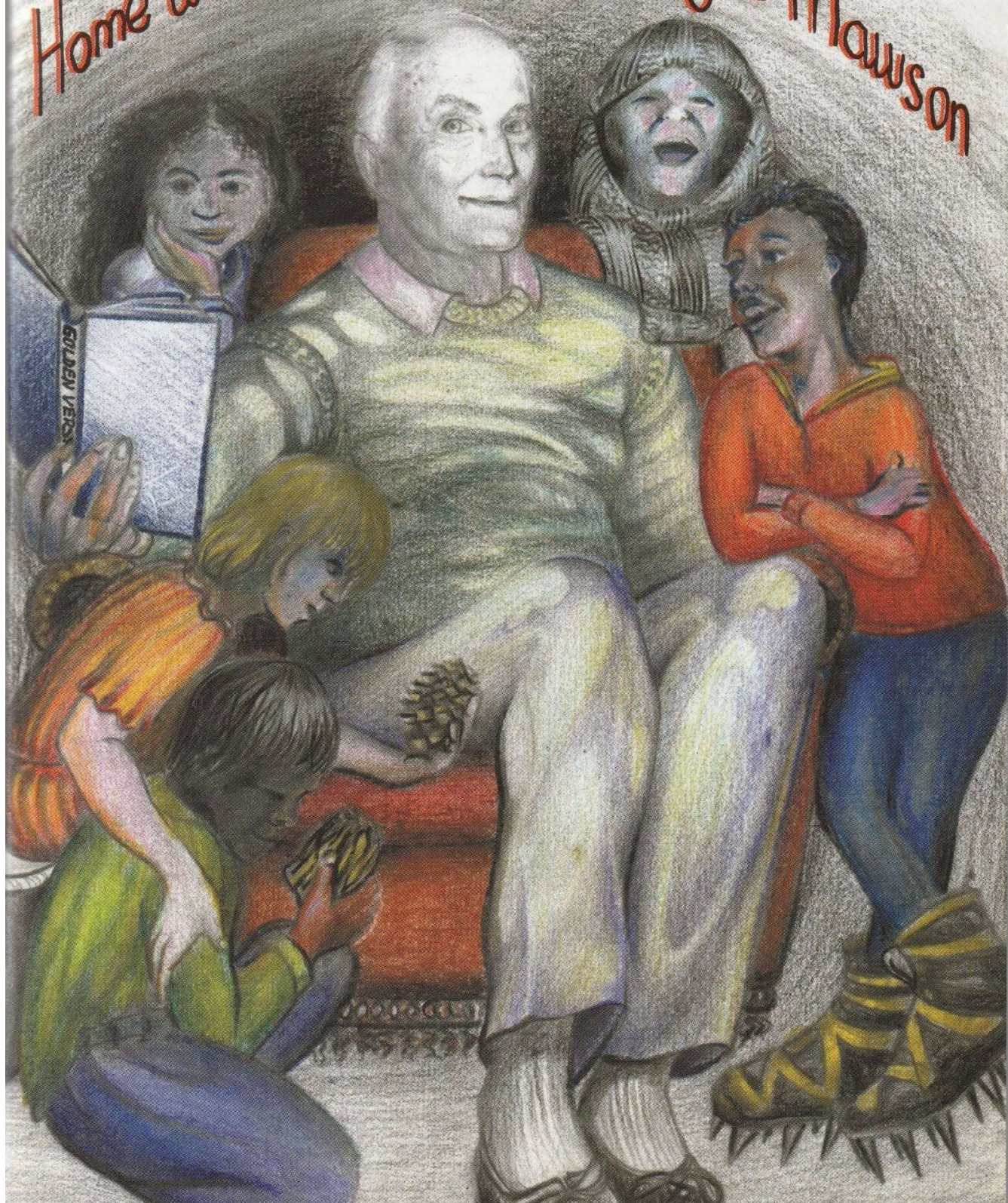


Home and Away with Douglas Mawson





# Home and Away with Douglas Mawson

by Paquita Boston  
assisted by Jessica McEwin nee Mawson

Cover by Markham Boston,  
which depicts his great, great grandfather in old age,  
surrounded by children, discussing geology and trees and poetry, as  
indicated by the rock specimen, the pine cone and the poetry book. He's let  
them try on a balaclava and crampons.

Printed in 1998 and 2000 by Gascoyne Printers, Carnarvon, WA.

In 1998 Yvonne Routledge was the curator of the Mawson Antarctic Collection,  
now on display at the South Australian Museum.

*Dear Reader,*

*Sir Douglas Mawson's life is an inspiration to young  
Australians. This is the story of his childhood, his teen years, his  
family and his old age as well as his heroism.*

*The story boosts enthusiasm for life. People who love finding  
things out will understand his long and enjoyable life of learning and  
discovery. (Also, anyone tempted to give up and die should read this  
first.)*

*This book was prepared by three generations of the Mawson  
family. Jessica and her daughter Paquita are both science graduates  
and great grandson Markham, DA (Art and Design), is a practising  
artist. Proceeds go to preserve and promote the Mawson Collection  
which has been donated by the family.*

*Yvonne Routledge  
14/7/1998*



*Dear Reader,*

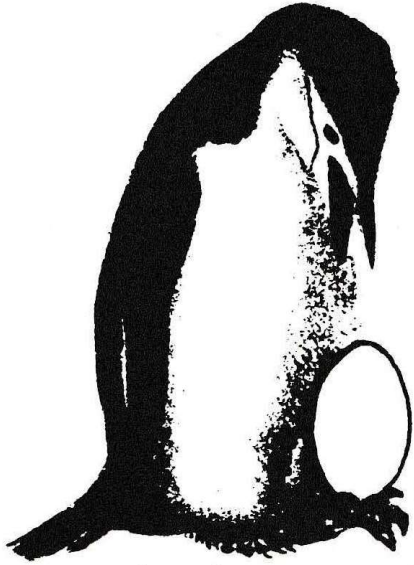
*When our hundred dollar note featured my grandfather some businesses used him to advertise their products, pretending that he was personally promoting their goods.*

*I was told that this was quite legal, because the people on our money are public property, their faces can be used anywhere, except on counterfeit money.*

*So I decided that it was time that Australians got to know their public property grandfather. My mother and my son helped me produce this little book in which I pass on to you your heritage. Gather round, like the children on the cover, and find out what he was really like. You may find you are very similar.*

*Best wishes,  
Paquita.*





## Home and Away with Douglas Mawson

Once upon a time a tall sailor climbed the mast of a big sailing ship. A little boy sat on a pile of rope on the deck of the ship and watched the sailor go higher and higher. The little boy decided to follow him, up, up, higher and higher. The ship sailed on southwards and with every step up the rope ladder he saw further and further south.

“Sailor, get that wee fellow down out of the rigging!” the captain ordered from the bridge.

The barefoot two year old boy squirmed in the sailor’s arm as he was plucked from the rope ladder half way up the ship’s tall mast.

“Plucky little fellow,” the sailor grinned, as he returned young Douglas to his father, Robert Mawson.

Robert guided little Douglas towards his big four year old brother, William, who was playing deck quoits with the other children. There were many families on board, all sailing south for Australia.

Robert had dreamed of this trip for a long time. Soon after his second son Douglas was born he sold the farm his family had farmed for many hundreds of years and said to his wife, Margaret:

“Now, at last, we can set out for the South Seas, to the islands I have read about and dreamed about since I was a boy.”

“Let’s go to Australia first,” said Mrs Mawson, “While the boys are growing up. So they can go to school and you can keep on farming.”

