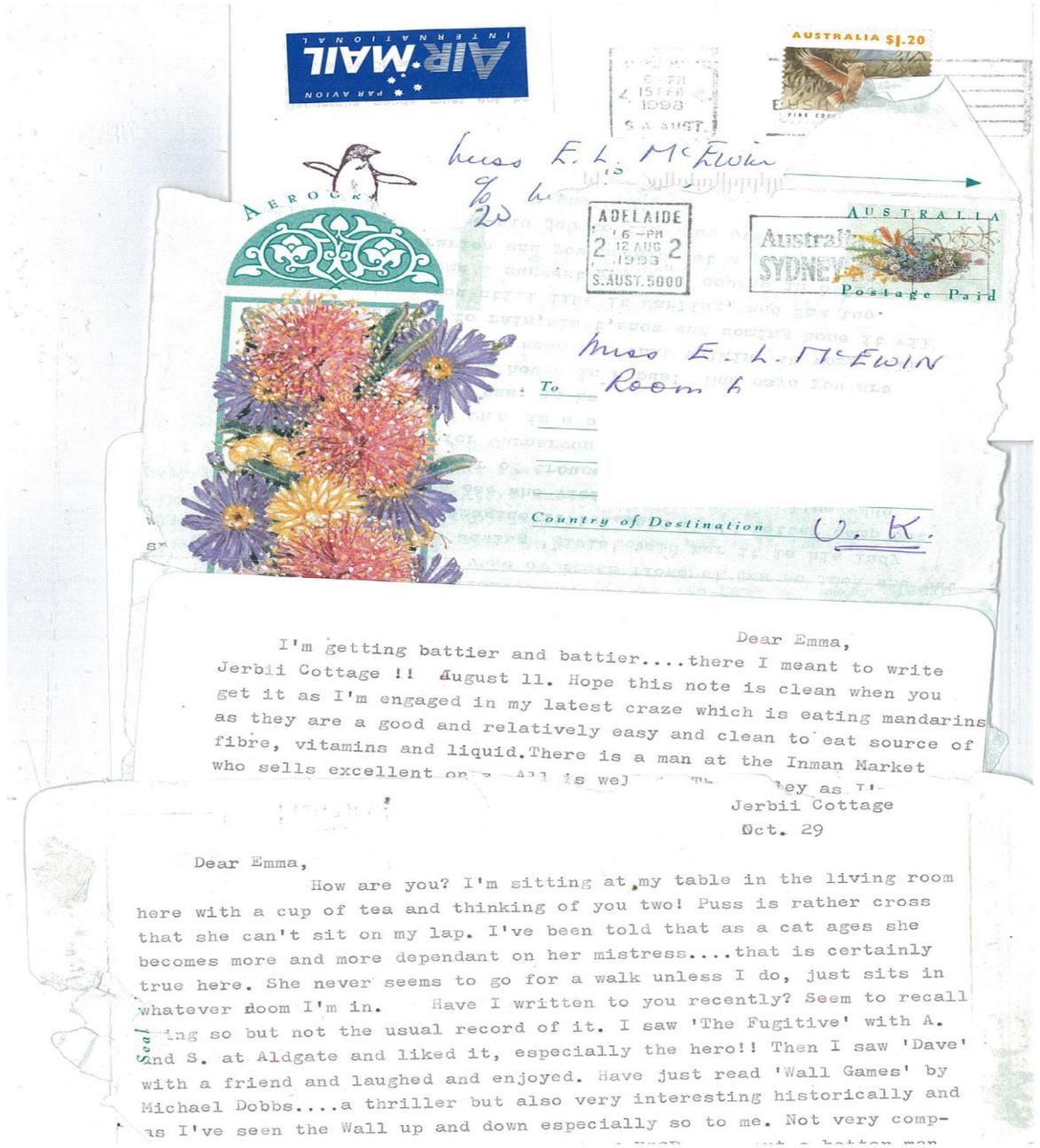
It is true that *The Winning of Australian Antarctica* is written from Mawson's perspective. Grenfell Price clearly states in his 'Author's Note' that his 'main task was to outline what Sir Douglas thought and wrote'. Although there is very little mention of the arguments between Mawson and Davis except for one short paragraph subtitled 'Disputes over coal', in consulting only Mawson's papers and diaries, Grenfell Price does omit Davis's point of view. Yet he acknowledges that both men were 'innocent victims of that divided control' and credits them both for not allowing 'a temporary quarrel to wreck a life-long friendship.'

While Davis forgave Mawson, it seems he was unable to extend the same forgiveness to Paquita. Was he in love with her? I have sometimes wondered if he was. Or was he just stubborn? The men on BANZARE called him 'Bloody JK' behind his back. On

his death, a copy of *A Vision of Steel* was found among his things, but not the copy Paquita had sent him of *Mawson of the Antarctic*. Did he throw it away?

My grandmother and I talked a lot about Davis that day over afternoon tea but somehow we came back to her discovery in the bookshop that summer afternoon. It is extraordinary that her linocut, made more than seventy years before, was still inside the copy of *Mawson of the Antarctic* which had passed from Vina to a second hand bookshop. It now belongs to me. When I look at the print I picture Vina as I knew her, Captain Davis looking suitably miserable at the helm of the *Discovery* and Paquita with a typewriter on her lap, as heavy as the burden of Mawson's legacy and the sorrow of her lost friendship with Davis, but mostly I picture my grandmother with a gunshot wound, a small, dark red trickle of blood running down her leg.

The book stands in my bookcase above the Noël Coward plays with their Mimi bookplates, and beside a volume of poems by Robert Service, a writer Mawson admired. One day, during the time I was reading and researching Mawson's favourite poetry and fiction, I went into a bookshop around the corner from my house in search of Robert Service. The owner led me to a shelf lined with volumes of his poetry—*Songs of a sourdough*, *Lyrics of a lowbrow*, *Carols of an old codger*, *Ballads of a bohemian*. I picked one at random: *Rhymes of a rolling stone*. When I opened it up, I saw at once that it had belonged to my great-grandfather, for inside it he had written his name in faint pencil: 'D. Mawson'.



The Mawson's Paper Legacy

One winter's night when I couldn't sleep I got up and reread all the letters that my grandmother Jessica had sent to me when I was living in London. They span almost nine years, from the beginning of 1993 to the end of 2001. Over these years she bought a laptop and for a while she sent emails from oma@adelaide.com.au but after a year or so she returned to her typewriter because she didn't like 'the denigrating way' that the computer underlined her mistakes.

While some are handwritten, most of her letters are typed, and somehow her personality comes out in the mistakes she made. Every now and then a rogue red letter appears in the otherwise black text; some letters are typed high above the others where an apostrophe might be. There are random capitals and upside down queries. Sometimes the left and right margins are very wide, making the width of the text so narrow that there are only five or six words to a line. At other times there are no margins at all and the words run off the page. These typing errors are often mentioned in the letters, and the frustrations of trying to understand how her electric typewriter worked without the instruction booklet which had gone missing. She didn't throw away pages with mistakes for like her father she disliked waste. Just as he wrote in every available space on the pages of his Antarctic notebooks, she turned pages sideways and typed lengthways in the margins. In one letter, she types 'Dear Emma' on the right hand side of the page. Instead of beginning again on a fresh page this error becomes the subject of her opening line: 'I'm getting battier and battier...there I meant to write Jerbii Cottage!' As I read these letters I feel glad that she abandoned her laptop, aware that in an increasingly paperless world the distinctive physicality of her correspondence to me is something to treasure.

My grandmother, like so many of her generation, was a prolific writer, of notes, lists and letters, and in everything she wrote she had a wonderful way of turning the most mundane event into an interesting and amusing story. Actually she had dreamt of becoming a poet when young and although she admitted to burning her poems soon after she was married, she wrote stories later in life—'No Flowers for Miss Harris' and 'Mrs Murphy's Day' sit in my desk drawer at home. In many ways she had inherited a writing tradition. As well as their non-fiction publications, both Mawson and Paquita experimented with fiction. Although not a keen reader of novels, Mawson admitted to liking 'imaginative literature'. The first book to be printed in the Antarctic and the inspiration for *The Adélie Blizzard* (which was also modelled on the first Antarctic newspaper, the *South Polar*

Times) was the BAE's *Aurora Australis* for which he wrote 'Bathybia', a science fiction story. Only Mawson's story, about a sledging party in the Antarctic who enter an alternative Antarctic world of giant ticks and poisonous mites, and 'Erebus', a poem by Shackleton, were chosen from all the contributions for publication in a third volume of *The Heart of the Antarctic* in 1909. One reviewer of the *Aurora Australis* wrote that 'Bathybia' 'may be fairly regarded as the pick of the collection'.

It seems Paquita had aspirations to write more than she did. She intimated in letters to friends that she might write a sequel to *Mawson of the Antarctic* to include all the details which had been edited out. She typed a diary of her three-month stay in Iran in 1939, perhaps with a view to shaping it into something later, and when my father was born she gave him a story she wrote and illustrated. It is about two birds who lose their nest and have to find a new home. Typed and bound it includes Paquita's own pencil drawings, as well as cut-outs from magazines. Although no trace of the manuscript survives she began working on a novel in her widowhood called 'Orchids in my Kitchen' which my aunt Stella helped type. It was going to be about a young woman and her awakening into adulthood inspired by Paquita's own memories of the shock of marriage after being shielded from the facts of life. (As a young woman she had feared that she was pregnant after Mawson kissed her; and in a letter to Mawson during the expedition she said that she hadn't known 'anything about the dark side of life', admitting that 'life frighten[ed]' her 'sometimes', and that he was 'the only one' who could reassure her.) In a letter to one of her nieces in 1970, Paquita said of the manuscript: 'It is the only thing that will keep me at all happy'.

Their attempts at fiction aside, the Mawsons were tireless letter writers and accumulators of everything from receipts to Christmas cards to school reports to shopping lists to half-finished stories. Their frequent absences from home explain the volume of

letters that survive. There are literally thousands, spanning from Mawson's certificate of baptism to my grandmother's will. Some lie in private drawers and cupboards; many are crammed into boxes and folders, unsorted and undated. Others are catalogued in libraries and museums and must be handled with white gloves.

Philip Law recalled that Mawson was 'amazingly untidy in his attention to pieces of paper, and that in his office 'there'd be a great stack of paper jumbled from one side of the table to the other' because 'he always had so many things going on at once that he never liked to put things away in case they got out of mind'. He scribbled drafts of letters on scraps of paper and on the backs of envelopes, and also saved typed drafts and carbon copies of the final versions. Nancy Robinson Flannery, editor of the 1911-14 letters between Mawson and Paquita felt that the amount of correspondence in existence was due to both sheer 'accumulation of time', as well as Mawson having an eye to posterity. Nancy likened Mawson to a magpie because he 'acquired objects like a magpie' and to a squirrel because like a squirrel he 'hoarded' the things he collected.

The habit of letter-writing between the Mawsons can be said to have begun with Mawson and Paquita whose relationship was initially almost entirely conducted through letters. It was while valuing Mawson's vast paper estate at the University of Adelaide in the 1990s that Nancy found Paquita's letters to Mawson written during their engagement. They were among his 'professional and expedition papers'. Nancy cried not only because the letters themselves were moving and written under very difficult and unusual circumstances and could not be delivered at the time but also because Mawson had kept them till the end of his life which challenged the popular impression of him as a wholly unromantic figure.

At the time of this discovery, the other half of this correspondence (Mawson's letters to Paquita), was somewhere in my great aunt Pat's house which was always as Jessica described it, 'in a tremendous muddle' much like their father's office. Over the next seven years Pat often invited Nancy to search for the replies from Mawson over afternoon tea. My great aunt would fling open cupboards and drawers and out would flow a cascade of unsorted papers. As this was all happening during my time in England my grandmother related this all to me in her letters. Reluctant to go through Pat's personal things, and overwhelmed by the disorder, Nancy declined and so it was not until Pat moved out of her house in 1999 that the whole collection could be assembled and later published as *This Everlasting Silence*. The title was inspired by a line in a letter Paquita wrote after seventeen months of no contact with Mawson.

Previously only selected excerpts of these 'love' letters had been published in *Mawson of the Antarctic*: 'After some consideration I have decided to include some of the letters written to me by Douglas during the Expedition', explained Paquita, adding that she had 'left out some of the more personal sections'. This decision was made partly or perhaps entirely under the influence of Pat. My great aunt, who blushed to the roots of her red hair when explaining the sex life of parasitic worms to her students, was convinced that these letters would be of little interest to others. 'They sound just what you would expect from a man who has not seen Lovely Woman for some time', wrote Pat who stressed that they were meant for her mother's eyes only and that the intimate content would only 'give rise to ribald comment' if published. Whether or not Pat came to later see the letters in a different light or whether she was disinclined to put up a resistance, both she and Jessica agreed to their publication in 2000.

The first letter in this collection was sent from Mawson to Paquita from Hobart on December 1 1911 before the *Aurora* left for the Antarctic; his last was written on the

Aurora ‘between rolls’ when the ship was ‘off Kangaroo Island’ on approach to Adelaide on February 25 1914. Yet, had Mawson died on the expedition very few letters from this period would remain for he wrote very few in the first year at Commonwealth Bay. Most were written after he had narrowly escaped death and become, according to Eric Webb, ‘a noticeably chastened man—quieter, humble, and.... very much closer to his God’. It is this 1913 correspondence which marks the collection as ‘love letters’.

In the middle of *This Everlasting Silence*, there is a letter dated 10 November 1912. This was the last letter Mawson wrote to Paquita before he left on the sledging journey. Above it and on the opposite page there is another dated 9 November 1912. These were the only two letters he wrote to her in ten months, from the time he landed at Commonwealth Bay in January of that year to the day he left to go sledging. In the second he writes: ‘The weather is fine this morning though the wind still blows—we shall get away in an hours [sic] time. I have two good companions Dr Mertz and Lieut Ninnis. It is unlikely that any harm will happen to us but should I not return to you in Australia please know that I truly loved you...I must be closing now as the others are waiting...Good Bye my Darling may God keep and Bless and Protect you. Your Douglas.’