However, in Australia they lived in the bush, a long way from any school.

So Mrs Mawson taught the boys to read and write. Lack of a piano did not stop her from singing. She had a beautiful voice and Mr Mawson had a wonderful memory. He was never short of a story for the boys. He told them tales of ancient Rome and Greece from his study of the Classics, or stories of the South Pacific Islands from the many books he had read.

Mrs Mawson feared all the stories would turn the boys into dreamers. So she made sure they learnt to add up and take away.

“Good boys,” she said after each day’s lessons. “Now go and help your father.”

The boys loved to be outside on the farm but farming in Australia was very different to farming in England and Mr Mawson made losses instead of profits. He tried very hard but everything went wrong. So Mr Mawson sold the farm and they had to move.

Their new home was near a school. Each day William and Douglas walked four miles to school along a path which went past a big camp of Aborigines. The Aborigines often took their pencils and notebooks but the boys said nothing. The Aborigines told them they would drop dead if they said anything but the boys knew it would be no use complaining at home because their mother would just say, “Be pleased that you have a school to go to.”

In those days many children did not go to school. Some white children were kept at home to work for their parents. Worse still, Aboriginal children were not welcome in most schools.

Although Mr Mawson continued to have bad luck, Mrs Mawson made sure the boys knew how lucky they were to be getting an education in this strange, new land where everything was so different to the life they had enjoyed in England.

William and Douglas noticed that their mother did not sing as often as she used to, and at times her lovely face looked tired and worried. Their father was always cheerful. He was an optimist



and made friends easily. He loved being in a land of pioneers.

They moved house again. The boys had to say goodbye to their school friends and to learn to make new friends. Bad luck followed Mr Mawson. He lent one friend some money to build a police station but a big flood washed the building away. He bought land near Sydney and then it dropped in value, in a "land crash".

Douglas was now eleven years old. One night his father told his mother that all the money was gone.

"How shall we live?" she asked.

"Some friends have lent me money. We have a few hundred pounds," their father replied. The boys heard this from their bedroom.

"Oh, Robert my dear," they heard their mother wail, "What you are saying is that we are several hundred pounds in debt. However shall we repay our friends? How shall we raise the boys?"

"Hush, Margaret dear," he said, for Margaret, his brave Margaret, had begun to cry. "Something will turn up."

Their mother was still crying when the boys fell into a troubled sleep.

Luckily, something did turn up. A good friend offered Mr Mawson work in his timber yard in Sydney. It was not exciting work. It wasn't even outdoors. Mr Mawson had to sit in a little office all day and add up lists of numbers, widths of logs, lengths of timber, weights of loads.

It took a long time to pay back all the money but Mrs Mawson did not mind going without new hats and dresses, she did not mind mending the family's clothes, turning stale bread into tasty puddings, making sure nothing was wasted because she was happy. She was happy because now they lived near the best state school in New South Wales, Fort Street Public School in the city.

The boys finished school together. Douglas was sixteen and

William was eighteen. Mr Mawson began talking of an exciting new project in Papua, growing rubber.

Such talk worried Mrs Mawson.

“Don’t worry,” said Mr Mawson, “The headmaster is very pleased with our boys. He says they are bound to win scholarships to study at the university.”

Sure enough, they did. “Congratulations,” she said, hugging them both.

“But mother,” said William, “I want to study medicine. The scholarship is for Literature.”

“So is mine,” said Douglas. “I love books, especially poetry, but I want to be an engineer.”

“And so you shall,” she cried without hesitation. “A doctor and an engineer. That is what a young pioneering country needs. Your father would have been better off learning something like that instead of his beloved Classics, bless him.”

“How shall we manage, mother?” they asked.

“We’ll manage,” she said quietly. “I’ve been thinking about taking in boarders ever since your father first mentioned going to Papua. We’ll turn our home into a boarding house to put you both through university. How proud I am of both of you,” she added, and smiled up at her tall sons.

“And we are proud of you mother,” each said with devotion. How they admired her grit.

Very soon their home was a well respected boarding house. Before going to university each day Douglas and William collected the shoes outside each bedroom door and went downstairs to polish them in the kitchen. They cleaned the stove as well, carried out the cinders and restocked the firewood box. Mrs Mawson taught the boys about household finance.

With Mr Mawson away in Papua, seeking adventure and fortune, first in rubber, then in cedar, then in oil palm, lastly in copra, all with dramatic bad luck, young Douglas took over the victualling



of the big household.

He saved his mother a lot of money by buying groceries wholesale, sides of mutton too, crates of soap and so on. He learnt from his mother what was required and how best to buy it.

Mrs Mawson smiled to herself. Her Douglas was a good helpful boy. But then again he had to be. And he wasn't perfect. Unlike his big brother, Douglas had been removed from the Cathedral Choir for disruptive behaviour. Only William had his mother's fine ear for music. Later, when he moved to the country to become the well loved doctor of the Campbelltown district he took great pleasure in training the local church choir. How proud his mother was of him. Her William, never having had the chance to learn to play a musical instrument could, nevertheless, conduct the choir, read the music and sing every part in perfect tune.

To be an engineer Douglas learnt about machines and bridges and tunnels. His favourite teacher was not an engineer but a geologist who taught them about the rocks under the ground. Engineers had to know about the underground rocks before planning the tunnels. Professor David, the geology teacher, talked of more than just the rocks that block tunnels. He showed Douglas and the others how to read the story of Australia in the rocks. Some parts of the story were missing. Douglas wanted to learn more about the rocks and dreamed of finding the missing parts of the story.

When Douglas finished the engineering course there was a graduation ceremony. His father had been home and gone back to Papua but his mother was there.

"How proud we are of you Douglas. Now you can get a well paid job," said Mrs Mawson.

"I would like that, mother," he said, "but only for your sake. I would like you to rest and no longer have boarders in the house. For my sake, I would like to learn more. I would like to study for



another degree, a Science degree, and specialise in Geology.”

“You are only nineteen, Douglas,” she replied. “Go ahead. We’ll cope.”

“I’ll help all I can, with the boarders,” he replied. “Also, I have been offered some part-time work at the university for one hundred pounds a year. I can study and earn at the same time.”

“No doubt your nice Professor David has helped in this. He must have faith in you,” Mrs Mawson paused to smile. “Go on, Douglas, chase your dream if you must.” But there was a hint of a frown in her smile when she added “I see a lot of your father in you at times.”

Sure enough, young Douglas followed his dream, but he never forgot the practical lessons his mother taught him. When he was preparing to lead the first Australian expedition to the Antarctic he was asked how he knew what to take with him, to feed a ship’s crew there and back and thirty one hungry young men for a year.

“Ask my mother,” he replied, looking at the seventy tons of food in boxes on the wharf. “Mother taught me. Helping at home is the best start you can have in life.”

So far, the story has been in big print and especially worded for children.

The rest of the book is for teenagers, and adults, too.

It’s a story book, a true story.

To use as a history book, list the events. Calculate dates from clues to draw a dateline.

To use as a science book, list equipment and puzzle out each use from hints in the story.

To use as an ethics book, list decisions to be made and how they were reached.

### **To South Australia and Beyond.**

As teenagers Douglas went camping with his brother in the Blue Mountains near Sydney. Now the more Douglas learnt about rocks the more he understood about the mountains. When he graduated as a geologist he moved south to teach about rocks and minerals at Adelaide University.

On university vacations he went way inland, all through the Flinders Ranges and into South Australia’s vast deserts, collecting rocks. On weekends he explored along the coast. Signs in the rocks told him that huge rivers of ice, called glaciers, had scraped and shaped the land many millions of years ago.