Although I’m sure it wasn’t quite like this, I picture Mawson in the hut hurriedly writing that letter, standing hunched over his table to finish the last bit with the dogs howling outside, straining at their harnesses, and Ninnis and Mertz calling for him to hurry up. The tone of the letter is very much ‘I might die but probably not so don’t worry too much. No time to write more. Must dash.’ Along with the others this letter lay unnoticed for more than eighty years after it was written. Perhaps no one had the energy to sort through his paperwork but it is more likely that it lay undiscovered because no one was looking for his last dying message. There it sits on page 47 of *This Everlasting Silence*, one of the twenty-four letters he wrote to Paquita during the expedition, no more and no less

important than the other twenty-three. It carries no special significance because he survived.

Two days after Mawson set off on the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey, the frozen body of Captain Robert Scott was unearthed in another part of the Antarctic. Beside Scott was a letter to his wife, Kathleen. Written over several days leading up to his death, it was addressed 'To my widow'. This letter has since been donated to the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge and in 2007 it was the centre piece of an exhibition called 'Scott's final letters home'. Charged with disappointment and regret that he would never see his wife again, and regret that he would not live to see his son Peter grow up this letter of Scott's has become a symbol of human tragedy and loss.

Like this letter of Scott's to Kathleen, Mawson's letter of November 10 could so very easily have been his last to Paquita. It would have endured as a symbol of unrealised love and would almost certainly now lie in the same museum of 'final letters home', Yet Mawson was a very different kind of writer. As one reviewer commented, his diaries are not reminiscent of those of Captain Scott or Edward Wilson in that they are marked by 'little personal introspection or emotional outburst'. When Ninnis disappeared down a crevasse Mawson wrote only: 'May God help us'. His description of the death of Mertz reads like a postmortem: 'Death due to exposure finally bringing on a fever, result of weather exposure and want of food'.

Noticeably brief and unsentimental Mawson's letter of November 10 hardly compares with Scott's long, considered farewell to Kathleen. A quarter of the length, it barely qualifies as a letter, and in fact Mawson described these two November letters as 'notes'. The second, resembling a will of sorts, is reflective of his inherently practical nature. He summarises his feelings for Paquita in one line whereas a whole paragraph is

devoted to explaining his 'total assets' and where she can find them. It is reminiscent of his letter to GDD in 1909 asking for permission to marry Paquita; in outlining his 'position and prospects for the future', he states in exact figures his current bank balance and annual salary, what he is owed and what he hopes to gain from investments.

Would Mawson have written a different, longer and more romantic goodbye had he accepted Scott's invitation to go to the Pole and found himself facing certain death? His survival was never a certainty on the sledging journey, and there were whole days when blizzards confined him to his tent with plenty of time to contemplate his own end and to write something in the way of a goodbye yet he never ventured to write any dying messages in the vein of Robert Scott's.

Even so, in 1913 Mawson came to see the value of letters, something he had earlier dismissed in the excitement of exploration. He realised that he had been a bit negligent, a bit blasé. 'Had I known what lay ahead how I should have devoted myself to writing to you last year', he admitted in a letter to Paquita after his safe return to the hut. In another, he wrote: 'It is now midnight—and where are you?—and where am I? and where might we not have been?' He went on to write more than twice as often as he'd written the previous year and his letters are longer and more loving. Paquita had written to him from Europe in 1912 and Captain Davis had delivered her letters to the hut in early 1913 when Mawson was still out on the plateau. This correspondence from her, although out of date by then, more or less carried him through the winter of 1913 and saved him from despair. 'Those four valuable letters from you have been reread on the occasion of each celebration during the past few months. Tonight I have feasted on them again', he wrote on Midwinter's Day as though they were life-giving sustenance.

Yet while Mawson was enjoying the receipt of Paquita's 'delightful letters', his 1912 letters to her travelled to Australia and back again in a box on the *Aurora* bypassing Paquita altogether. It was not until December of 1913 when the ship returned to the hut that Mawson realised that she had not received the letters that he had written in November of the previous year. 'I now find them still in the box undelivered' he wrote. 'I forget exactly what is in that letter', but whatever it is could not have helped being some reassurance to you, notwithstanding its provision for my non-return.'

Before this discovery Mawson seemed to sense that Paquita was growing increasingly uncertain of the future, and that he was the cause of this feeling. 'Warm Heart of Mine' he wrote on October 30. 'I hope that it is only that I am wracked by anxious thoughts—I trust that you are well—that you are enjoying health and life—I cannot however help feeling anxious, most anxious. A wretched fit seizes me; sets the imagination running in a doleful tune; figures you unwell, cast down by worry—or piqued and hurt by my seeming unconcern—these wretched scraps of information that have passed on to you.'

Much more aware of her anxiety, he answered her four 1912 letters item by item but although his letters are more attentive and loving, they are almost completely devoid of any mention of his physical and mental state. Six weeks after his return to the hut from the sledging journey he confided to his diary on March 23 1913: 'I find my nerves are in a very serious state, and from the feeling I have in the base of my head I [have] suspicion that I may go off my rocker very soon'. Two months later he noted that a boil was forming on his 'left temple' and that he was 'quite down in general health'. Yet in a telegram to Paquita in September 1913 he reported 'everything splendid here' which was a long way from the truth. It is only in his last letter to her before the *Aurora* arrived in Adelaide that he gives any indication of the effect on his health of a second winter in isolation. He writes that she 'may think' that his letters of 1913 are 'the expression of a lunatic', and he asks

her to make allowances explaining that he had been 'pretty close to that state' in the last year. His letters are still concerned with practicalities. He calculates their financial position taking into consideration 'marriage expenses', the cost of furnishing a house, his income from the University, savings in the bank and interest rates. As well as this, he sets out an itinerary for his lecture tours on return from the Antarctic, including the number of lectures to be given in each country. He sets out these future plans in lists. At the time he had no information about the finances of the expedition because the secretary Conrad Eitel, who had travelled down with the *Aurora* in early 1913, had not left a statement, and Sidney Jeffryes' disturbing behaviour was dictating the mood in the hut. Perhaps by arranging future events in lists gave him a sense of order and control and offered a distraction from his present circumstances.

Mawson also lists the reasons for the 'paucity' of messages sent to Paquita by wireless, including interference from auroras, the need for business messages to take priority over private ones and the need to be 'diplomatic' and not send her too many as the other men were wanting to send some too. There is no mention of any reason for the non-delivery of his 1912 letters anywhere in anything Mawson, Paquita or Davis wrote but the result of this apparent oversight was that in twenty-two of the twenty-seven months Mawson was away, Paquita received no letters and only four wireless messages. With reference to his infrequent contact, she wrote: 'You can explain it all when you return'. I imagine he did but I also think that Mawson, ordinarily a good correspondent, never stopped trying to make up for this lapse in communication, for the ten months when he wrote nothing at all, and for the inadequacy of his two November 1912 letters.

Mawson continued to woo Paquita, and to placate her wounded heart through the written word, for he did not settle down 'to live quietly & not dash off again' as she had hoped but continued a life marked by comings and goings. After his death, Paquita not

only missed his presence but also this regular correspondence: ‘It isn’t the same when you know D isn’t there anymore’ she confided to Dumps when working on *Mawson of the Antarctic* in London in 1960. ‘He was always there to write to & to keep things to tell to’. Mawson had written so often that Paquita came to expect Dumps to fill the void he had left. In letters to Dumps she admitted to feeling ‘shut out’ and ‘sick with worry’ at not hearing from her. This correspondence mirrors the tone and anxiety expressed in Paquita’s letters to Mawson during the AAE; her dependence on letters for reassurance and her terror of silence.

During the AAE Paquita worried that if the Antarctic didn’t take Mawson’s life, it would freeze his heart while he was afraid that Paquita would grow apart from him and become ‘a woman of the world’, ‘quite too fine’ for him. Partly because of this mutual fear that they would drift away from each other if the lines of communication were not always open, letters continued to play a central role in their relationship. They had the power to comfort and reassure, and were, as Paquita put it ‘the next best thing’ to being together. Through writing to each other they maintained an ongoing love affair which underpinned their daily lives even when they were both at home in Adelaide. Mawson sometimes posted letters from the University to Paquita at the Red Cross Civilian Relief Department in Gawler Place where she worked as convener during World War II when he could have walked across the road or spoken to her at home after work. They guarded their letters from other readers, even from their children: ‘We got your letter today’, wrote a teenage Pat to Paquita in Melbourne in the mid-1930s. ‘At least Pa did but we are not allowed to touch it—he favoured us with extracts’.

Letter writing became something the whole family engaged in, particularly as both Mawson and Paquita were often away from home and seldom at the same time. When away they asked their daughters to write, reminding them to concentrate on their spelling

and to read any letters they received carefully in order not to miss any questions that they might need to answer. They often wrote to Pat and Jessica separately as a way of giving them individual attention, and a full response was always expected.

As Philip Ayres notes in *Mawson: A Life*, Mawson's detailed, thoughtful letters to Pat and Jessica reveal his 'unrestrained affection' for them and reflect his close connection with his children, strengthened by their shared interest in science. In a letter to Pat there is so much warmth, even in the opening line: 'Well my Pat! You are a real chump to go riding your bicycle in your best stockings!' In another in which he refers to her as his 'young minx', he writes that he is 'glad' that she had noticed that he 'had not written for ages', adding, 'I thought perhaps you did not care—and that would break what is left of my heart.... well just heaps and heaps of love from Dad, the most faithful friend you will ever have'.

Attune to their needs, he wrote to ask for their shoe sizes, sent them silk stockings when in England without Paquita in 1928, and often enclosed small gifts with his letters. When in South Africa in 1926 he sent stamps from every port; garnets from a diamond mine in Kimberley; quartz pebbles from the top of Table Mountain; wild flowers from the tip of Cape Cod. (Nine-year-old Jessica sent her milk teeth in return.) From London he sent Jessica a leaf from the elm tree in Regent's Park under which he had often parked her as a baby in a pram.

His letters to his daughters were always instructive and educational. He was ambitious for their futures. According to Jessica he was 'very modern in his outlook re sex equality and thought the female brain just as clever as the male one'. He advocated a rounded education for them both. (Paquita noted that despite not being very interested in music, he 'knew about most of the great composers, and when they lived and where'.)

When en route to South Africa Mawson related his geographical position, the speed at which the ship was travelling and described the wildlife and plant life he was encountering on land and at sea. Dolphins are ‘not fish but mammals’ he explained, and the little black birds that followed the ship were called ‘Mother Cary’s chickens’. On a lecture tour through the United States later that year he explained every city he visited, its population and main industries. Two years later in a letter to Pat, who was then thirteen and beginning to show an interest in the natural sciences, he advised her that:

in order to do well in science you need to first get a good knowledge of mathematics—to be able to write presentably—to be able to compose good accounts of things in English. Then if you can also read in foreign languages so much the better. To be a decent intelligent citizen, as of course we must all be we need to learn some history, some geography, some music, etc as well...

The letter shows ‘his revealed view of the world’ and ambition for Pat. According to Paquita, whenever he was away Mawson wrote several letters a week. He would write ‘giving advice’, and ‘instructions and shopping for the family’. As provider and protector of his family, he was always as Ayres notes, ‘concerned to provide against unforeseen eventualities’.

When in England in 1928 he wrote to Paquita after she had sent him a photograph of Pat and Jessica in bare feet by the spring at ‘Harewood’ to suggest that she ought to be more attentive to their safety: ‘They can bare themselves down to the waist if they like but not the feet in snaky country’, adding that they didn’t have ‘the snake sense’ like him.

Early in their marriage when Paquita was about to travel to Liverpool to meet him during the First World War, he wrote to advise her on what to do should the ship she was

travelling on be hit by a torpedo. Perhaps particularly alert to potential dangers as he was then working for the Ministry of Munitions checking for explosives on ships coming into British ports, he recommended that she book a berth high up near the main stairs and the open deck where she would be safer from damage caused by a torpedo and in a good position to escape. Warning her not to be ‘lulled into a false sense of security’, he gave her, according to Paquita ‘characteristically thorough instructions’ on how to carry out her escape:

Have your most valuable things in a handbag and besides some warm clothing to throw on—all with life belt so that you can grab them and rush on deck at a moment’s notice. If the ship is struck, remember that safety depends very much upon getting on to the deck without delay. A minute or even less may be fatal, for the ship soon heels over so that you can’t walk about in the passages below nor get upstairs, and water may come rushing down the stairs and along the passages against which nobody, however strong, could make headway. Also if you don’t get away in a boat quickly the vessel gets such a lean on her that the boats cannot be got out. There is always a tendency to stop on the ship too long... This is all to put you on your guard... you had better at once go to a Deck Steward and order a chair as they carry only a limited number and they are all let out in a few hours.

When he was on his final voyage to the Antarctic, and aware that there was a chance that he might not make it safely back to Australia, he wrote to Paquita from Kerguelen Island:

Should anything go wrong with our expedition or should I not return for any reason, you may like help in summarizing assets realizable. This I have done on enclosed sheet. While I think of it—you had better put all valuable things such as the tin box in study (locked), medals etc. in a safe hiding-place. If anything did happen to me I suggest that you would

be wise to straight away set about looking for somebody to buy 'Jerbii' at a good price. It may take two years to sell at a good price. When 'Jerbii' sold, live in a flat in town, using Harewood as a country retreat. Later, if you have no Brighton house, you can at any time pack up and go to Europe.

A few years later in 1932 following the second BANZARE cruise when he was again in England and Pat had started her first year of a science degree at the University of Adelaide, he wrote to warn her of potential dangers in the lab:

There is one thing you need to be very careful about—this arises chiefly in practical chemistry—namely any speck of acid or strong alkali on your clothes will eat a hole in them. If weak it will not show perhaps for days then a hole will form. I fear that you are so careless that your clothes will get damaged. You must never do practical chemistry without an apron over clothes—and even then be careful not to splash. You are so haphazard that there is even a fear that you may get acid on your face and disfigure it—so be careful won't you?

Mawson watched over his family from afar so much so that in a letter some years after his death, Pat asked Paquita: 'Do you really think Pa is lying there in that cemetery? I feel very firmly that he is still keeping a good eye on us, rather a sorrowful one when he sees me playing patience and wasting time etc but still loving.'