This was still happening in a country further to the south. All around the edge of Antarctica glaciers were pushing huge loads of ice down from the highest snowfields in the world into the sea. And not just ice. Ancient rocks which had been buried for eons, scraped along at the bottom of the



ice and fell into the sea.

One day Douglas received a visit from Professor David.

“Great news!” the Prof exclaimed, “Earnest Shackleton’s over here from England. He’s having another crack at the South Pole. He and Scott nearly made it last time. Our government donated to his cause and in return he’s taking an Australian geologist with him.”

Douglas’s heart leapt. Was the Prof going to recommend him? “Bless my heart, he has invited me, at my age, to join him,” said the Prof.

“And rightly so,” Douglas replied, “For you are the best geologist in Australia. Congratulations,” Douglas said and he meant it. All the same, how he wished it had been him.

Professor David smiled. He had not quite finished. “How about coming with me? We go down in summer, when the pack ice melts. So you could travel there and back in the university break. Shackleton has already agreed to it. It’s up to you. I know you are very busy.”

Douglas was busy. He had just discovered uranium in the Flinders Ranges but this was a dream come true. To see an Ice Age in action!

Yes please!” he replied.

The Professor and Douglas were very busy on board the little ship, taking compass readings, collecting sea water and making notes on its temperature and salinity (saltiness).

Sailors can tell where south is by the sun and the stars but as the ship went further and further south the compass began to disagree with the message from the sun.

The ship’s chief officer, young John Davis, agreed with Douglas’s compass readings. He’d seen it happen before. He was two years younger than Douglas but had been at sea for years. What Douglas had learnt in books he had learnt on ships. They became good friends and talked about other ships that had sailed south.

John Davis had the sort of face that looked gloomy even when he was happy. This soon earned him the nickname “Gloomy”. John explained that compass readings changed each trip and his face grew even longer as he and Douglas puzzled this out, unsuccessfully. It remained a mystery, as though whatever was attracting the compass was moving around beneath the earth.

Douglas was meant to stay on board, drop Shackleton and his men off, to start their trek to the South Pole, and return on the ship to Australia. As they crashed through the waves, Douglas asked Shackleton why he wanted to go all the way to the South Pole when there was so much else to discover.

“I want to be first to the Pole,” said Shackleton.

The Professor joined in. “Although no one has been to the South Pole, everyone knows where it is. Why not go somewhere more exciting? To a place no one has been, a location no one knows, the place the compass is pointing us to.”

“Imagine it,” said Douglas, “a place which would make every compass, every magnet on earth stand on its head! Your compass will dip a bit as you get near the South Pole, but why not turn, follow your dipping compass until it stands up and dances on its head! Then come back with a gem that science longs for - the latitude and longitude of the very spot this happens.”

The Professor beamed. Young Mawson had been his keenest student. He hadn’t changed. He explained to Shackleton that scientists needed the position of the South Magnetic Pole in order to understand it.

“That may be so,” said Shackleton, “but my aim is to be first to the proper South Pole.”

That was Shackleton’s battle cry, “First to the Pole”, and he had chosen strong men to assist him. Now he looked at the two Australians. The Professor was a fit man but already fifty years old. However, young Mawson was only twenty-six and used to long expeditions into Australia’s Outback. Shackleton smiled at the blonde, blue-eyed giant - Douglas was six foot three inches tall and exceptionally strong.

“If you think other discoveries are more interesting, why go home on the ship? Why not stay in the Antarctic and go exploring?”

They saw that Shackleton meant it. A whole year in the Antarctic! Huge ice bergs broke



off glaciers and floated out to meet them. There was Erebus, a snow white volcano, rising to meet them as they neared the Antarctic coast. Only one incident marred the day for them. They unloaded the ponies in slings onto the ice. As the tough little ponies waited patiently to be led ashore some killer whales reared up and grabbed at them. Those that were badly wounded had to be put down.

Australia's volcanoes had stopped erupting a long time ago. Erebus, higher than any mountain in Australia, was still active. Shackleton sent the expedition's doctor, an Australian called Alistair MacKay, with Douglas and the Prof, to climb up the side of Mt Erebus and look down into its erupting core. Nobody in the world had done this before.

They collected rare rocks and huge crystals, and looked down into a bowl of red molten lava, rocks so hot they had melted and were on fire and spitting steam a thousand feet into the air. Then the steam froze and fell back on the cold snowy mountainside like stiff white lace.

"Nature is truly amazing," Douglas said to himself. The view from the mountain was just as enchanting as the view into its crater. To the north ice floated on blue sea, islands of rest to penguins, seals and sea birds. To the south lay a vast white land cut in two by a jagged, white, mountain range which pointed the way to the South Pole. He held up his compass but instead of pointing down the mountain range to the South Pole it pointed a little to the right, out west. Out west was a vast white land that no man had ever been and somewhere out there was the Magnetic Pole.

"Why oh why do all the compasses point that way instead of to the Pole?" Douglas asked himself as he walked back down Mount Erebus.

After the long, dark winter, which went surprisingly quickly, they saw Shackleton and his men off to the South Pole. Then the three Australians set out for their mystery spot, the Magnetic Pole.

Shackleton's group nearly reached the South Pole. They had about a hundred miles to go when they wisely turned back. Food was short because the trip was slower than planned. There were not enough ponies to pull the sleds due to the killer whales' attack on landing day.

When Douglas and the Professor and Dr MacKay set out to find the Magnetic Pole they had nothing to haul their sled except themselves. They hauled their heavy sled for 2,000 kilometres over sea ice, up a glacier and over the mountains to the South Magnetic Pole and back down to the coast. They collected rock samples from the few places rocks rose out of the snow and recorded the colour and shape of the ice crystals in the glaciers. Their compass dipped deep, pointing into the snow, at 72 degrees latitude and 15 degrees east longitude, a long way from the South Pole, which is, of course, at 90 degrees latitude and at the spot that all lines of longitude meet.

This trip to the Magnetic Pole was Douglas Mawson's apprenticeship in Antarctic travel.

He learnt what to take, how to pack it on the sleds, and how to put up a tent in a gale. They had to ration the food carefully and fairly, and ensure the wheel out behind the sled kept turning, for this "sledgometer" recorded the distance they travelled each day. And they looked after each other, by treating snow blindness with little pills under the eye lids and by pulling each other up out of crevasses.

Crossing glaciers was always dangerous because the ice moved along at different speeds which caused deep cracks. Sometimes these wide cracks, called crevasses, were hidden by a lid of snow. If a man stepped onto that snow lid he would fall through to his death unless the sled he was pulling acted as an anchor. Then his friends pulled him up by his towing rope. Sometimes they fell through the snow just walking near the tent. The Prof never lost his manners, for even at times like this he would simply say, "Anyone up there? Very busy? I have fallen into a crevasse and need pulling out," or "Sorry to trouble you but I cannot hang on much longer."

Most importantly Douglas learnt how to keep track of where they were in a wide world of snow and ice with very few land marks. He learnt it so well that when the Professor's strength failed Douglas took over and led them to the spot on the edge of the great white continent which Gloomy and the Captain had pointed to on the ship's chart. Douglas knew he was "spot on" when



the ship arrived to take them home to Australia.

He was given a hero's welcome back in Adelaide. His students carried him shoulder high out of the university and along North Terrace.

One lady out shopping joked to her friend, "Look at them! No wonder the students love him. He missed lectures all year!"

Her friend said, "I've heard the university paid him anyway, but he won't accept it. He's paid it all back."

Adelaide was proud of him. His family was too. His father wrote from Papua: "I have been greatly rejoiced by your joint achievements. You have done your share in upholding the honour of your adopted Country - both as a man of science and a man of action. Personally, to me your success has been a great tonic."

### **Planning an Expedition**

Douglas and the Professor had carried their rock samples back to Australia and now they compared them with the rocks on Australia's south coast. Some of them were identical!

"This could mean that it's true, Alfred Wegener's new idea that continents move around and match up like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle!" said the Professor. "He hasn't published yet. We should write to Germany and tell him about these matching rock samples."

"But the Antarctic is not mapped. Without a shape to its coast line it remains a missing piece in any puzzle." said Douglas, wondering if the coast out west of Mt Erebus did indeed fit like a jigsaw piece into the Great Australian Bight.

There was so much to find out. Douglas could not forget the panoramic view from Mt Erebus. In January 1911 he went to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science to ask for help.

"I want to go south again and find out more about Antarctica west of Erebus, map the coast, find the Magnetic Pole again and see how much it has moved, map the glaciers, collect more rocks, measure the wind, sample the sea ..." Douglas would have gone on and on but Professor David was at that meeting. He held up his hand.

"It's a good idea," said the Prof, "and, although I am too old to go again, I will lend you some equipment from my laboratory."

"Me, too," said another professor, "I have many experiments that I would like you to do for me in the Antarctic. There is much to discover."

A third professor said the same.

The Chairman said, "You will have to take a big team of scientists with you to make the trip worthwhile. We can offer you one thousand pounds, but it won't be nearly enough. I suggest you ask the rich and powerful people of the land for more."

At that time all the rich and powerful people in Australia had gone to England to see the coronation of the new King. Douglas did not wait for them to come home. He went to England. It was easier to find them all together in London, instead of scattered over Australia. Three rich Australians gave him a thousand pounds each!

Robert Scott, the English explorer, thought Douglas Mawson had arrived in London to join his expedition. Two thousand young men had applied to go with Scott to the South Pole.

So when Douglas said, "No thank you, I am busy arranging an Australian expedition," Scott was very surprised.

"Surely you will not give up such a chance for glory?" he asked the young Australian.

"For me it is not so much the love of adventure but the adventure of discovery," Douglas explained. "I am a scientist. I'll not be competing with you for the Pole, but I am honoured that you asked me."

Collecting money in England now became a problem for Douglas. He wasn't allowed to ask the English for money while Scott was collecting funds, but he was able to recruit two men whom

Scott did not want.

The two men, Xavier Mertz and Lieutenant Ninnis, loved dogs and knew how to look after them as sled dogs. However, Scott insisted on ponies, not dogs, to pull his sleds. So Mertz and Ninnis set out to find strong sled dogs, huskies, from Greenland for Douglas, for the Australian expedition.

Then Douglas met up with John Davis. His young shipmate was twenty-seven now and had been promoted.

“Gloomy,” Douglas exclaimed, shaking his hand, “I’m planning an Australian expedition to the Antarctic. Will you take us there?”

“Captain Davis at your service sir,” and the young man’s normally serious face split into a grin.

“You’ll have to choose a good strong ship,” Douglas said. “Strong enough to get us all home again through the ice. I’ve only got enough money for a deposit. We’ll have to sell it afterwards to pay back the money! In fact, I haven’t very much money at all. Our Australian Prime Minister wants us to go but we have not had any money from the government yet. The English newspapers want to help us but they are not allowed to.”

“Never mind. We’ll show them. We’ll go anyway, even in a cutter,” said the young sea captain and the two men shook hands on it.

“That’s a promise,” said Douglas. “We’ll go anyway.”

### **Packing an Expedition**

Douglas left a day before the Coronation. He was keen to be home in Australia. There was so much to do. Besides, he’d fallen in love with a girl called Paquita. Just before leaving for London, he had asked her to marry him. His brother William had married a lovely nurse called Jessie. They already had two little girls.

Paquita had four big sisters but at eighteen was the tallest. Her two brothers were studying engineering and medicine, her sisters studied medicine and music and they all spoke in many languages. Douglas was not used to such a large family, such a babble of voices.

Paquita’s family had arrived in Australia when she was eight years old. They arrived in summer and so the first sentence she learnt to say in English was “May I please leave the classroom to get a drink of water?” (She was not allowed to.) Now at eighteen she joined in the lively family conversations in English, Dutch, French and Italian, with a bit of Spanish too, for although her family came from Holland she had been reared in Spain.

One day her father, Mr Delprat, took her with him on a business visit to a mine at Broken Hill, a town which had many visitors, especially geologists. At a dinner party in Broken Hill they met a young geologist called Douglas Mawson. He was exploring the Barrier Ranges at Broken Hill while on holiday from the Adelaide University. Paquita was very pleased to meet him. She didn’t tell him that she had seen him before, in a crowd at a university football game, and already fallen in love with his smile.

Back in Adelaide Douglas visited the Delprat’s home for dinner and, realizing that she liked music, invited Paquita with her sisters or her mother out to theatres and concerts. One evening, on the veranda of the Delprat’s beach house, he proposed to Paquita and asked Mr Delprat for her hand in marriage.

Mr Delprat was outraged. “I don’t mind the fact that you have very little money,” he said, “I didn’t have much money when I married my dear Henrietta, but I do mind the fact that you propose to my daughter and at the same time plan to go away, first to London and then on a very risky trip to the Antarctic!”

Paquita soon persuaded her father that there was no possibility that Douglas would change his mind, either about her or about the trip. Now, as Douglas stepped ashore back in Australia, he was overjoyed to see Paquita and hear from her that everyone was behind him, even his future



father-in-law, that they would all help him prepare and pack for the trip.

What a busy time it was, preparing, planning, raising more money and packing. There was not much money but Australians wanted to help. Some businesses donated food - tons of meat, ham, bacon, soup, fruit and vegetables, sugar, golden syrup, milk powder, cereals, butter, cheese and cooking grease. Altogether forty-four tons of it, either tinned or dried.

“How lucky we are to live in Australia. Such bounty!” Paquita exclaimed as she packed the last of the two and a half tons of dried fruit.

“And look! A ton of cocoa and half a ton of chocolate!”

Meanwhile Douglas turned to another stack of boxes. They were full of scientific equipment - hypsometers and magnetometers, transit theodolites and sextants, chronometers and heliographs, anemometers, azimuths and sledgemeters, self-recording tide gauges, cameras, telescopes, compasses, a deep sea dredge and even a box of artists' materials.

There were two wireless sets, complete with motors and dynamos. Radio, or wireless as it was called, had not been tried in Antarctica before. Douglas hoped to contact his men on Macquarie Island and thence Australia. There were long steel cables to reach three thousand fathoms to the bottom of the sea and heavy coils of rope to attach to a dredge.

“A deep-sea dredge, from the Prince of Monaco,” Douglas explained, as Paquita read from the list. “He's keen on marine studies. I spoke to him in Paris on his way to the King's coronation. We shall use it to collect things from the sea floor.”

A huge medical chest was donated for the trip and the dogs were not forgotten - a second chest contained medicines for them.

Woollen clothing from Australia and New Zealand was added to the woollen caps, gloves and blankets Douglas had bought in England. Paquita made brightly coloured cloth bags to store biscuits, chocolates and other sledging supplies.

“Bright red and yellow and orange will be a welcome sight down there amongst all the snow,” she explained.