There is a sense that it was this tendency to be the overseer and instructor that sometimes set Mawson apart from his wife and daughters. When Pat and Jessica were teenagers at Brighton with their father during times when Paquita was away they complained in letters to her that he didn't understand them. He was disapproving of their boyfriends, and wanted them to go to 'Harewood' with him at weekends when they preferred to go to parties in the city with friends. Paquita responded by playing the

mediator and the peace-maker. She sympathised with them acknowledging that their father couldn't 'very often put himself in another's viewpoint' but she accepted that it was partly her fault for not being there. She suspected that, at times, he felt frustrated in an all-female household: 'He is one man against 3 women. He must often wish there was another man in the house. We are all so often all three of us jolly together + he must feel out of it. That's partly my fault as- being so often without him- I've got into the habit of being much with you two'.

Paquita's letters to Pat and Jessica and theirs to her reveal a very different relationship between the three Mawson women. Whereas Mawson is inclined to describe his hotel room in terms of exact measurements and includes facts and figures about the wider world, Paquita focuses more on the immediate surroundings from a personal perspective, and adopts the role of storyteller rather than teacher. She depicts where they are staying in more visual, relatable terms, telling her daughters of the 'fine big room' on the ship to Capetown in 1926 with their own private bathroom, the tiled swimming pool, gymnasium and winter garden enclosed in glass. When she and Mawson were staying with her sister Mary in Capetown, she details the domestic scene: 'Auntie' is teaching the maid to use the new copper; people don't boil their clothes but spread them out on the ground and scrub them with a stone or pinecone. By way of including them in her holiday world, she likens the twinkling lights off Madeira to the lights they saw over Tapley's Hill on their way home to Brighton from 'Harewood', and describes the thick fog of London, where she and Mawson spent Christmas of that year, as 'rather like a thick mist like we get in Meadows'.

While Mawson advised them on their studies, Paquita directed her daughters on manners and social etiquette. She reminds them to be 'good girls, to clean their teeth, to write 'in script' to their grandparents, and tells Pat not to be 'an overbearing boss' to her

sister. (Jessica's nickname for Pat was 'Old Mother Mawson'). On one occasion when she was in Melbourne and Mawson was also away Paquita heard that Sir Philip Brocklehurst and his wife were on their way to Adelaide. Brocklehurst had been on the BAE with Mawson. He had been in the support team that followed Mawson's party to the top of Mount Erebus and lost a toe to frostbite. Paquita wrote to Pat, who was then at university, instructing her to 'give up anything' to have lunch with them; to buy 'Lady B' some flowers 'at the shop in Rundle Street', to wear 'good gloves' and her 'yellow linen dress + white hat'.

Bound together by different things, many of the letters between Paquita, Pat and Jessica contain hand-drawn dress patterns and attached samples of material. While they learnt some basic hand sewing at school, such as hemstitch and how to sew letters onto serviettes, Paquita taught her daughters machine sewing and dressmaking. Pat, especially, tried very hard to take an interest in the things that were important to her mother. Even though she was ultimately overwhelmingly like her father ('a real chip off the old block' said Reg Sprigg) in that she was more scientific than artistic, more practical than romantic, her letters show that she tried to connect with Paquita through music and Dutch. At school she was a member of the 'special choir' despite discouraging comments such as 'Patricia has not been able to sing very much this term as the songs were beyond her range'. On holiday in Melbourne with Paquita's parents in the mid-nineteen thirties Pat writes of how dispiriting it is that her grandmother never understands what she says in Dutch and that her efforts only attract 'subdued giggles from Jelly's [Jessica's] direction'. Neither Pat nor Jessica went on to pursue music or Dutch but both wrote many letters throughout their lives.

The tradition of being away and having a reason to write continued in the family. Jessica moved to the country when she married, and her three daughters have long since

lived in other states and countries. Letter-writing was very much a part of my relationship with my grandmother and her letters to me are similar in many ways to those her parents wrote to her.

Between March 1993 and July 1995 she was writing from her house in the country. It was across the paddock from our farm which we had sold in 1990. She had moved to this house after separating from my grandfather Peter in the late 1970s. It was called 'Jerbii' after her childhood home at Brighton. She even had the original brass sign that Mawson had made for the front gate attached to one of the French doors leading into her living room. A nephew had fashioned the word 'cottage' in the same style.

When she was a girl the thought of country life was 'anathema' to her; her friends used to joke that she would marry a farmer and then she did. Her letters to me when I was in England are full of country living which she had grown to love. She gives me regular updates on an ash tree she had planted in front of her house to replace an adult one that had begun to die (and was subsequently chopped down). Before going to London, I had written a poem for her inspired by the idea that the ash tree represented her mark on the earth because she had once told us (my sister, brothers and me) when looking out at the new tree over afternoon tea that it was our responsibility to look after it and water it after her death because she would not live to see it fully grown.

She had inherited her love of trees (and cats) from her father. Many that Mawson planted in the Adelaide Hills still stand today, including the Red Gums and evergreens that line the driveway to their farm in Meadows. 'I think Douglas was really happiest when planting trees', wrote Paquita in *Mawson of the Antarctic*. 'He took infinite care in the actual planting, and spent some time choosing the site, with an eye to a tree's requirements as well as the topographical position from a scenic point of view'. My grandfather Peter

ran a sawmill. He started it in the 1940s because returned soldiers were looking for timber to build houses, and he needed to clear his land. Thus, a tree is appropriately symbolic of my grandmother although I am certain that she did not give any thought to all these connections, nor that ash trees are associated with resurrection and renewal.

I suspect because of my poem, which was about continuing to nurture the ash tree, she explains in a letter in early 1994 that she had delayed writing as she was dreading telling me that the new ash tree was dying:

Our ash tree looked dead and it was too depressing for me to write about. Ash trees in SA must be one of the first trees to put out leaves in spring and my other two big ones are almost in full leaf but I saw no move on our tree. My next door neighbour saw me returning to my house after inspecting its leafless black branches and he said 'I'm afraid it is dead' to which I had to concur.

She later discovered that the tree was 'covered with scales and there were masses of ants rushing up the stem'. After consulting someone she was told that ants encourage the scale insect, a parasite capable of killing the tree, and that she therefore first needed to get rid of the ants. She tells me that she climbed onto the bonnet of her car to get to the tree because it had grown quite tall. To stop the ants she had to spread grease around the stem so that they couldn't climb it and would slip and drown. Even so, she writes that she 'very much feared for the tree' and that I 'shouldn't have gone away.'

Two months later, and in the last months of her life at 'Jerbii Cottage' before moving to the city, she writes that she thinks the tree will survive after all: 'As I sit at my table typing I can see our ash tree and it is quite well covered with leaves and there are no ants running up the stem...' Saving the ash tree was so important because it was the centre

piece in the view from her back porch. A house with a view was what Paquita desired most when she left 'Jerbii' where the high windows hadn't allowed for one. 'When I go to bed I lie and think of it + feel that it is the only thing I want to do', she confessed in a letter to Dumps in 1959; 'to live as I've always wanted... in a cool climate + in a house where I can look out of the windows.' I am reminded of this as my grandmother prepares to move into a flat in Adelaide in late 1994. To make up for the lack of one in her new place, she wants to take the view from her back porch with her, of the river and of the hills beyond. In the afternoons we used to sit with her and watch our father riding his yellow Yamaha up the steep red road that snakes through the middle of 'Limestone Hill'. He was going to get the cows for milking. He would disappear for a few minutes and then come back again with the cows walking slowly in front of him. We could hear the distant whir of his motorbike and sometimes the wind carried his voice down to us as he called 'Come on, girls'. He would nudge them past the pine trees we had planted and the paddocks we had named 'Limestone Hill, 'Beehive', 'Hay Flat'. From our folding lawn chairs we could see the ash tree, halfway between the house and the gate leading to the river. The photograph is no longer with the letter but my grandmother writes that she is enclosing a picture of this view which she later hung in her new living room.

'Tomorrow I expect to sign away Jerbii Cottage + want to say thanks to you for making my stay here so happy' she writes, a few months before leaving. 'It's time I moved as will soon be too old to move at all! "The old order changeth, yielding place to new"—well not often I burst into poetry but Tennyson certainly knows his onions!' By this stage she has started to give away a lot of her furniture to her children, my father and my three aunts because she won't have the space for it in her new place. As she contemplates getting rid of some of her books, she writes that she is beginning to see the sense in what her father once said to her—that 'it is silly to buy novels as they are always available at libraries but one must have reference books in one's home; also some biographies'.

In the midst of all this change she was answering my questions about her younger years and about 'Jerbii'. I think she enjoyed reliving her childhood; having an excuse to recount it. 'It doesn't seem so long ago that I was climbing apricot trees' she writes on the back of a floral aerogramme, as if old age had somehow taken her unawares.

After showing an initial interest in botany she tells me that she came to specialise in bacteriology by chance. On a visit to the Waite Research Institute in Adelaide one day Mawson came across some botany students counting leaves in glasshouses. It gave him the impression that botany was very boring as it seemed that the students did this for most of the day so he encouraged Jessica to take up bacteriology, a new course being offered at the University. After that she 'never looked back'. While still an undergraduate in 1939 she was offered a job at the Institute of Veterinary and Medical Research working on viruses which had to be grown in living tissue. Developing hens' eggs, specifically the embryos, were good places to grow them; a photograph I have shows her sewing up an egg in the bacteriology lab where she was second in charge and where they carried out all the tests for the Royal Adelaide Hospital as well as for private doctors. She feels lucky that she was always certain about what she wanted to do. There was never any question that she would go to university, and there was never any doubt in her mind that she would study science. Perhaps because she was so focused, she worries that I am drifting and so her letters, which echo the tone of her father's, are filled with all kinds of advice and guidance.

She was very concerned that I was not making the most of my life, and not thinking ahead. This was partly true. I was very much living in the moment, and spending a lot of time in a pub around the corner. I had begun to think about writing a biography of Paquita but my grandmother felt that I ought to be more concerned with 'short-term benefit'. 'Most writers have at some time had to resort to pot-boilers and I do not think you are the exception', she tells me. 'With your fertile mind you should be able to think up some

theme or plot for a one-pager in any magazine.’ Her suggestion that I ‘make up a funny, wry, matrimonial misunderstanding’ is in keeping with the themes of her own Noël Coward-like short stories. She stresses in her letters that she does not want me to have any lasting regrets; happiness is ‘a fleeting emotion’ she tells me whereas contentment, a more lasting feeling, is what I should aspire towards. ‘It is very important to smile’ she writes. ‘I never used to think that but now the wisdom of old age speaks! A smile bridges the gap between people and keeps one’s cheek muscles firm for later years!!!’

Although I don’t remember mentioning bacon sandwiches on Saturday mornings and trifles from Marks & Spencer she must have sensed that my diet needed improving when she writes: ‘You’ll be tempted to eat the cheap carbohydrates, but do keep up a good diet of protein, fats and green stuff. Fish is very good for studying—as the phosphorous is needed for brain development. I think this is why island races are so clever...’ ‘What exercise do you take?’ she enquires in another letter (I flash back to evenings munching crisps in front of the television.) ‘For God’s sake keep walking or doing something! I’m trying swimming next week as my physio suggested’. Perhaps concerned that I wasn’t presenting well enough, she also offers some fashion suggestions: ‘It is saving to have one good get-up—so long as it is one that won’t date. I’m still wearing—and not looking like Daisy Bates—a dress I bought at Reynella in 1976!! Good quality keeps its shape’.

Although I had not indicated any need for any life counselling, in one letter she recommends visiting her cousin Hannie in The Hague on my own ‘for a weekend or something’ for advice from a disinterested party. Hannie was then in her seventies, a retired teacher and someone I had met only once before. ‘She was always very involved in her students’ lives and is well balanced’, explains my grandmother adding that, ‘in spite of being a spinster’ cousin Hannie ‘is very clued up on sex problems etc’.

She wonders whether coming back to Australia is something I ought to consider. In the hope of enticing me home, many of her letters include newspaper articles about Adelaide developing into a place for young people and excerpts about ‘popular inner city accommodation’ within walking distance of shops and markets. It is no accident that there is one about someone called Emma who had recently bought a flat in the city. Emma is standing on her balcony beaming with happiness; another shows a woman relaxing in her rooftop home with a view of the streets of Adelaide behind her. The article begins: ‘Living on top of the city makes Susan Lindblom feel on top of the world’. My grandmother says she would love me to return but, scribbled above Susan’s picture, she suggests Sydney where the job opportunities are greater and where there is also more chance of meeting a future husband.

These concerns for me paralleled concerns about her own life. Like her mother’s letters to her father in 1912, her letters to me express a certain anxiety about the future although she was not a young woman anticipating marriage but a woman in her late seventies trying to come to terms with the perils of getting older. Her letters are interspersed with descriptions of her falls, and of my great aunt Pat’s frailty and mental confusion. In typical Mawson style, she lists the reasons why Pat misses appointments: a) because she doesn’t have her watch with her b) because if she has a watch she can’t read it c) she has forgotten the appointment altogether.

As she and Pat were getting older they were being sought out by writers and journalists who were responding to the revival of interest in Mawson. They were asked, among other things, to sign 120 copies of a limited edition of a reprint of *The Home of the Blizzard* in 1996. My great aunt Pat’s shaky signature stands out against Jessica’s steady, vigorous handwriting. In May 2000 she apologises for not writing sooner but says it is due to ‘all the excitements re the museum.’ A collection of her father’s things—his medals,

including his Knight Bachelor Insignia, around 50,000 papers and about 18,000 images, as well as other Antarctic artefacts, had been donated by the family to the Museum and University resulting in the opening of a permanent exhibition at the South Australian Museum, 'In the Footsteps of Douglas Mawson'. 'We are having a lot of Pa lately, she writes, as if to say 'there is no escaping my heritage'. 'Everywhere one looks these days one sees pictures of my father...usually in that balaclava...which is not very enhancing!'

In the same month, she mentions attending the launch of *This Everlasting Silence*. The publication of these letters more or less coincided with the opening of 'In the footsteps of Douglas Mawson' at the Museum. Although not in Adelaide for the launch I had been home to see a sneak preview of the exhibition earlier that year. Before it was officially opened the family was allowed a private tour. My grandmother cut the ribbon and we walked through the display.