Douglas smiled at her. “Donations are coming in. I am so happy that you are here helping me and yet I feel I must be mad to leave you.”

Paquita just smiled. She knew there would be no turning back.

“Am I mad?” he said. “I have spent all my own savings on the trip. I shall have nothing to offer you when I come back. In fact, I shall be deep in debt, for the donations are wonderful but not enough.”

“You will have your job at the university,” she said calmly and added with a smile, “And you will have me. Besides, you have said yourself a publisher will pay for a book about the expedition.”

Douglas did not tell her that he had been paid in advance and spent that money on supplies and equipment. Besides packing, there was much planning to be done. Douglas spent many hours with university professors planning the experiments and listing the necessary scientific measurements.

Sometimes, at the end of a busy day, Douglas relaxed with the Delprats at their beach house in Brighton. One night he and Paquita sat on the veranda in the cool breeze listening to the waves. Inside her mother showed one of the girls a new lace stitch while another sat at the piano. Music floated out to them from the sitting-room. Paquita sighed. It was a night just like this that Douglas had proposed, with music from the sitting-room and the sea mingling together.

If only time could stand still, she wished. Then she reminded herself, the quicker Douglas goes, the quicker he comes back.

“Your little hut will not be unlike this,” she said to him. “Not unlike a beach house perched on the edge of an ocean. The same ocean.”

Douglas roared with laughter. “Any verandas would be ripped right off by the wind,” he said, “And as for the view ...”

“Of course,” agreed Paquita, “It is better to be warm than have big picture windows. Besides, you will be in darkness almost all day in winter. What will you do all day? Especially

when it is too dark to go outside?"

"Oh, one can always keep busy," he assured her. "We shall be a hive of activity, preparing for the spring expeditions. Besides, the very wind that keeps us in the hut will bring us fresh information, from around the world!"

Now that Paquita and Douglas were engaged her father said there was no need for her to go to university. However, that did not stop her attending evening lectures with her family, especially if Douglas was the guest speaker. She liked the way Douglas explained his work. Now she asked him about the wind.

"It's an ill wind that blows no good at all. I have heard that before," she laughed. "But how can it be true in this case? I am intrigued. Please, do explain."

"The wind carries information from all over the world," said Douglas, "So it is very useful." He smiled at her eager face, with the creamy skin, dark, dark eyes now wide with expectation, under the mass of dark hair, always so firmly pinned up on her head. He'd rather take the pins out and make discoveries of his own than lecture his young fiancée on katabatic winds, but she really did want to know and it simply did not do for a girl to let her hair down.

"In winter the air over the South Pole gets colder and colder. The colder it gets, the heavier it gets. It falls to the earth, and air from all around, high in the sky, rushes in to fill the space it leaves behind. So, air from all over the world is sucked southwards, then down to the Pole."

"And how are these gases delivered to your little hut, which is not after all going to be at the South Pole?" Paquita asked him.

"Well, the wind does not stop at the Pole. It hurtles down-hill to the sea," Douglas replied. "Because snow keeps on falling and turning into ice, there is a high cap of ice inland and the cold air speeds in a powerful katabatic wind all the way down the ice cap to the sea."

"Like a child on a kindergarten slide," exclaimed Paquita, "And your little hut will be at the bottom of the slippery dip, by the sea! You will get the full force of it!"

"Yes, we shall have to build our hut and settle into it before the winds start. The colder it gets the stronger they will blow, bringing air from all over the world into our hut. Did you see the box of white paper we packed, with the Singer sewing machine and the books? We shall soak the paper in potassium iodide, and depending on the amount of ozone in the air, it will change colour."

"Is that important? The amount of ozone in the air?" Paquita asked.

"Yes, it is," replied Douglas. "It tells us about the world's atmosphere."

"Then I can see that the wind does blow some good. Like the proverb, it is not all bad," she smiled. "I shall think of it leaving messages on the little white notes left out in the hut."

Planning and packing was secondary to the most important part of all, choosing the men. They were the youngest group ever to set out for the Antarctic. Only five were older than thirty, two were nineteen and the rest in their twenties. Douglas himself was twenty-nine.

Besides his thirty-one explorer-scientists, there was the ship's crew, with their Captain, "Gloomy" Davis, still in his twenties. Gloomy had set sail from England and was on his way to Hobart, packed with further supplies plus young Ninnis and Mertz and a deck full of huskies.

Douglas was very confident that he had chosen men of good character.

"They may be young," he told his future father-in-law, "But I have chosen tempered youth. They all have skills and the character to keep going when all appears hopeless. I need young men for their fitness but I looked for old heads on those fit young shoulders. It's easy to be keenly enthusiastic at an interview and to prove one is skilled but I have to be sure a man not only knows his work but can work, doggedly on, against the odds when necessary, and remain pleasant company."

"Moral fibre as well as muscle fibre," said Mr Delprat, drawing deeply on his cigar.

"Smokers and drinkers at the bottom of the list, no doubt?"

Mr Delprat knew that Douglas did not smoke and drank very little alcohol. (What Douglas liked to drink was milk and lots of it.)

"In theory one could say a man is better without such habits," replied Douglas, "but then



again, the way a man handles alcohol and tobacco is a clue to his character and self-control.”

Mr Delprat chuckled. This man, who had won his daughter’s heart only to leave her, certainly had wisdom beyond his years and would make a good leader.

Soon all the well-wishing and farewell speeches were over. Douglas took Paquita aside for one heartfelt kiss and was gone.

## Going South

Douglas arrived in Hobart in time to see Gloomy in the Aurora come in under full sail with the huskies jumping in excitement amongst the deck cargo. Ninnis and Mertz tied up the dogs and popped the new born pups into a crate so the boxes could be opened in peace.

Some contained gifts from English, Dutch and Irish companies - thirteen tons of flour, three tons of biscuits, four tons of canned fish, a ton of sauce and pickles, two tons of jam and a ton of marmalade, a ton of tea and coffee.

This was all carefully checked against the list and then altogether one hundred tons of supplies had to be carefully packed into four separate stacks, one for each base. Each box had to be a handy size to lift, about twenty-five kilograms and, so that the stacks could not get mixed on unloading, each pile was colour coded with bands around the boxes.

Fur sleeping bags and fur boots called finneskos, bought in Norway and wolfskin mitts from Lapland were added to the clothing. More boxes contained sleds, dog harness, heavy ski-boots and finnesko crampons, which made walking on ice possible in the fur boots which had been procured along with the dogs.

There was not much space for personal belongings. When young Leslie Blake, the twenty-one year-old geologist bound for the Macquarie Island base, arrived from Brisbane his “Boss”, Dr Mawson, nodded approval at his small pile of things.

“Excellent choice,” the Boss said of a red book bearing “Treasury of Australian Verse” on its spine. “May I?” he asked and ran his eye down the contents. All his favourites were there, Patterson, Lawson and the rest.

“Good stuff, poetry, it sustains a man like rich chocolate and what’s more, it’s there to be eaten at will, over and over again. Good choice.”

The Boss, as they called Douglas, smiled as he returned the book.

Many sightseers visited the wharf. Amongst them were journalists, for the Australian newspapers kept everyone well abreast of progress. Although he was not a doctor like his brother, he was called Dr Mawson in the newspapers because he had passed extra science exams.

“Dr Mawson plans four bases, one at Macquarie Island and three dotted along the Antarctic Coast,” the journalists reported, but this plan changed at the last minute.

“Like it or not,” Douglas said to Gloomy, “We are affected by the race to the South Pole. You remember I told Scott that we’d be landing at Cape Adare to make a base? And he planned bases at McMurdo Sound and the Bay of Whales?”