Included in the exhibits are several letters. There is one from Douglas Mawson to the Lord Mayor of Adelaide in which he says 'This extra year's detention has been bitterly grudged by me', and another from Mertz applying to join the expedition. He details his experience and qualifications and says, 'I sincerely hope you will be able to give me a favourable reply'. This enthusiastic letter from Mertz is tragic in light of his terrible death, and even more so beside the glass cabinet housing the roughly-hewn wooden spoon he had fashioned after the death of Ninnis.

The letter that caught my eye was one from Mawson to Paquita, written over the winter of 1913. It is not the last letter he ever wrote to her, unlike Robert Scott's dying message to Kathleen, nor is it the potential last letter of November 10 1912. It is not a letter of farewell from a man resigned to death but one from a man who struggled back to his hut in the snow on his homemade crampons to write to his fiancée of how his love for her had

provided 'the real incentive' to live, and of how he would 'never regret the struggle through which it dragged' him.

His actual last letter would not be dissimilar to these letters my grandmother was writing to me. It could be any one of those he wrote to Paquita in the year before his death when she was away visiting her elder brother in Bathurst. (She was by his side for most of the year he died and so had no cause to write.) There is a familiarity and a mundaneness about them that can only be the result of more than forty years of marriage. He writes of the small things that bind them together—of possums dying in the ceiling, of the hanging pots in the glasshouse, of buying kippered herrings and lamb chops, of the housekeeper, Mrs Broadbeam, and her habit of cleaning everything 'most minutely'. For now all these letters lie in family members' drawers and cupboards, inconsequential in their ordinariness while the one in the Museum has been deemed worthy of resurrection after almost ninety years of lying unnoticed.



Q 594

The Jigsaw of the World

It is a cold Monday afternoon and I am back at the Mawson collection at the South Australian Museum. Today I walk straight past the Quaker oats and Mertz's wooden spoon to the stuffed animals, which I now view with a new eye—not as sources of food but as taxidermal specimens: the two huskies, Ross and Serai, Antarctic petrels and albatrosses suspended in flight, Adélie, King and Emperor penguins, and that sea leopard, its head raised and its mouth open in a toothy roar.

Beside them, in a cabinet called 'Science from ships', there is the tip of a harpoon, a fish net, a deep sea thermometer, water samples marked with the date and the depth at which they were collected, and other equipment for dredging. 'When the gear reaches the bottom you have to go full steam ahead, and when the first haul comes into view there is tremendous excitement' said Mawson in an interview after the AAE. 'The numerous animals are soon examined on the deck by the biologist, and the job may take 24 or 26 hours'.

Only a fraction of what was brought back from the Antarctic is here in the museum: some samples of deep-sea mud, starfish, gastropods, isopods, sea urchins, and chitons floating in jars. A huge variety of specimens were collected from a range of depths. Microscopic organisms were scooped from the surface in a silk net that trailed behind the ship. Sometimes huge rocks weighing half a ton and fragments of wood and coal came up with the catch; phosphorescent creatures were dredged from the lower depths. And there were bigger marine specimens, such as those sailor Stan Taylor described emerged in one trawl on the 13th of December 1912—'a fish two and a half feet long with 'a large black round head' and 'very long, sharp teeth', and a giant octopus with tentacles four and a half feet long'.

On BANZARE, by the end of the first voyage alone between eighteen and twenty tonnes of natural history specimens had been collected, including almost four hundred and fifty spiders and hundreds of insects gathered from the sub-Antarctic islands. Insects found on the remote Kerguelen Islands are almost all flightless. In an article summarising the work of the expedition, Mawson described how they feign death when they feel threatened because they cannot fly away. Falling lifeless to the ground, they take on the appearance of particles of sand. Did they evolve in such a way because the terrific winds blew their wings off? I suspect many weird creatures with strange features adapted for the cold were

discovered and recorded, and knowing that Mawson distributed all that his expeditions collected throughout the Australian museums 'gratis', I wonder where a sample of the Antarctic tooth fish 'Dissostichus Mawsoni' might be housed.

Aside from sealers and whalers who were only interested in the commercial possibilities of the southern seas, virtually all expeditions to the Antarctic, dating back to Captain Cook, were to a greater or a lesser degree, a combination of discovery and science. Apsley Cherry Garrard, a member of Scott's last expedition, *The Terra Nova Expedition* of 1910 to 1912, defined exploration as 'the physical expression of intellectual passion'. In *The Worst Journey in the World*, he argued that of all the reasons that sent men to 'the Poles', 'the desire for knowledge for its own sake is the one which really counts'.

As I inspect some rock specimens with tiny marks on them, indications of other rocks that were dragged over them by glacial ice many geological ages ago, I am reminded of how on return from the South Pole, just weeks before their deaths, Scott and his party added 35 pounds of rock specimens to their sledge which they collected on the Beardmore Glacier. The specimens were found beside their corpses. Some say that the day they spent 'geologising' might have cost them their lives but according to scientists the samples collected on Scott's last journey more than justified the expedition. Edward Larsen, author of *An Empire of Ice*, argues that science 'gave meaning to the death of Scott and his men in a manner that a failed dash to the pole could not'.

However, the AAE (of which BANZARE was a continuation), stands out as having a greater focus on scientific research than many others of the time. Whereas Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton had marine backgrounds, Douglas Mawson, who held degrees in both geology and mining engineering and whose main occupation was as a geology

lecturer at the University of Adelaide from 1905 to 1952, was one of the few science-trained expedition leaders of the Heroic Age.

Scientist and explorer Phillip Law worked closely with Mawson on establishing permanent Australian scientific research stations in the Antarctic in the 1940s, and led many expeditions to the continent himself. Law acknowledged that Scott more so than Shackleton made some important discoveries, but he felt that unlike the AAE, the science work was driven by the enthusiasm of individual members who were scientists rather than by the inspiration of the leader. Eric Webb, magnetician on the AAE, described Shackleton as having ‘a magnetic personality of the kind which was physical rather than intellectual’, Scott as ‘a naval martinet with scientific leanings’, and Mawson as ‘above everything an intellectual leader’ dedicated to ‘scientific objectives’ whose dedication ‘became accepted and promoted as the policy of the expedition.’

In a radio interview in the 1960s Paquita said that ‘adventure for the sake of adventure or for the sake of renown just didn’t mean anything to him’. Similarly, in one of three articles Phillip Law wrote about Mawson in the 1980s he recalled that ‘it was clear...that he thought Shackleton had little real interest in science and he was contemptuous of his pursuit of wealth and fame’. According to Law, Mawson had greater respect for Scott. He nevertheless turned down the Englishman’s offer to be a member of his pole party on the *Terra Nova Expedition*. Scott’s main object was ‘to reach the South Pole, and to secure for the British Empire the honour of this achievement’ but Mawson had different aspirations. He felt it was important to advance knowledge of the Antarctic by going to new parts of the continent, for there to be no overlapping, and the area around the Pole was well-trodden territory.

‘Science came first with him, every time’ recalled Paquita in an interview a few years after Mawson’s death. ‘His wife, his family, we all came second’. In *Mawson of the Antarctic* she suggests that his curiosity about the world was innate and that it set the course of his life in her description of him crawling out of his cabin as a two-year old to climb the rigging of the ship that was taking his family to Australia. ‘He wanted to find things out’, she later said. ‘He was a real discoverer and he never wasted any time’.

For Mawson, it seemed that everything was a potential subject of enquiry and experiment evident even in his scientific approach to cooking, and in his dreams of cakes fitted with fuses which when lit would ‘react chemically’. On honeymoon en route to England on the *Orama* in 1914, the captain’s black cat wandered into their cabin and Mawson dipped its tail in hydrogen peroxide to see if it would come out white.

According to Paquita ‘his idea of a hobby was simply another kind of work’. Eric Douglas, pilot on BANZARE, recalled that ‘he never seemed to get tired’. If the men were all engaged in pulling up a dredge, Mawson didn’t think to suggest they stop for a rest. ‘His enthusiasm would just carry him on’, said Douglas who claimed that the only way they could get a rest was if someone started an argument. This way Mawson would be distracted and say: ‘Belay the rope, chaps,’ momentarily stopping the haul.

My great aunt Pat remembered that as a family they always went on holidays for a purpose, and that her father ‘didn’t just go anywhere to look at the scenery, he went there to look at rocks that made the scenery’. For instance, one Christmas at the Coorong, he took Pat and Jessica out in a boat and they dragged the lake for geological specimens.

Eric Douglas said that ‘he was always impatient to get to his scientific work and he discounted all dangers in between’, which perhaps explains why some say Mawson was

‘reckless’. On Shackleton’s BAE while waiting to be rescued from a crevasse he had fallen into, he calmly collected ice crystals from the walls of the crevasse (he was doing some studies of snow), and ‘threw them up for examination’. Later, on the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey on the AAE he continued to write up meteorological logs as well as his personal diary after the deaths of Ninnis and Mertz and when his own survival was uncertain. Even after he fell into a crevasse and nearly lost his life he did not miss a day of recordings.

The exhibition in the South Australian Museum displays the breadth of Mawson’s scientific interests beginning with his early geological career while he was still a student at The University of Sydney. Housed in a cabinet called ‘An Island Cruise’ are artefacts collected on his first major geological expedition, to the New Hebrides (an archipelago now known as Vanuatu), in the winter of 1903. It was his only expedition in Pacific regions but despite the very different climatic conditions, it was not dissimilar to his voyages south and to his work in the northern Flinders Ranges (which began when he moved to South Australia to work at The University of Adelaide in 1905) in that it involved working in a remote, little-known area and enduring harsh conditions.

In mapping an island in the New Hebrides, he had to fight his way through dense tropical jungle. Included in this cabinet along with bowls, panpipes and the poisonous arrows that he stored for years above his garage is a photograph of him at twenty years old with a lean muscular chest, dressed as a cannibal. Behind the mask and feathered headdress is the inquisitive two-year-old who climbed the sail ropes. As the first to carry out a geological survey of this island group, he was already a pioneer by the time he joined the BAE.

Phillip Law noted that while Mawson’s prestige rests on his Antarctic exploration, ‘his scientific reputation was earned by his geological work in South Australia’ which is

also represented in the exhibition. In one cabinet he is depicted as an older man in the bush against a backdrop of gum trees standing beside a rock holding a geological pick in his hand. 'He would disappear into the interior of Australia for every university vacation' wrote Paquita in *Mawson of the Antarctic*.

Mawson discovered radioactive minerals near Olary and Mt Painter and was one of the first scientists to study radioactivity in rocks in Australia. Rock and mineral samples from Mt Painter and Arkaroola line one wall. Everywhere connections can be made between what was discovered on his expeditions to the Antarctic and what he collected in the Flinders Ranges. This is in keeping with his own perspective of science as 'a homogenous whole' which he likened to a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of which were the data. He was literally trying to join up the countries and continents, to put back the parts that had broken apart in former ages. He argued that in order to get an idea of the complete picture, all the pieces were necessary; none should be ignored. It's a rather fitting analogy given that the first jigsaw ever made was a map of the world.

When I reach the Australian specimens I feel I have come full circle. In the Antarctic section floating in jars are the sea pens and other small marine invertebrates found on the AAE and on BANZARE; here those living organisms are in fossil form. Discovered at Ediacara in the Flinders Ranges by Reg Sprigg, their imprints in rocks are indications that the Ranges were once submerged under the sea, so too other rock samples which show impressions of ripples on them. There is Sprigg's famous jellyfish, one of the oldest fossils in the world, which he named 'Mawsonites spriggii' after Mawson, his mentor and friend, and a fossil found by Mawson of stromatolites, 'the remains of primitive single-celled organisms'. Tillite, 'rock formed from the crushed and powdered stone left by a glacier' is a clue that Australia was once covered by ice.

Mawson's studies in glaciology inspired his initial interest in going to the Antarctic with Shackleton in 1907 where he looked forward to seeing 'an ice age in being', and this first experience was in turn the inspiration for what became the AAE. Under Shackleton's command he was compelled to fulfil the objectives of the BAE; detailed geological field work had to be forgone for attainment of the South Magnetic Pole. This made him determined to go back and make science of primary importance. His leading role on this first ever trek to the South Magnetic Pole region earned him national and international recognition. The Pole journey especially, argues Antarctic historian Beau Riffenburgh, combined with his 'serious scientific plans were major reasons that he had been able to raise the funds for the AAE.'

David Day, author of *Flaws in the Ice: In search of Douglas Mawson* (2013) argues that Mawson used science as 'a cover' for territorial gain. In a review of Day's book in December 2013, Tom Griffiths argues that 'science is never given the dignity of its own dynamic. With such a view, Day is destined to be blind to Mawson's core motivation, and he is unable to share the wonder and intellectual excitement that drew – and still draws – many expeditioners to Antarctica.' That Mawson's objectives for the AAE were multifarious does not mean that science was not a major motivating force or that it was in conflict with other interests.

Geographical work was intimately connected to science. 'Mawson's motivation was curiosity – scientific and cartographic', said Phillip Law. The mapping and claiming of territory was an essential aspect of both the AAE and BANZARE as it was for nearly all exploratory expeditions to the Antarctic. Mawson was no different from any other explorer of his time; empire building was the spirit of the day. It would have been virtually impossible for him to gain financial support for an expedition that did not include in its programme the annexing of new territory. His expeditions led to the claiming of more than a third of the continent for Australia (originally for the British Crown), including King

George V Land and Queen Mary Land on the AAE, and MacRobertson Land and Princess Elizabeth Land on BANZARE.

In the Museum footage from Frank Hurley's two films on BANZARE (*Southward Ho! With Mawson* in 1930 and *Siege of the South* in 1931) includes an excerpt of Mawson proclaiming King George V Land for the British Empire. He reads a scripted proclamation of annexation as instructed by the prime minister, Stanley Bruce (1923-29):

I, Sir Douglas Mawson, do hereby so claim and declare to all men that from and after the date of the present, the full sovereignty of the territory that we have discovered and explored south of latitude sixty-four degrees and as far as the south pole, this in his majesty King George the fifth, his heirs and successors, forever.