“Yes, I do,” said the young ship’s captain, nodding his gloomy face. “But his ship’s back and I have just heard Scott landed a party at our spot!”

“Exactly,” said Douglas. “The Bay of Whales was already taken by Amundsen. We are like sea birds clamouring for a piece of free rock to secure our nests. As for Amundsen, his plans were ruined by the Americans. Since they beat him to the North Pole, he’s turned his attention south.”

Douglas had read all he could about that first trip to the North Pole - two Americans, Robert Peary and Matt Henson, one white and one black and four Eskimo helpers. Three separate races, helping each other on the race to the North Pole. The white man and the black man adapting to the world of the Inuit, as the Eskimos called themselves.

“We shall have to change our plans,” he said to Gloomy. “Adapt ourselves to the circumstances. After Macquarie Island we’ll set up two huts not three. Two huts can be combined to take double the number of men at the first place we find solid rock above the snow. Then you’ll

leave us and sail on further west to set up the other group.”

“Like we said back in England, we’ll go anyway!” said Gloomy, smiling and looking longingly out to sea.

Douglas smiled gleefully at the brilliant young sea captain he had grown to depend on. Gloomy excelled at the difficult job of packing the Aurora. The little ship was only nine metres wide and forty-nine metres long, and besides the hundreds of tons of expedition cargo Gloomy made room for coal, his crew, the dogs and the men as well.

“We can lash the sledges to the ship’s rails,” Gloomy told Douglas, “That will make room for the aero-tractor. But we’ll need another ship to take supplies to Macquarie Island and then top us up with coal.”

“A support ship it is then,” nodded Douglas. “We’ll raise the money somehow.”

Douglas managed to raise sixty pounds from two lectures before departure day on December 2nd, 1911. “Ready at last,” said Douglas when at four o’clock that day hundreds of Australians gave them a grand send off from Hobart’s wharf.

They sailed south for ten days, through the “Roaring Forties”, against gales from the west which threatened to blow them off course as well as wash their cargo overboard. They arrived to find another, smaller ship had not made it through the rough seas, but lay wrecked near Macquarie Island. The shipwrecked men ran out of a sealer’s hut to meet them.

“Thank God, you have come to save us,” one shouted.

“No, we haven’t,” Douglas shouted back. “But you can travel back to Tasmania on our back-up supply boat. It will be here soon.”

“And our cargo?” the man shouted, pointing to barrels of penguin oil on the beach.

“We shall not charge you much to take it with you,” Douglas assured them and to Gloomy he said, “Just enough to cover the cost of hiring our support boat! What luck!”

They all had a busy, wonderful time amongst the lush terrain and wild life of Macquarie Island. Everyone agreed with Douglas that the island should be a nature reserve. On Christmas Day they said goodbye, tired but happy to have erected a solid wireless mast for the five men they left behind. Between them, these men were skilled in meteorology, geology, biology, cartography, wireless mechanics and radio operations. Builders they were not but they all joined in building “The Shack”, their new home.

Douglas shook hands with their leader, George Ainsworth, “See you in a year’s time!”

The wind and the sea were calmer now. The scientists’ work was easier. Eric Webb in his magnet house on the boat’s stern was no longer tossed about. Biologists noted all the bird species, types of whales, and sea water quality without feeling seasick. Now the meteorologists smiled as they recorded the weather. Soon the cartographers spent all day looking for islands that the old maps showed but simply weren’t there.

“We should be passing Emerald Isle,” someone said. “Either the map is wrong or it has sunk back into the sea.”

“Or floated away!” said another and laughingly pointed to a huge ice berg coming over the horizon.

It was a monster, miles long and flat topped like an island. In fact, in a mist it would look exactly like an island. No wonder the early explorers drew them on their maps and gave them island names.

Soon they were surrounded by towering icebergs all floating west. Some had caves at sea level, honeycombed out by the waves. Then they entered pack ice, frozen sea.

“Well, look at that!” said Frank Hurley as he reached for his camera. Penguins and seals travelled about on the floating pack ice, safe from the killer whales. How the men chuckled as some penguins floated on a pack ice ‘gondola’, in and out of the icy caverns of a nearby berg.

While Hurley photographed the amusing scene, Arthur Hodgeman the artist tried to capture the pastel shades of pink in the ice. Each berg differed in hue, from soft greens to blues and lavenders.



After New Year's Day the sea leopards and crab eater seals were joined by Weddell seals. This meant land was near. Then petrels of many kinds flew out to meet them. They sailed west along the cliffs of ice, mapping as they went. At last, they found what they wanted, rock rising above the snow, but there was no way they could land. Another two days and more rock rose up behind a bay which was not yet iced in.

Gloomy sailed the Aurora into this bay they called Commonwealth Bay and advised Douglas to unload quickly. Everyone worked long hours, which was easy, for in summer Antarctica is the land of the midnight sun. Gloomy did not want to be iced in for winter. So he was happy to leave Douglas and seventeen scientists at Commonwealth Bay and continue on westwards with the remaining seven scientists and their team leader Frank Wild.

After nearly four more weeks at sea, they gave up looking for more rock and Wild's men were forced to make a base on a shelf of ice. Gloomy sailed in close and they rigged up a flying fox to hoist the cargo ashore.

"Hurry, hurry," said Gloomy. "I had not planned to come this far west. If I do not get home safely I'll be unable to come and get you next summer."

Another ship some years back had been iced in on February the 22nd and had to wait until the ice melted ten months later! Gloomy sailed away to the north on February the 21st as Wild and his men set up the Western Base. They moved their supplies and their nine sledge dogs 600 metres back from the edge of the ice shelf and began building their hut. The next day the shelf broke off into the sea, leaving a thirty metre ice cliff. A lucky escape, but now there was no way down to the seals on the pack ice below, no extra dog meat.

Meanwhile the other nineteen dogs back at Commonwealth Bay were more than happy with their new home, outside in the snow next to the big hut which Douglas and his men built on the rock.

A weather screen was set up on another rock for the thermometers, the thermograph and hydrograph, with a wind vane on the top and a nephoscope nearby. The dogs were exercised and every one practised snow skiing with the help of Xavier Mertz, Swiss ski champion. Soon some of the sledges were fitted with sails and the wind used to advantage.

The wind rarely stopped. It wrecked the radio mast, and dashed their hopes of radio contact to The Shack on Macquarie Island, but there was still much to be done. Webb's hut had to be away from everything else so that metal pots and pans would not upset the magnet readings. If it was calm on a Sunday the Boss postponed Divine Service so they could work without the wind.

They were always busy, taking weather and tide readings and other measurements as well as daily jobs like cutting blocks of ice to melt for the kitchen. Soon the wind blew so hard that the hut was covered in snow and hard to find. When they did find it they would put heads in the door, about to step inside, and be blown back again.

How the men inside laughed to see a face appear at the hut door only to disappear, reappear, disappear again.

"Like a puppet on a string," chuckled Ninnis. He'd just been out himself to feed the dogs and now it was his turn to cook. He saw it was Bage struggling to get inside. Bage had been down to read his tide gauge.

"The wind's blowing the waves back and up into fantastic shapes," Bage announced. "Hurley's down there with his camera, crawling along the ice on his stomach so he's not blown into the sea."

When Hurley entered and hurried into his dark room Douglas looked up with approval. Hurley was great value. If he had a spare minute he could be found head down, digging through the ice, taking samples as he went, to help record the nature of each layer - dust in the ice from a far off eruption, ash from a distant bushfire, rocks from the inland and meteorites from outer space, all trapped in the ice as clues to the past. Even ice density told a story. Hurley was a good all-rounder as well as a good photographer. Others were the same, getting on with their own work yet always ready to lend a hand.

There was, however, an odd man out. He went by the nickname of the “Toggle King” for he had a mania for toggles on his clothing - smooth lengths of stick instead of buttons. It was easier to loop these with cords than push buttons through holes with mittened hands. He spent a lot of time on sewing for himself, so that he was covered with sticks and cords, but disliked helping others. He slept in and complained a lot.

At first Douglas tried kind persuasion to get him to join in. This did no good. The Toggle King would not even do the simple jobs, like collecting ice to melt for kitchen water. Some of the men thought Douglas was too easy on the lazy fellow. They were pleased when their Boss resorted to ordering him to get up and “pull his weight.”

The Toggle King obeyed but tried to get his own back by sneaking some precious port wine. Douglas had tried friendly persuasion, and then firm orders, and now he poured laxative into the wine bottle which he suspected the lazy chap drank from each night. Sure enough, the next day the Toggle King spent hours in the cold latrine, outside the Hut’s door, in the icy entrance passage. After that he snapped out of his silly, lazy mood and became another valuable team member.

By now, they nearly all had nicknames. “X” suited their only real foreigner, Xavier Mertz, of flashing white smile and dashing black moustache. Most were Australian or from New Zealand. “Dad” was one of the ‘old ones’, over thirty. The fresh-faced English lieutenant, Belgrave Ninnis, was called “Cherub”. Douglas was the Boss or DI, short for Dux Ipse, Latin for undisputed leader, for he was a popular leader, never asking anyone to do anything that he would not do himself.

### **Antarctic Winter**

The autumn days grew shorter and the wind grew louder! Also, the ice began to crack like a cannon. The wind’s moan turned to a roar. Early in April the last bird flew away and by May the wind began to shriek. Luckily every chink in the Hut’s walls was now blocked with ice.

Annie, the anometer was blown to pieces. Madigan crawled back into the hut in the dark and blinding wind, which made even breathing difficult, with Annie’s pieces.

“I can still record the wind’s speed,” he said as he began to mend poor Annie. “I can tell by the sound of the shriek how fast it is!”

The darker and colder it got the harder the wind blew until, looking up past wind speed records, they knew beyond doubt they had built their hut at the windiest spot on earth.

Sea water samples were blown right out of their billy cans but, being scientists, this led the men to ponder wind power and how to harness it. What a lot of wasted, mischievous energy. Sometimes, if the wind stopped, the men stopped to listen. They could hear the silence!

The wind continually surprised them. Not only did it break their gear, often as soon as it was mended, it also gave them huge delight. At first the snow it carried, drift snow, was a great nuisance, for everything was covered after a blizzard.

As the months continued the wind swept the inland clean. It carried less snow and in finer particles and as they impacted on the weather vane it glowed in the dark. This was the scientific electrostatic explanation. It was also known as St Elmo’s Fire and the men all looked like saints if they stood on rock in such a wind and removed their fur mittens to hold up hands which glowed in the dark. Bare heads glowed as well, in an unearthly fashion.

As the days grew shorter the sky was a constant source of wonder, sometimes as red as a bushfire only to change to green all afternoon, with the ice appearing jet black in the early sunset. Other times the sun on the clouds gave such a kaleidoscope of colour in the sky and reflected so gaily in the ice that the men stopped thinking of their new home as the great white land. Best of all were the auroras, moving sheets and curtains of colours in the night sky due to magnetic affect.

Birthdays were always celebrated with a special dinner and entertainment to follow. Songs were composed by the more poetic in the hut. Plays were staged. Once little Blizzard, the favourite husky puppy, was dressed up to play the part of a monkey.

Douglas told them about a book which Shackleton’s group had published, about fifty copies,



in the long winter months of 1908. As the youngest, his contribution was a piece of early science fiction.

“It was a job well done,” he said, “We had a printing press and our artist made a good job of the illustrations. Ten of us wrote for it, mostly light and imaginary stuff. We called the book *Aurora Australis*. Had quite a print run, I am proud to say, all properly bound with packing case or seal skin covers. I wonder what’s become of them all.”

Someone suggested publishing a monthly magazine. No sooner said than done! Dinner menus, newest member of the Crook Cook’s Association, poems and jokes all went into it. The only subject not allowed into print was the wind. They heard it all day and night. They did not want to read about it too.

They called the magazine “The Adelie Blizzard”, for they were living in Adelie Land. Long ago a French explorer had seen this very piece of coast from his ship. He named it after his wife Adelie and claimed the land, from the coast all the way to the South Pole, for France. Consequently, Adelie Land looked like a thin slice of cake on the map, a piece of iced cake without a foot print on it until Mawson’s mob of young Australians came ashore. Commonwealth Bay and their Hut was just east of the French boundary but until their arrival that whole piece of the Antarctic cake, not just the thin French slice, was called Adelie Land.

In May, Douglas and wireless man Hannam shared a birthday dinner as guests of honour, followed by indoor entertainment and then, by chance, a spectacular aurora. They all went out to admire the rosy pink and red waves which seemed to break on a low shore from a sea in the sky.

Being Australians, the men enjoyed a little gambling, playing at the huntolyette roulette table designed by young Hunter, the biologist from Sydney University and betting on the average hourly wind velocity for the month in a Calcutta Sweep. Archie McClean, their doctor, lost so much on the Calcutta that he had to auction off some of his things to cover his debts! Money was no use to them. They gambled with their Sunday chocolate ration.

By day, even in very little daylight, they continued to enjoy what scientists like doing best, finding things out and gathering evidence to discover more. In the evenings they shared their books, reading aloud from tales of voyage and adventure. There was always fun to be had teaching Mertz to speak English. In his innocence he was led astray to say the wrong thing at times, to give everyone a laugh. Luckily, he had a sense of humour and they loved him for it.

All through the long dark winter they went out of their way to create amusement. Everyone wanted to be in the Adelie Land Band - kettle drum, mouth organ, piccolo, triangle, tin drum, whatever one could lay a hand on. They were a cheerful, hard-working lot. At one Sunday Service, as the full choir sang “Count your many blessings, count them one by one...and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done,” Douglas said to himself, ‘Yes, many people would be surprised to see us now’, and he gave silent thanks for the rich community life they had established in this modern Ice Age.

Great auroral displays were accompanied by magnetic storms which kept “Azi” busy. Eric Webb, the magnetician, was nicknamed after the equipment he used to plot the magnetic lines of force, the azimuth. He was kept busy plotting them up, down and sideways while whoever was on night watch enjoyed the coloured waves of greens and yellows, or pinks and purples. The nightwatchman took hourly weather readings. On a clear night the moon and stars were brighter and more lustrous than anyone had ever seen back in Australia.

Throughout the winter, busy as they were, the men craved spring. As the sun returned, they filled canvas food bags, each bag with supplies for three men for one week. They dried seal meat for the dogs. They went on short runs and then adjusted their gear to suit windy conditions - sewed flaps on clothing to keep out the driven snow, sewed gussets in tents to hold the poles against the wind. Each dog’s harness was re-adjusted to fit.

On October 11<sup>th</sup> the first penguin came ashore.

## **Spring at Last**

“Spring at last!” they all said as the penguins returned, but still the wind raged above gale force.