Watching the British flag being raised and listening to the grand way that Mawson says these words, stretching out 'forever' with a rising intonation, never fails to move me but beneath the pomp and ceremony was the idea that by claiming Antarctic territory, Australia would invest an interest and gain some control over what happened there. These annexations later led to the establishment of a permanent Australian presence in the Antarctic in the way of scientific research bases which was always Mawson's hope.

Science and adventure alone were not strong enough reasons to attract investors, and this was most likely why Mawson promoted the AAE as something that could bring national benefits. He hinted at the prospect of economic gain by suggesting that there was money to be made from sealing and from the fisheries, and possibly from discoveries of oil, gold, or other precious metals. As Peder Roberts notes in his MA thesis on the science of the AAE, *Specimens, Skins, and Souvenirs: Rethinking the Australasian Antarctic Expedition*, there was a belief that 'science underpinned successful natural resource

exploitation' and that this was 'entirely consistent both with the prevailing ethos in Australasian science and more general trends in attitudes to natural resource management'.

As an early conservationist, Mawson advocated limiting commercial activity in order to protect the environment and to prevent the reduction or extinction of the native fauna. Fur seals had been hunted almost to extinction and king penguin populations were under threat. Partly due to his campaigning, sealing on Macquarie Island was banned after 1919 and the site was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1933.

He also fought to prevent the extermination of whales. Between 1910 and 1966 over 130,000 blue whales were killed in the Southern Ocean and almost 30,000 in 1930 alone. Mawson was probably as 'bewildered' by the carnage he witnessed on factory ships as Harold Fletcher, assistant zoologist on BANZARE. In his account of the expedition *Antarctic Days with Mawson*, Fletcher describes going on board the *Sir James Clark Ross* in December 1930. The flensing deck was 'running boot deep in blood and grease, the scuppers spouting continual streams of blood and filth into the sea'. After stripping the whale of its blubber, men worked on removing the meat, 'wading knee deep' in intestines. At the end of their visit Mawson was given some whale meat as a gift which Fletcher assumed he 'accepted with reluctance'. When served for dinner the meat was later 'firmly rejected' by all and thrown overboard. Interestingly, when asked in a radio interview in 1975 how he would eulogize Mawson, Eric Webb replied that 'his contribution to mankind was very great and perhaps should reach its climax in his care of whales.'

In his thoughts on conservation Mawson was ahead of his time. Phillip Law on the subject of his 'forward-looking attitude' said he was 'always pushing for the latest things, looking ten years ahead'. In his introduction to *The Home of the Blizzard*, Mawson predicted the future global significance of the Antarctic, and its impact on world climate

and on the environment: ‘As sure as there is here a vast mass of land with potentialities, strictly limited at present, so surely will it be cemented some day within the universal plinth of things’. He believed that the continent, even more of a mystery in his time, held data ‘of vital importance to science, and economic problems’ which could ‘become of moment in the near future’.

Law also described Mawson as ‘amazingly imaginative’, and certainly some of his predictions and suggestions for sustainable ways to protect Antarctic wildlife were rather creative. In a 1922 article on the future of Macquarie Island, he proposed taking black foxes to the Antarctic and farming them for their fur, an industry he argued was flourishing on Prince Edward Island in the Arctic where a single fur could fetch ‘many hundreds of pounds sterling’. He suggested grazing sheep and reindeer on Macquarie Island, setting up sanatoriums, establishing a penguin egg industry and obtaining supplies of ice for Australia: ‘vessels could just run alongside natural jetties and put the ice straight aboard’ he explained in an interview.

In an article for *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1919, John Close, assistant collector on the AAE, described Mawson as ‘a manly intellectual devotee of science’ whose mind was ‘ever weighing and measuring, estimating men and material, probabilities and possibilities, causes and effects’. On the AAE Mawson boiled down seal and penguin oil which he collected in jars, and made calculations of yields to assess their economic viability. In his diary Archie McLean mentions him making soap out of leopard-seal oil by adding sodium hydrate, and on another occasion ‘experimenting on seal oil to find its freezing point, in view of lubrication in low temperatures’. ‘Here’s another possibility’ Mawson said in one interview, keen to promote the purity of the Antarctic climate: ‘health resorts and winter sports on this coast for Australasians...I don’t see why they shouldn’t grow up in that sunny, germ-free atmosphere’.

Antarctica is still not suitable for human habitation on any permanent basis; any potential industries have not yet been established and any prospective resources have so far proved unattainable but some of Mawson's predictions about the growth of tourism, for instance, were right. He said on his return from the BAE in 1909 that he 'would not be surprised if excursion steamers were in the future run to the Antarctic'. This didn't happen in his lifetime, at least not to the Antarctic continent although Chile and Argentina sent tourist ships to the South Shetland Islands in the late 1950s. 1966, less than ten years after his death, marked the first expedition to the Antarctic for paying travellers, and cruise ships have been going down regularly since 1970. Skiing, which he had envisaged as a possibility, is not on the list of things visitors can do but other activities include kayaking, mountaineering, camping, scuba diving, wildlife watching, and visiting historical huts. I wonder if Mawson thought his hut would still be standing and that it would become a major tourist attraction and a national heritage site?

Among the most important areas of research on the AAE was meteorology, and in the pioneering of wireless telegraphy communication. Mawson believed that Australia's weather came from Adélie Land. Weather reports were sent by wireless to the Meteorological Bureau in Melbourne from Commonwealth Bay via Macquarie Island, the remnants of which I saw on 'Wireless Hill' during my voyage in 2008. With five times more ocean than land, Mawson argued that there was so much more to discover in the seas (and so much more chance of uncovering new data and new species), hence his special focus on marine biology and the then relatively new field of oceanography. One object of the AAE was to determine whether or not Antarctica was a continent as opposed to several islands. The sounding machine on display in the Museum which was used to map the ocean floor produced findings which Mawson later explained, 'had a bearing on the theory of a lost southern continent'.

Included on the AAE (and on BANZARE, also represented in the Museum) were studies in botany (limited to lichens, mosses and algae), geology, geography, cartography, astronomy, geomagnetism, glaciology, bacteriology, and medicine. More than fifty separate reports were written by a range of scientists over more than thirty years just for the AAE alone. Some of those reports are in the Museum, stacked on either side of a plaster replica of John Dowie's bust of Mawson. Titles in view include 'Birds', 'Fishes', 'Mollusca', 'Daily weather records', providing a glimpse of the scale of the work carried out.

In *Antarctica: A Treatise on the Southern Continent*, published in 1928, polar historian, John Gordon Hayes declared the AAE 'the greatest and most consummate expedition that ever sailed for Antarctica', and deemed it unequalled 'in the wealth and importance of the data collected and in results generally'. Yet, the scientific achievements of the expedition were at the time eclipsed by the tragic deaths of Ninnis and Mertz on the Far-Eastern Sledging Journey in the summer of 1912-13, and by Mawson's lone survival, as well as by the death of Scott and his party on return from the South Pole in 1912, by Shackleton's heroics on *The Imperial Antarctic Expedition* 1914-17, and by the outbreak of World War I.

Mawson is remembered as a survivor rather than as a scientist and the story of his sledging journey has also obscured the achievements of others and the collaborative nature of the expedition. Yet, despite being called 'In the Footsteps of Douglas Mawson' the exhibition at the South Australian Museum does provide an insight into the science and it does portray the AAE as a collective enterprise, and this is a large part of its appeal.

The AAE was an ambitious programme which included three parties of men, only one of which Mawson could be physically part of. All three land parties, one on Macquarie

Island and two on the continent, essentially worked independently, each making their own separate contributions to the scientific output of the expedition. Frank Wild's party 1500 miles from Mawson's base at Commonwealth Bay added hundreds of miles of new coastline to the map. They discovered, for the first time, the eggs and nesting grounds of the Antarctic petrel, and the silver-grey petrel, as well as a huge emperor penguin rookery. George Ainsworth's group at Macquarie Island made a special study of elephant seals. The cartographer and geologist Leslie Blake made the first map of the island, which was found to 'abound in glacial lakes and tarns', indicating that it had once been 'overridden by an ice-sheet travelling from west to east'.

The scientific significance of the AAE applied not only to its output but also to its innovation in organisation and execution. Through the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science a committee was formed which included ten professors whose job it was to promote and support the expedition and recruit members. This gave the AAE added scientific credibility; most of the men chosen to go on the AAE were science graduates from universities around the Commonwealth making the ratio of scientists to non-scientists far higher than on previous expeditions.

Yet the roles assigned to each member were not as defined as their titles suggest, and some were even employed to work outside their area of expertise. For instance, Charles Laseron was a geologist but he was taken on as the assistant biologist. This practice was not unique to the AAE. Mawson, a geologist, was physicist and unofficial photographer on the BAE while the position of assistant geologist to Professor David went to Raymond Priestley who had no formal scientific qualifications. Cherry-Garrard, who held a degree in Classics from Oxford, was appointed assistant zoologist on Scott's last expedition. Cherry-Garrard nevertheless argued that they all 'travelled for science'. By this it seems he meant mastery of any department of learning, not something limited to the

material and physical sciences. That they worked or assisted in various disciplines with or without any training or expertise reflects the collaborative aspect of expeditions of the Heroic Age and was most likely a way of maximising scientific output.

The surgeons, Sydney Jones and Archie McLean, received training in skinning and preserving at the Australian Museum in Sydney. Adelaidean Percy Correll, the expedition's 'Mechanic and Assistant Physicist' and the youngest member at 19, received the same training at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. Mertz, who was not a scientist but an engineer and a lawyer hired for his skiing skills and mountaineering experience, was sent off to the Mediterranean for six weeks with the Prince of Monaco's scientific adviser, Dr Jules Richard, to learn about dredging, soundings and 'other deep-sea work'. Frank Wild, who, like Mertz, did not have a scientific background, was given some training in marine science on a voyage around the south-eastern coast of Australia in 1911. Captain Davis was also given advice and training to carry out oceanographic work on cruises in the *Aurora* during the expedition, in between delivering and collecting parties from Antarctica and Macquarie Island. On the first cruise, which departed from Hobart in May 1912, he was 'the recognized expert in practical operations'.

From the outset, a united effort was the spirit of the expedition. In a letter to Frank Stillwell, Mawson acknowledged that his duties would be mainly 'in the department of Geology' but he stressed: 'you will be required to be prepared to do anything that you may be called upon to execute during the progress of the expedition'. This applied from the moment the *Aurora* left Hobart. 'All hands' took their turn at four-hour watches. 'We were promoted to the status of sailors, and were expected to turn out at all times, haul on ropes and lend a hand wherever possible', wrote McLean.

Both on the ship and once in the Antarctic, all assisted in the collecting of data and other related work, such as killing animals, preparing skins, digging ice shafts for dredging, and retrieving piles of geological specimens which were carried back to the bases in rucksacks. 'Zoological collecting' was 'a popular subject commanding general interest', wrote Mawson in *The Home of the Blizzard*: 'seals and birds were made the prey of everyone'. In his diary even sailor Stan Taylor described skinning a penguin for himself which he hoped would be stuffed.

It is likely that Taylor consulted *Hints to Travellers*, a guidebook published by the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1906 which gives instruction and advice on a variety of topics. There is a section on natural history which includes 'where and what to collect', how to preserve mammals in alcohol and how to prepare animal skeletons. Taylor might also have learnt something of the art of skinning from Laseron. On the return voyage to Australia in 1913 he helped Laseron catch penguins at the Western Base where they stopped to pick up Frank Wild's party. They 'would have to be quick' to grab a penguin wrote Taylor. Holding a flipper in each hand they would 'sit on his back and ride him till he got tired' after which 'one holds while the other gets a pithing needle, shoves his beak in the snow, then puts the needle in from the back of the skull bone and works the point about in his brain, being careful not to prick the eyes or any veins or sinews leading to the eyes, as if you do, the eyes bulge out and stretch the skin, spoiling it'.

Specimens and data were not always easily procured. 'If things proceed as we expect them to', said Mawson in an interview in 1910, 'it is believed that the scientific material collected by the Australian expedition of 1911 will outclass any previous undertakings of its kind'. But things did not proceed as expected. Mawson had set an ambitious scientific programme basing his knowledge of the Antarctic climate and conditions on his experiences at Cape Royds in 1907-9. However, the winds at

Commonwealth Bay averaged more than double the speeds at Cape Royds, and the snowfall for the month of April 1912 alone was the same as that recorded for a whole year on Shackleton's BAE. 'How terribly disappointing this land has been', he confided in a letter to Paquita before setting off on his sledging journey in November 1912. 'Our only consolation is that we feel that everything has been done that could be done and that on account of the rigour of the climate the information that we have obtained will be of special value'.

'Mawson...was not the man to be daunted by blizzards. Courageously cheerful himself, he fired us all with his spirit', wrote Frank Hurley in *Argonauts of the South*. In a letter to Paquita years later when she was working on *Mawson of the Antarctic*, Laseron admitted that at the time the men didn't fully appreciate the pressure Mawson was under. Their very inexperience of Antarctic conditions meant that, unlike him, they had nothing to compare it with. 'He showed nothing of the anxiety which consumed him, for it seemed that the fearful weather we encountered was likely to nullify the whole success of the expedition', wrote Laseron.

As I listen to the howl of the blizzard piped through the Museum installation, I picture the men at Commonwealth Bay going out into the weather almost every day throughout 1912 and 1913 to take magnetic recordings of the temperature, and of the velocity and direction of the wind. Ironically, these were among the expedition's most successful scientific studies and they continued even when blizzards prevented other work being carried out but the data was hard-won in the brutal climate and sometimes it was not possible to go out. On May 3 1912, Mawson noted in his diary: 'The weather has simply overwhelmed even the meteorologist'.

Stillwell conceded that Eric Webb as magnetician had ‘the worst position of all’ with the meteorologist Cecil Madigan coming a close second. Mawson claimed that because at one time or another they all assisted Webb in recording his ‘determinations’, everyone developed an interest in ‘terrestrial magnetism’ but it was cold work. In acknowledging Webb’s assistants, Mawson wrote: ‘Three hours writing figures in a temperature of forty-seven degrees of frost is no joke’.

Taking observations at midnight and again at 6am was the task of the nightwatchman (in between washing clothes, stoking the fire and baking bread). The men couldn’t go outside unless they were ‘dressed to the nines, everything lashed’ said Webb who acknowledged that the wind was ‘the determining feature of all activity’. In *South with Mawson* Laseron describes the process of preparing to go outside to the meteorological hut:

First of all he draws on his burberry trousers, which he ties tightly round his ankles and waist. Then comes the balaclava, and over it the burberry helmet. Woollen mittens come next to protect the wrists, and over all the blouse, which is tied at the waist, neck and wrists to prevent the entrance of snow. Finally, fingerless woollen gloves complete the outfit. The barometer is read and the result noted in the record book; then the main adventure begins...’

Once outside, he had to feel his way in the drift and in the darkness for in winter there was almost no daylight. Even though the meteorological screen was only about forty yards from the hut, it was easy to get lost. As the biologist John Hunter noted in his diary, ‘every fall of snow alters the appearance of the landscape’. The night watchman crawled on his hands and knees to avoid being blown off his feet. As soon as he hit the air (after scrambling through one of the tunnels leading off the veranda), a mask of ice formed around his face, long icicles dangled from his eyebrows and eyelashes and his beard

became fixed to his helmet. To read the instruments the ice around his eyes had to be first smashed and all the while he had to make sure the wind didn't scoop him up and drag him away.

Footage from *Home of the Blizzard*, Hurley's 1913 film of the AAE, is shown in the Museum (along with other film footage from the BANZARE, including Mawson reading the proclamation speech). One clip shows two of the men climbing up the little rocky hill that the meteorological hut stood upon. The wind rips at them as one tries, with one hand, to open the door to read the instruments while the other is swept back down the slope.

Almost every discipline of science included in the AAE programme required the men to go outdoors, but to get out, many precious hours were spent clearing away the endless volumes of drift snow that accumulated around them. Almost every day the entrances to the main hut and to the veranda became filled with snow which had to be removed with shovels and saws; often the chimney cowl filled with ice once the stove pipe had cooled and someone had to climb up onto the roof to unblock it. Even the dogs had to be dug out of their 'houses'.

The men were forever unearthing boxes of equipment. One Sunday in April 1912 it took all eighteen men, 'including the cook', the whole morning to dig out the aeroplane after it had become buried in deep snow. Accurate and continuous records were not always possible because the wind damaged their instruments. 'Annie' (the anemometer) would get choked with snow, the cups and spindle would snap off and fly away in blizzards, the vanes and 'arms' would get bent and battered. A search for the lost equipment would ensue in calm weather and then Correll 'the gadget man' would sometimes work through the night doing repair work.

The weather aside, minimal scientific work was carried out in the first few months of 1912 because all hands were required to build the main hut and adjoining workroom, the magnetograph house, the transit hut, the absolute magnetic hut, and the ‘aeroplane house’ (for storing the wingless aeroplane used for transporting supplies across the ice). And until there was somewhere to house the scientific equipment, it could not be unpacked. They worked fourteen-hour days on the main hut, starting the day the *Aurora* left Commonwealth Bay, hence their appreciation for Irish stew. By the end of January they were sleeping in the hut but there was still work to be done inside—bunks had to be built, shelves and benches put up, the stove assembled, the walls lined and ‘caulked’. Tunnels had to be excavated—one for the entrance; one leading to the store; one for liquid refuse.

In April they began to build the wireless station which became an ongoing project throughout 1912. Fine days were rare and from May they had only about three hours of daylight. As soon as there was a break in the weather, ‘a crowd of muffled figures would emerge through the veranda exit, dragging ropes, blocks, picks and shovels’. Oregon masts had to be erected in high winds and anchored with steel wire cables. ‘Fumbling with bulky mitts, handling hammers and spanners, and manipulating knots and bolts with bare hands while suspended in a boatswain’s chair in the wind, the man up the mast had a difficult and miserable task’ wrote Mawson in *The Home of the Blizzard*. According to Paquita, the first message that came through the wireless was, ‘Having hell of a time waiting for calm weather, put up masts’. This was on the September 25 1912. It wasn’t until February the following year that another message was received because blizzards prevented them from successfully erecting the station.

In mid-February 1912 the biologist Hunter confided to his diary that he would be glad when the hut was finished so that he could ‘settle down to good systematic work’. He predicted that ‘it is quite likely that in a week’s time the majority of us will be away

sledging'. However, blizzards continued to prevent him and his assistant Laseron from going outside to collect specimens. The sea ice, which was constantly being broken up in the winds, seldom had a chance to freeze making it impossible to get out to deeper water to dredge for sea specimens. Frustrated that he couldn't get on with the zoological collecting, partly because their boat for dredging had been blown out to sea in March, Laseron wrote: 'Hunter & I are feeling blue about our work as there seems little prospect of our being able to dredge. The only thing that we can do is to skin birds, & pray for fine weather to let the sea freeze'.

In the meantime, they worked on small hauls they pulled up in the nets, made fish and crab nets, preserved marine creatures, and went through the skins or stomachs of animals looking for parasites but, as the days confined indoors passed, their supply of samples dwindled and there was a limit to what they could do.

Mawson had held out hope of going out sledging almost from the moment the *Aurora* landed them in January 1912 but aside from a few short reconnaissance journeys where they laid food depots, they didn't set off on their main journeys until mid November. In the intervening months, with more days inside than anticipated, they set about preparing sledges and sledging equipment for the coming summer. This involved modifying everything to suit the unexpected climate, and a variety of skills were needed. 'The smallest qualification became of value if administered in any way to the general welfare', wrote Laseron.

They adjusted their fleece suits; 'none of the Hobart suits are satisfactory and require alteration for convenience in use' wrote Stillwell. They made 'yokes' of lamp-wick for their mitts; this way their mitts could hang around their necks and not get blown away in the wind. They sewed sledge harnesses, and adjusted snow goggles so that they would

fit the wearer. They attached new spikes to their crampons. 'Those designed for normal Antarctic expeditions had been found unserviceable' wrote Mawson. Only Swiss spikes of about one and a half inches long would do. Tent poles were sewn into the canvas after a disastrous practice run erecting a tent in high winds. The light drill tents, which were perfectly adequate at Cape Royds, were ripped to pieces in the Adélie winds, and were replaced with ones made of Japara sail cloth.

All of this was in the name of science but it nevertheless took the specialists away from their particular studies. 'I am becoming the food ration expert', wrote Hunter, 'but although I do it cheerily enough yet it makes me feel dispirited to think that I have to make up food rations instead of doing – not doing but being able to do – my own particular work'. Cooking was also less popular with the scientists for the same reason. Members of 'The Crook Cooks Association' were characterised by their 'scorn' for cooking 'as base routine'. Hurley claimed that the scientist was 'uninspired by gastronomy'; anxious to get on with his work, he vacillated 'betwixt his microscope and the stove'.

When there was time for science there was very little in the way of a designated workspace, either on the ship or at the bases. In the hut at Commonwealth Bay, the same bench in the 'workshop' was used for scientific work as for sewing and for mechanical and carpentry work. Included in the exhibits in the Museum are the metal lathe and the Singer sewing machine they all became adept at using.

Hunter complained about the difficult working conditions: 'Careful fixation of parasites, such as one does in a University laboratory, is not the easiest thing to carry out in winter quarters. Firstly, one has not a supply of dishes etc such as one has in a lab; then the light is not so good, & worse still there is a constant shaking of the table – people sewing,

or hammering etc, so that careful work is difficult to carry out...'. As a result, bottling and preserving and even skinning was often done at the kitchen table.

Storing and labelling specimens was also difficult. After naming and recording geological specimens and packing them into boxes, Stillwell could not find a paint for branding the boxes that would work in the cold. After experimenting with different materials, he found eventual success with a mixture of shellac varnish and lamp black at Correll's suggestion. There was a shortage of zinc-lined cases for packing biological specimens. There were some made of tin but they were unsuitable because they rusted. Looking after animal skins also proved a challenge. Hunter mentions carrying in all the bird skins from the workshop into the main hut to dry but, with the constant build up of moisture ice would melt and drip down the walls which meant that skins took a long time to dry out.

Carrying out scientific work was even more challenging on the sledging journeys undertaken in the summer of 1912: 'The contriving of laboratory conditions on the bleak ice plateau, with wind, drift snow and freezing temperatures taxed time, patience and ingenuity to the utmost', wrote Webb in an account of the Southern Sledging Party's experience which he sent to Paqueta in 1965. One of Mawson's main objectives on the AAE was to establish the true location of the South Magnetic Pole and the aim of Webb's party, which included Hurley and astronomer and magnetician Robert Bage as leader, was to get as close to the Pole as possible. Limited by lack of experience and training and inadequate instruments on his own earlier journey to this Pole on the BAE, Mawson admitted to Webb that he had only managed a rough estimate of its location.

'Our journey' explained Webb, 'was intended to be a comprehensive geographic, geodetic and geo-magnetic exploration' but navigation proved difficult because the route

was 'so disturbed magnetically' and because there were so few landmarks. According to Webb, in the whole of their 600-mile round trip, there was 'not one noteworthy landmark other than the "Nodules", an ice mound which could only be seen in clear weather. For location and course', they had to rely 'wholly on observations of the sun' but 'all hinged on being able to see the sun' which was completely out of view during 'white outs' which could last for days. Taking magnetic recordings was a constant challenge: To take readings, a wind shield had to be erected, often in the teeth of a gale. At one stage they excavated an observatory out of the ice, 'seven feet deep and seven feet square at the base' in order to take continuous recordings in sheltered conditions over a twenty-four hour period.

While Bage's party dragged their sledge which was weighed down with heavy equipment essential for their work, uphill across sastrugi (waves of hard ice up to two feet high formed by drift snow), Madigan's party, which explored coastline east of the hut, faced different obstacles. Travelling close to the sea they had to negotiate 'blue ice' formed when the sea freezes, and waded, sometimes up to their thighs, through slushy, sticky ice which clogged the sledge-meter, their means of recording distance. They also encountered numerous crevasses. In *The Home of the Blizzard* Madigan wrote that he fell through the ice 'eight times in about four miles'.

In his 1965 account of the southern sledging journey Webb wrote: 'One might very well inquire what sustained this prodigious toil under such conditions, and we questioned ourselves... undoubtedly the enthusiasm essential to such effort was maintained by the spirit of adventure, of competition and of pioneering science...'

Looking down into a cabinet in the Museum at some penguin eggs carried back from the Antarctic in a biscuit tin, I am reminded of arguably the greatest example of lives

risked for science: the winter sledging journey undertaken on Scott's last expedition by Cherry-Garrard and two others, including chief biologist Edward Wilson who later died with Scott on return from the South Pole. Their objective was to collect Emperor penguin embryos which are incubated in the winter months. Penguins, being flightless, were considered the most primitive of birds, and it was thought that a study of their embryos would reveal something about the evolutionary relationship between birds and reptiles. The party sledged in almost complete darkness for five weeks in temperatures that plummeted to minus 70 degrees Celsius, in order as Cherry-Garrard put it 'that the world might have a little more knowledge'.

Not all of the specimens discovered on heroic age expeditions were scientifically enlightening. The professor who wrote a report on the embryos brought back by the winter party could find no conclusive evidence—birds evolved from dinosaurs, that much he knew, but there was no evidence that feathers had developed from scales. However, the efforts of the men involved in these ventures were not made vain. Much of the data collected on both the AAE and BANZARE about, for example, sea levels, animal populations, water temperatures, and ice structures are now compared against modern data to understand and assess the impact of the changing environment of the Antarctic. The meteorological records kept at Commonwealth Bay contribute to our current understanding of weather patterns; DNA samples from the seal and bird skins brought back are analysed in scientific studies to determine breeding habits; a rare sample of whale baleen in the animal cabinet in the Museum has been used to determine 'the differences between "true" blue whales and pygmy blue whales'.

Research work being carried out now by Australian scientists in the Antarctic has its roots in the discoveries made on the AAE and on BANZARE. In 1947, Mawson initiated the establishment of ANARE (Australian National Antarctic Research

Expeditions) with the aim of setting up permanent research stations in the Antarctic to ensure continuation of the work begun on his expeditions. Phillip Law was the Director from 1949-66. There are currently four Australian stations, one on Macquarie Island and three on the Antarctic continent of which 'Mawson', established in 1954, is the longest continuously operating, and Australia is recognised internationally for its contributions to scientific discovery and innovation.

To mark the centenary of the AAE, in the summer of 2013-14 Professor Chris Turney from the University of New South Wales set out to replicate, as far as possible, the science work of the expedition. Leading a team of 85 people, including 60 scientists, his aim was to 'repeat the measurements' taken on the AAE and compare them with their own to find out how climate change in the Antarctic is influencing weather patterns in Australia. Before leaving Turney acknowledged that this was only possible because of the 'remarkably precious' volumes of information recorded on the AAE, which he said would 'fill a bookcase'. The second year spent at Commonwealth Bay in 1913 meant that continuous measurements were recorded over a two and a half year period, and this data is now, according to Turney, 'vital to tracking global warming'. However, the 'AAE 2013-14' was cut short when the expedition ship became trapped in sea ice and the team had to be evacuated to safety. Despite advancements in technology, including a much stronger ship, like Mawson and his men Professor Turney and his party were ultimately at the mercy of the weather. It was a humbling experience to consider wrote Turney, that in equivalent conditions Mawson and his men 'not only survived but thrived, mounting a major scientific expedition'.

In *Mawson of the Antarctic* Paquita wrote: 'Douglas always felt that the success of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition was due to the fine cooperation of its members', and in writing his life she knew that 'he would not wish mention of the good work done by

them to be omitted'. As I leave the exhibition I pass the memorial cross to Ninnis and Mertz and my eye catches the engraved words: 'erected to commemorate the supreme sacrifice made by Lieut. B.E.S. Ninnis and Dr. X. Mertz in the cause of science A.A.E. 1913.'



The Many Faces of the Mawsons

From my position on the sixth floor of the Napier building at the University of Adelaide, where Mawson worked for almost fifty years, first as a lecturer and then as Professor of Geology, I am almost completely surrounded by images of him. He is to the north, south, east and west of me and each portrait in and around the campus (including a photograph and a bust) depicts him at a different stage of his life, documenting his face from his thirties to his seventies. These portraits can be seen to reflect his ‘many lives’ and all are different—the biographer ‘must be prepared to admit contradictory versions of the same face’, argued Virginia Woolf, which, she claimed, brings not ‘a riot of confusion but a richer unity’.

Mawson’s portrait, in academic robes, by Henry J Haley is above me, on the eighth floor of this building. The geography department is housed on this floor, which is not inappropriate. Mawson was known for his navigational skills, and Paquita claimed that he could draw a map of any region of the world from memory. The mapping of territory was an important part of his work as an explorer, and in fact, he described the work of the AAE as ‘primarily geographic’. He discovered and named more than two thousand miles of new coastline, added even more territory on the BANZARE and he traversed many miles of ice on foot over his Antarctic career.

He is depicted in this portrait in 1933, two years after the BANZAR Expedition when he was in his early fifties and physically past his prime. Philip Law, who met him some thirteen years later, in 1947, described him as tall and powerful but noted that he carried ‘no excess weight’ yet in this portrait he looks slightly podgy and I suspect he knew that he had just been on his last expedition. He is puffing out his chest a bit, perhaps to thrust his physicality to the fore even as (and because) age was catching up with him.

One of his colleagues, Arthur Alderman, noted that ‘he always seemed happiest when in the field with his students, and this was shown by his zest for the work on hand and frequent outbursts of boisterous good humour’. Yet, this portrait is very formal and it places Mawson in an intellectual space, not a physical one, and I sense some resistance to his academic persona. His defiant eyes are challenging the artist. He seems to be saying: ‘Paint me if you will but know that I’m sitting for you under duress’. As an active person, he appears unhappy being passive; being confined to a chair. The Douglas Mawson who loved the outdoors and physical work wants to break free.

Perhaps because of this, he looks slightly stern. His students found him friendly and approachable but there are glimpses in his expression of the man who could be, as his successor Arthur Alderman put it, ‘devastatingly frank in his criticism of what he thought foolishness’. Looking at it I am reminded of the story of a student who once gave him a piece of cement to identify at Hallet Cove. Thinking himself very clever, the student enquired, ‘What’s this Sir?’ to which Mawson replied, without even deigning to look up: ‘That my boy, is a piece of impertinence’. Mawson’s student Keith Johns remembered that Mawson ‘enjoyed slipping in trick specimens’ in practical geology tests, such as kangaroo dung or clay brick. He obviously found it less amusing when a similar trick was played on him.

A far different and better known image is the photograph of Mawson by Frank Hurley, depicting him in a balaclava, which was used on the \$100 note. It hangs in the South Australian Museum to the west of me. If people know nothing else of Mawson, they will know this image (few would recognise the Haley one). If his name comes up in conversation, and they are not quite sure who he is, they ask: ‘Wasn’t he on the \$100 note?’ And if they know a little bit more, the next thing they say is, ‘Didn’t he eat his

dogs?’ This image, synonymous with the story of him eating his huskies to survive, is mistakenly associated with the AAE, the main reason for his fame.

The truth is, this photograph was taken in 1931 when he was fifty years old, on his return from the BANZAR expedition, ironically an expedition that many people know nothing about, and one that did not involve any danger or hardship, and no inland sledging trips. He was no longer the vigorous explorer he’d been twenty years before, and physically not up to the demands of polar exploration, but somehow he passes as young in this photograph; the lines around his eyes make him look rugged rather than old. The beard and moustache he grew during the expedition disguise his true age, and the balaclava hides his comb over, revealed when he takes off his hat in a goodbye gesture in a photograph published in the *Register* while on his way to Hobart to prepare for the expedition.

Interestingly, the Haley portrait was done when he was only two years older. I sometimes wonder how Mawson saw himself and I am almost certain that he would have preferred the Hurley photograph, where he looks like a manly warrior, over the Haley portrait of him as a nondescript Professor. After all, he did once say to Paquita: ‘Do you know that had I not lived in the 20th century I might have been a crusader or a buccaneer’, and this idea of himself is encapsulated in Hurley’s photograph. His big stature has contributed to perceptions of him as a great man. In an article for *The Sydney Morning Herald* a few years after the expedition, John Close elevated him to almost god-like status when he wrote of ‘his superior length of limb’ and of ‘his fine introspective eyes’ which ‘might have taken their hue from the azure vault of heaven, or from the paler turquoise hints of the Polar ice’. In the press Mawson was described as ‘a young Saxon giant’ and as ‘a heroic Dane of old-world romance’. Grenfell Price described him as ‘distinctly Viking in appearance: a great blond man with a very fine physique.’

There is a version of Hurley's photograph held by the Art Gallery of South Australia. Entitled 'The Philatelist's Mawson' by Australian artist, Narelle Jubelin, it is embroidered in tiny pointillist stitches reminiscent of the dots that make up a photograph. Such a technique gives the portrait a fragmented appearance. Mawson, whose status as a national and colonial icon is embodied in this well-known image, literally disintegrates and erodes before the eyes of the viewer. It is only 25 by 17.5 centimetres, which further diminishes his importance and undermines his large physical stature. However, by replicating Hurley's iconic photograph, the artist reaffirms his standing despite her desire to disestablish him.

Mawson is also to the north, where I sometimes teach in the Mawson Labs of all places. I say 'of all places' because I am not at all scientifically inclined. It just so happens that I am teaching English to engineering students so this is their domain rather than mine. I walk through the double doors on the ground floor and turn left towards the stairs to the first floor, where I pass the Tate Museum containing his geological specimens. I cannot pass this room without picturing him in the Flinders Ranges placing a wooden box of rock samples on the side of the road for a passing driver to pick up and deliver to the University. (It is marked 'D Mawson, Adelaide University'.) This Mawson is wearing a hat and braces that lift his trousers up high over his waist, and he is turning a rock over in his large hands, and I imagine Reg Sprigg saying: 'He had an absolute genius for identifying minerals'.

Each time I pass, I always look up at his portrait by Jack Carrington-Smith on the far wall and feel half-inclined to say hello. (I once caught myself bowing my head slightly.) This portrait was painted in 1955 when he was 73, a few years after his retirement. Here again he is a professor, in his mortarboard and academic gown, a very different and lesser-known Douglas Mawson than the half-shaven explorer in a balaclava in the museum foyer.

Mawson had a reputation for being ‘a mountain goat’. Geology student Keith Johns said that this belief continued beyond his more active days. By the time Johns met him, in the mid 1940s, he had slowed down considerably and rather than outstrip his students on walks, Mawson was glad of any opportunity to sit down. Certainly by the mid 1950s he was much reduced physically dogged by arthritis and heart problems. He would catch the tram into the city from Brighton to sit for the artist. Paquita was away visiting her brother, Theo, in New South Wales and Mawson kept her up to date with the progress of the portrait. When it was nearing its completion, he wrote: ‘Rowe² came into the room yesterday morning to see the painting. He declared it diplomatically but clearly—main fault the face too dark. It was quite dark and Rowe said it represented me as of a coloured race—I had not liked the darkness but it was not for me to be an art critic. So yesterday Carrington-Smith spent all day brightening up the complexion. Later in afternoon Rowe came back...and it was declared satisfactory. Rowe says it represents as a medieval alchemist—he is almost right’.

Unrecognisable as an explorer (many would not make the connection between this man and the one in the glass cabinets a few feet away), he blends in with other portraits of academics dotted around the campus, a man who might never have ventured much further than the dim lecture halls of the University. Yet, there is something unsettling about the painting, and it is interesting that the artist scrapped his first attempt, which suggests he had difficulty with it. Mawson’s face is thin and angular and he looks worried, anxious about something, as he looks out towards an uncertain future.

When Carrington-Smith took the portrait away to add the finishing touches and to frame it, Mawson wrote again to Paquita: ‘I think it is all right and will be acceptable to all’; but despite Carrington-Smith’s attempts to lighten his complexion, it is still not right.

² Albert Percival Rowe, Vice Chancellor of the University of Adelaide 1948-1958.

It is as though he was powerless to prevent the darkness seeping back in, the yellowish-brown wash that seems to reflect Mawson's ill health. It was less than a year since his heart attack in April 1954 and he was recuperating through this winter of 1955, battling also with chronic arthritis that was so bad Paquita had to help him dress in the mornings. It was a particularly cold and wet winter with heavy rain and hail, and every day seemed to present some new challenge. In letters to Paquita he complained about the housekeeper whose every move got on his nerves. She was slow at everything and burned his toast. 'The paper this morning was delivered in a puddle of water and hopeless' he wrote. 'Mrs Chivers went off in her car and bought another as she was feeling a bit useless having done so many silly things...she gets up at about 6am and makes herself coffee—at 7am she makes me tea—then gives the cat a week's meat in one helping. By 10.30 she may have washed up'. Looking at the painting again, and his anxious expression, with these criticisms and complaints in mind, I fancy I can see the pessimism some saw in him. This Mawson is the one who sometimes cried, 'The whole expedition is ruined!'; 'The wireless will never work!'

The Carrington-Smith hangs outside the entrance to the Mawson lecture theatre, inside which there is another portrait of him in a suit and tie sitting at a table working on what looks like a map with a world globe and a bookcase behind him. This one was painted in 1922 by W Seppelt. I only recently discovered it was there, not being a geology student and therefore having no reason to enter the lecture room. I'm not sure that Mawson sat for this portrait because it is clearly based on a photograph taken just after his knighthood in London in 1914. Interestingly, in the photograph, he is resting his hand on an open book whereas, in the portrait, the book has been replaced by a map and he is holding a pen which is poised over it. What looks like a painting behind him in the photograph is a bookcase in the portrait, with the addition of the world globe. The changes the artist made emphasise his explorer status. The bookcase marks him as a man of

learning; the globe represents his discovery of Antarctic territory, reminiscent of portraits of other explorers, and of kings and queens (I think of Queen Elizabeth I, mistress of the lands and the seas, swinging a golden globe in her hand).

In the painting, done six years after the photograph was taken, he looks older with less hair, as if W Seppelt had literally aged him, yet he is not old (he was 40) . Here he is sure of himself. He is looking the painter straight in the eye with a steady gaze and I think of his confident words to his father-in-law when he wrote to ask for permission to marry Paquita: ‘I have never yet failed in anything I have undertaken and look forward to a bright future’. I see determination in the eyes of this Mawson who had survived a journey two others had not.

Paquita preferred this portrait to the one by Ivor Hele painted in 1956, two years before his death which hangs in the reading room of the Barr Smith Library³ . In this one he is wearing a beige suit which she felt was not very typical of him. I like it for this very reason. He looks benevolent and serene; here he is ‘the kindly, gentle giant’ Philip Law knew. There is no trace of the anxiety or the vulnerability evident in the Carrington-Smith portrait, nor the confident youthful air of the Seppelt. Here he seems quietly self-assured.

The suit neutralises him. He is posing, neither as an academic nor as an explorer, but as a man who can afford to rest and reflect on his many accomplishments, evident in his distinguished expression rather than in his dress. He looks composed, relaxed in the knowledge that he is camouflaged in these ordinary clothes and in his elderly appearance—as a young man he wanted to make his mark but now, at 74, he has made a name for himself and is happy to step out of the limelight, and relieved to be free of having to be anything other than himself. Even if recognised, his name on the frame beneath the

³ The University of Adelaide library.

painting is too high and too far away to read, and being high above the bookcases, many visitors to the Reading Room, looking down among the shelves, would have no cause to look up and would therefore miss him altogether. Somehow I feel he wouldn't mind this.

Paquita offered the University the Seppelt painting instead, and the family delivered it to the University after her death in 1983. Now both portraits are displayed, the Seppelt depicting him at the height of his career, and the Hele thirty-four years later, a year from the end of his life.

To the east, I walk past his bronze bust almost every day on my way to my desk in the Napier building. The fact that he is just a head and a torso is a bit disturbing. Somehow it seems wrong for a man who was so active, who covered so much territory, to be without arms or legs. Captain Scott, by contrast, is complete as a marble statue in Christchurch, New Zealand; he stands in full Antarctic attire holding a ski stick in his right hand, and he stands again in bronze in Waterloo Place, London. Mawson's dismembered state reflects his lesser-known status beside a man whose polar achievements overshadowed his own, in his lifetime and also since his death. However, perhaps their reputations are evening out for Captain Scott lost his legs in the Christchurch earthquake of 2011 when he slipped off his plinth.

Mawson's bust was sculpted by John Dowie and unveiled in 1982 to commemorate the centenary of his birth. A 'twin' of the bust was taken a year later to Mawson Station in the Antarctic and at the time there was some concern about where to put it as it couldn't go outside in the ice. At least it wouldn't get dirty there, unlike his double in Adelaide. It's been a cold winter; sometimes I notice dew on him, and there have been occasions when I've seen bird droppings on his head. As he's quite revered in this city, it seems almost

disrespectful of the birds. It makes me feel uncomfortable seeing him like that. I feel an urge to restore his dignity.

In 2009 I was interviewed in front of his sculpture for ABC radio. Later that day, a little parade of people and husky dogs passed by the bust in a re-enactment of his welcome home on his return from Shackleton's expedition in 1909. It is hard to imagine the public getting excited enough about anyone now to carry them all along North Terrace, especially not a geologist. In the midst of the centenary of the AAE, there is more of the same in store. Everywhere I look, he is constantly being resurrected.

There are an equal number of portraits of Paquita hanging in the houses of various family members, and there is even one on the University campus. While my only impressions of what Mawson looked like are gained through photographs and film footage, Paquita was still alive when I was small and I have a few memories of her. I remember her most clearly as an elderly woman in black, her large frame and slightly bowed legs walking away from me towards my grandmother's blue and pink hydrangeas; and as a frail woman in a nightgown and art deco glasses, her little Chihuahua, Trinidad, sitting across her shoulders.

I don't remember it, but she once had a bath at our house when she was very elderly, even though her doctor had told her not to on account of it being difficult to get out. That she disobeyed him is my favourite part of this story. My mother said she came to stay and within a few hours of her arrival, she announced that she would like to take a bath. When it came to getting out, she found she couldn't. It was only when my mother said, as the water grew colder, that she would have to ask my father for help, that Paquita, with the thought of her grandson seeing her naked, somehow found the strength to haul herself out. I always associate this story with photographs of her in the bath with dark rings under her

tired eyes and bubbles all the way up to her neck. In my mind she was always old; someone whose life was ending as mine was beginning, her thin purplish skin in sharp contrast to my baby skin and rosy cheeks as she cradles me in her bony arms and lifts a bottle of milk to my mouth.

A very different Paquita, as a young, striking woman hung in the hall outside my bedroom throughout my childhood. My sister and I shared the room, and for both of us the portrait was frightening at night if we had to pass it on our way to the bathroom at the other end of the house. It was not in any way a scary painting. It was done in The Netherlands, we suspect, when she was not even twenty, during her engagement to Mawson when he was in the Antarctic in 1912. We once had it repaired and the restorer uncovered the artist's name, a Dutch name, but it has since been lost, and so who he was, as well as the date and circumstances in which the portrait was painted remain unknown. Paquita's hair is tied back and she looks relaxed and content. The colours, the soft pinks and greens, have a calming effect on the viewer. It is life-size and perhaps this is what spooked us in the darkness of the hallway in the early hours of the morning. Though her expression is neither stern nor disapproving, we tried not to look up at her as we passed. It was enough to know that she was there, suspended above us in the hall, silently overseeing our young lives.

Recently I was given a portrait of her when she was perhaps in her forties but it is hard to gauge her age. The artist was Fred Dankbaar who painted the mural of the Hague for her and whose wife Ada is a distant relation of Paquita's. Fred and Ada invited me to see the painting one afternoon, and then one day in 2010, Ada's great-great nephew called to say Fred had died, and asked if I wanted the portrait. Ada was moving to a serviced apartment where she wouldn't have room for it. By then Ada was quite confused and so it was hard to ascertain anything much about how and when Fred came to paint my great-grandmother. In fact, even on the afternoon I visited, the Dankbaars were both muddled

about time and spoke of Paquita as though she was more my grandmother's generation. I could get no sense of what kind of relationship they had had with her, or how well they had known her. My suspicions are that Paquita never actually sat for this portrait.

It came with a particularly ugly, gold and black patchwork frame around it, but with that removed I like the picture a lot more. It is oddly formal though, and while there is some resemblance, it doesn't look especially like Paquita. In fact she has the frozen, dead look of a china doll. Her empty expression and completely unlined face, give no indication of her lively character (or her age), and in fact, it is as if her personality has somehow been erased. She is sitting up very straight in a chair and she is staring directly ahead which gives her a regal air. If it weren't for the lace-maker she is holding on her lap, the chair might easily be a throne and she a queen posing for a commissioned portrait. In a way this is fitting because there was something about her that was inherently aristocratic. She enjoyed her status as Lady Mawson and the invitations that were extended to her as a result, even after Mawson's death. In her widowhood she declined at least one offer of marriage, partly because it would have meant relinquishing her title. Even when she was old and frail and had to walk with the aid of a stick, she never stooped and retained an almost regal bearing. A journalist who interviewed her days before her eighty-first birthday, described her as 'statuesque' with 'the legs of a girl'.

Until quite recently, there was an enormous portrait of her at a much older age, entitled 'Aunt Paquita' by her great-nephew, Paul Delprat, on the wall above the stairs leading down to the main collection of the Barr Smith Library. Wearing a brown coat, she is standing in the foreground of a surrealist landscape of yellow and white. Until I looked at this portrait again, I had been under the impression that her hair was cut short in a severe style reminiscent of the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Picasso. In fact, her hair is hidden under a hat pulled tightly down on her head but the effect is the same. Her hair had started

to thin by the late 1950s and she had her hair cut short to try and disguise this; letters reveal that she later resorted to wearing a wig.

In the portrait, an elephant, partially hidden, stands behind her. Above is a white expanse and, in the distance, the faint outline of a figure, also in white, wearing a top hat. In 1917 Paquita had a dream about an elephant while holidaying in South Africa. She described the dream in a letter to her mother. A woman called Gladys discovers a rare breed of elephant which is distinctive from other elephants, mainly by the fact that it is so small (it only grows to eight feet in height) and has an especially long trunk. In the painting, Paquita is taller than the elephant and wide enough to conceal most of its body. In the story, the elephant turns on Gladys and kills her but Paul, who knew of the dream, doesn't recall this sinister end. For him, the elephant represents Paquita's father in his role as protector. His nickname was 'baby elephant' because he had a large nose and because he was quite small and strong. He could crack walnuts in his bare hands.

The white suggests Antarctica and the small figure in the distance, Mawson; an Australian flag beside him, a symbol of his pioneering spirit. Yet he is tiny and far off; it is Paquita who dominates the composition. She almost dwarfs the elephant, and although she stands in a vast landscape on a canvas taller than her in real life, she has a huge presence.

Paquita sat twice for Paul and, while he worked, she talked enthusiastically. Always impatient to get things done, she looked out of the corner of her eye at regular intervals and enquired: 'Have you got me?', adding teasingly, 'Is this my best angle?' I met Paul one day for lunch in Sydney at the Julian Ashton Art School in the Rocks, where he works. His grandfather started the school, the oldest of its kind in Australia. 'Aunt Paquita' was exhibited in his first solo exhibition at the Bonython Gallery in North

Adelaide. His respect and admiration for his aunt was very apparent, and I remember him saying that she was a woman who valued tradition but was never afraid to be original.

In contrast to the Dankbaar portrait, Paul Delprat's portrait evokes her strength and her uniqueness. This is the Paquita who wrote to the Minister for the Army in 1940 with the proposal that 'all women in Australia should be taught, as soon as possible, to shoot and to handle guns and ammunition'; the Paquita who fought bushfires and learnt to ski at the age of 50. I think Paul captures all of this in his portrait, as well as her obvious charisma that prevailed despite, and perhaps because of, the strong characters of her father and husband. It is not a flattering painting but it is a good likeness even if her warmth is missing—she was a very tactile and demonstrative person but she looks severe and it is hard to imagine her standing on her front lawn with her arms outstretched ready to sweep up her grandchildren as she was wont to do.

There are other portraits of Paquita, and almost all are large or bold. There is one by Adelaide-based Latvian artist, Ingrid Erns, now held in the National Gallery of Australia. It shows her seated in a white wicker chair. She looks as though she's wearing make-up suitable for the stage. Her rouged cheeks belie her sallow complexion, and she is dressed, uncharacteristically in bright colours, perhaps more a stamp of the artist's style than her own. But this is my favourite portrait of her. This is 'Lady Mawson' who opened health centres around the country in her role as President of the Mothers and Babies Association, who hosted dinners and sang at charity functions.

One portrait I have in my house, which belongs to my aunt Stella, was apparently painted in the same sitting as the one by Ingrid Erns. It was done by a family friend but the clothes are different; she is wearing red, and she is less made up. I am minding this portrait for Stella, who I imagine will one day take it home to Berlin, but she seems in no hurry to

reclaim it. In the meantime, I have hesitated to hang it up. It remains propped on a chest of drawers in my spare room. It is not an unpleasant painting but sometimes I want to turn it around so I can't see it. Like the portrait of Paquita as a young woman, it is a bit spooky, though for different reasons. It is one I would rather not pass in the night.

If I look between the slats of the blind in my bedroom, I can see into my courtyard and when it is still light enough, I can see a white plaster of Paris bust of her. Because it is white, it glows a little in the twilight. There are several copies of this bust, all owned by members of the family, but no one knows which one is the original. Who is the real Paquita, I wonder? Her father made it. Having dreamt of becoming a sculptor as a boy, he took up sculpting in the 1930s when in his late seventies during which time he was commissioned by the principal of the Blind Institute in Melbourne to make a bust of Louis Braille. Having no portrait or description to work from, he fashioned a face that would embody Braille's high ideals, intellect and kindness. 'I gave him a kind mouth', he said, 'and eyes that are closed in blindness'. Although Paquita's eyes aren't closed, there is a certain serenity about her, perhaps because her whole head and face are white, her features not shaded in. However, the birds have given her colour and definition. They tend to leave their droppings on her head, and green moss grows on her neck, under her eyes, around her nose, and in the grooves between the strands of her hair. She presides over the outside table, and I am always vaguely aware of her staring in my direction when I am sitting out there with friends as she used to watch over me as a child. Yet, this is not the abiding image of her. The one that prevails for me is of her as an old woman, in the bath or with Trinidad (perhaps because these are my earliest impressions of her), whereas Mawson remains ageless in my mind as he does in the public imagination. The image that endures is the Hurley photograph of him in a balaclava.

When I open my front door, the first thing I see on the wall ahead of me, is a framed 100 dollar note, ‘a grey ghost’, with his face on it. This particular bank note belonged to an elderly lady who, over many years, stashed thousands of dollars under her floorboards in the event of having to escape her alcoholic husband. The money had been there for so long that most of it was in old paper notes, before the polymer bills came out. My godmother, who knew this lady, bought me one. This note, long since out of circulation, was replaced by the ‘Jolly green giant’ in 1996, and Mawson’s face by Dame Nellie Melba’s, who incidentally donated one hundred pounds to the AAE. Yet, like his hut, which stubbornly remains standing in the windiest place on earth, never entirely buried, even in the heaviest snowfalls, this image of Mawson in a balaclava threatens to cancel out all the other portraits of him. It continues to resurface as the definitive image while the cross-sections of geological strata behind him, representative of his long career in science, are barely noticed, and other Douglas Mawsons are tucked away half-forgotten in rooms around The University of Adelaide and in family drawers. Immortalised as a young man in the frame of his balaclava, to some he never grows old; he is forever an explorer who might never have lived another day after 1914.

Author's Note

In this creative thesis I have consulted and cited from both published and unpublished sources. Unpublished material includes letters, photographs and scrapbooks held privately by Mawson family descendants; the Mawson/Delprat Papers, The Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia; Records of Sir Douglas Mawson and the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) 1911-1914, Mitchell Library, Sydney; The Mawson Antarctic Collection, University of Adelaide/South Australian Museum. The unpublished diaries of Percival Gray, second mate on the *Aurora* on all three voyages of the AAE, and the diaries of expedition members Walter Hannam, Frank Hurley, Charles Laseron and Archibald Lang McLean provided valuable insights into the expedition and into the character and leadership of Douglas Mawson.

Published sources that were especially useful were books about the Australasian Antarctic Expedition by Mawson and other expedition members, most notably, Douglas Mawson, *The Home of the Blizzard*, William Heinemann 1915; Charles Laseron, *South with Mawson*, George G Harrap 1947; Frank Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, Putnam 1925; John King Davis, *High Latitude*, Melbourne University Press 1962, and *With the 'Aurora' in the Antarctic 1911-1914*, Andrew Melrose 1919. AAE published diaries I drew from include *Mawson's Antarctic Diaries*, edited by Fred and Eleanor Jacka, Allen & Unwin 1988; *Trial by Ice: The Antarctic Journals of John King Davis*, edited by Louise Crossley, The Erskine Press 1997; Stanley Gordon Roberts Taylor, *Antarctic Diary*, Irene Gale 2011; *Still no Mawson: Frank Stillwell's Antarctic Diaries 1911-13*, edited by Bernadette Hince, Australian Academy of Science 2012; Bert Clive Burnell Lincoln, *Diary from SY Aurora – Dec 25th 1912 – March 15th 1913*, www.coolantarctica.com; *Madigan's Account: The Mawson Expedition: The Antarctic Diaries of CT Madigan, 1911-13*, edited by JW Madigan, Wellington Bridge Press 2012; *Rise & Shine: Diary of John George*

Hunter Australasian Antarctic Expedition 1911-1913, edited by Jenny M Hunter, Hunter House Publications 2012.

Two very helpful sources were Peder Roberts, *Specimens, Skins, and Souvenirs: Rethinking the Australasian Antarctic Expedition* (MA Thesis), University of New South Wales 2004, and Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn, and the Myth of the Frontier*, Melbourne University Press 2002.

Other works on the expedition which I consulted include David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook, *Douglas Mawson: The Survivor*, Alella Books 1983, and Beau Riffenburgh, *Aurora: Douglas Mawson and the Australasian Antarctic Expedition 1911-14*, The Erskine Press 2011.

The main sources that I relied on for a wider perspective of Douglas Mawson's life and character include *This Everlasting Silence: The Love letters of Paquita Delprat & Douglas Mawson 1911-1914*, edited by Nancy Robinson Flannery, Melbourne University Press 2000; Paquita Mawson, *Mawson of the Antarctic*, Longmans 1964, and *A Vision of Steel*, Cheshire 1958; *Records and Reminiscences: Geosciences at the University of Adelaide 1875-2000*, edited by John A Cooper, University of Adelaide Department of Geology and Geophysics 2001; William Tannant Edgeworth David, 'Extracts from the Narrative of Professor David' in Ernest Shackleton, *The Heart of the Antarctic*, William Heinemann 1910; Eric Norman Webb, 'An Appreciation' in Lennard Bickel, *This Accursed Land*, Macmillan 1977; Philip Ayres, *Mawson: A Life*, Melbourne University Press 1999; Griffith Taylor, *Douglas Mawson*, Oxford University Press 1962; Reginald Sprigg, *Geology is Fun*, Gillingham Printers 1989; and Archibald Grenfell Price, *The Winning of Australian Antarctica: Mawson's B.A.N.Z.A.R.E. Voyages 1929-31*, Angus & Robertson 1962. *Polar Record* online was also an invaluable source. For information on

not only Douglas Mawson but also Paquita, Pat and Jessica Mawson I referred to national newspaper articles from the early 1900s, Australian newspapers online, Trove – National Library of Australia.

Other sources were articles by Douglas Mawson, many of which appeared in *The Royal Geographical Journal* between 1910 and 1932; three articles on Mawson by Philip Garth Law: ‘The Mawson Story—No.1: A Powerful, Stubborn and Gentle Man’, ‘The Mawson Story No.2—Hungry and Alone in the Antarctic’, and ‘The Mawson Story No.3—Antarctic Triumphs to Remember’, *Royal Historical Society of Victoria Journal*, 1986, as well as radio transcripts from interviews conducted in the 1960s.

Of the nine images included in this thesis those on pages 2,7,17, 54, 90 and 111 are held privately by the Mawson family. The images on pages 69, 136 and 163 belong to the Mawson Collection at the South Australian Museum.