The Boss knew that busy hands meant healthy minds and fit bodies. He made use of the waiting time to carve out a cave in the ice a few miles above the Hut. Aladdin’s Cave they called it, for the icy interior glittered like jewels. It was a cosy spot, totally sheltered from the wind and the sound of the wind as well. They took off their jackets and “thumb tacked” them to the wall, for the pressure of their thumbs melted the ice for an instant and then it froze again. It was a magic spot indeed.

On November 5th they all sat down together for the Departure Dinner which was the best party of them all.

“Be back no later than January 15<sup>th</sup> !” they reminded each other, for they expected the Aurora to sail into Commonwealth Bay in mid-January.

Support crews of three set out with forward supplies to Aladdin’s Cave. Then the five expeditions set out. Webb, Bage and Hurley set out to find the new position of the South Magnetic Pole. Douglas expected that they would find it had moved since he plotted it in January 1909. Azi said it was moving north-west, towards the Hut. Bickerton’s group went west to investigate the coast and meet up with Wild’s group who were to explore to their east. They tried out the air tractor sledge but the engine’s fans soon iced up and they went on without it.

Stillwell’s group went east to explore the coast nearby. Madigan led his group beyond them, further east, to explore the next huge stretch of coast.

Douglas was the last to leave the Hut, on the 10th November, 1912. Like the others, his was a group of three men. Himself, Lieutenant Ninnis and Xavier Mertz. They planned to go about five hundred miles south east towards the spot Douglas had reached with the Professor, the old location of the South Magnetic Pole. The others man-hauled their sledges but these three used dogs to cover the great distance.

At the same time, two expeditions set out from the Grottoes, the place Wild and his men called home. Their hut, way out west, had no rocky base like Mawson’s Hut and had quickly settled into the snow to become an underground den of ice passages and cosy rooms which they nicknamed the Grottoes. Wild’s group went east and Jones led a group from the Grottoes out west.

In this way, with expeditions in all directions, Douglas hoped he and the others would learn as much as they could of the country he had seen from Mount Erebus, the great section of the Antarctic which may have once been joined to his own country, Australia.

They all kept diaries and made detailed readings of position and weather. Features in the landscape were mapped: nunataks, huge rocks rising out of the snow; mountains and valleys. The mountains could be avoided but deep, wide valleys could not and took up extra walking time. Glaciers were marked on maps and crossed with great difficulty for not only were there crevasses to avoid but also great peaks and pinnacles of shattered and jagged ice to be crossed. These were formed by pressures in the glacier as it flowed over invisible landscape to the sea. After the tight compression of mountain gorges the glacial ice cracked open on the wide plains near the coast.

Then again, those groups who explored inland, thus escaping the danger of the crevasses, discovered high plateaus where they felt the full force of the freezing katabatic winds. Tent bound in howling blizzards they had plenty of time to boil hypsometers and determine their height above sea level. The coastal explorers mapped new islands as well as previously unknown coastline and recorded hordes of wildlife on land, sea and air.

When they left depots of food behind for the return journey, they took care to wrap the food securely and leave it on top of big piles, called cairns, of snow. If not, the food would be buried by falling snow before they returned.

They all had extraordinary experiences, both good and bad, from the wrench of the “hang man’s drop” into crevasses, to the relief of being pulled back up by mates to the world of the living, from the frustration of days wasted sitting out a blizzard in a tiny tent to the exultation of discovery

of places hitherto unseen by man. Then, one by one, each group of explorers turned and headed back to base in time to catch the ship home.

On the 13th December Douglas said they had gone nearly far enough. They had passed over what they thought was the greatest glacier in the world, and survived its crevasses, but now they were crossing an even bigger one! They looked forward to returning at a higher altitude, travelling home along the plateaux, above the danger of the crevasses. So they left no food depots as they crossed the glaciers.

One sledge was very worn. "Let's leave it behind," said Douglas. "We have eaten nearly half the food and so we don't need it any more. Instead, you can go out ahead of us on skis, X. Two more days and we'll turn around and head for the Hut."

They went on with the very best sledge and best dogs pulling most of the load. This was a safety measure as it left the front sled, which was always in danger of being lost in a crevasse, without a big load.

As Ninnis had a badly infected finger Douglas asked him to ride on the back sled in order to rest. This left Douglas on the front sled and Xavier Mertz skiing ahead to warn of crevasses.

On the afternoon of the second day like this Xavier held up his snow stick to warn of a snow bridge over a crevasse. Douglas looked behind him and saw Ninnis step off his sled in order to turn the dogs with his good left hand to cross at right angles to the hidden crevasse.

The next time he turned around Ninnis had disappeared. He and Xavier went running back. Ninnis must have fallen through the snow bridge and the sled and dogs gone down too for there was no sign of him, just a gaping hole. There was nothing left to act as an anchor, no rope to pull him back up.

Their grief was terrible. After Douglas read the burial service from his prayer book, Xavier said "I know it is the hand of God, but why? Why?"

As Xavier looked up to God for an answer, suddenly a silver-grey Antarctic petrel flew in and hovered over the dark crevasse. They were amazed. This was the first wild life they had seen on their journey since leaving the coast. It hovered, turned and flew north, towards warmth and sunshine.

"Legends have told of such things," said Xavier, in his broken English. "Sea birds the souls of dead sailors. Today I believe it. My best friend is free."

Now Xavier Mertz and Douglas Mawson had to face facts. There was one sled left. Most of the supplies had disappeared into the crevasse, with the strongest dogs. They had only one bag of food. It held enough for three men for one week, but they had travelled five hundred and fifteen kilometres from the hut and it had taken them five weeks. There was no dog food. Douglas had some raisins and chocolate in the little yellow cloth bag in his pocket. Xavier had a few nibbles in his orange bag. That was all.

Douglas regretted packing most of the supplies on the back sled. At the time it seemed the best thing to do. He had tried so hard to do things right and now it had all gone wrong. Today was the day they were going to start back to the Hut and all their friends.

Douglas looked at Xavier and they knew what they would have to do to get back alive: eat their beloved dogs! This harsh realization brought them fresh grief. Unlike Amundsen, they had never intended to use the dogs to haul food for the outward journey and then use them for food going back to base.

"And we must get back to the sled we left behind. We have lost our tent but we must be thankful that we have this thin canvas one we used as a sled cover," said Douglas. "If we can find that old sled we can cut it up for tent poles. I still have my Bonzer tool set," he added, patting the miniature tool set in his pocket.

"And carve spoons and forks from it too," said Xavier. "We have lost all our mugs and plates and things but we can make more. The wonderful thing is that we have the primus stove."

And so they turned back, counting their blessings and not daring to stop until, fourteen hours later, they found the sled. Luckily no snow had fallen and hidden it. Without a tent they would



have frozen to death almost as soon as they lay down to sleep.

That night Douglas wrote in his diary that they had nearly five hundred kilometres to go and only a quarter of the food they needed to do it. "May God help us" he wrote. On and on they went, going a little further each day and grieving each time they had to kill another dog. They took it in turns to pull the sled, harnessed up with the dogs.

On Christmas Eve, ten days after Ninnis had died, there was only one dog left. They gave up boiling the hypsometer and threw it away to lighten the load. So they could no longer record altitude. The theodolite was very heavy but without it they could not have navigated their way home to the hut. They kept on recording latitude and longitude along with cloud formations, wind and temperature.

On Christmas Day they discovered their skin was coming off and tried to laugh about it. Xavier reached out and took an entire layer of skin from Douglas's ear! Under their many layers of clothing they were falling apart! Layers of skin and tufts of hair fell out onto the snow.

Three days after Christmas they ate the last dog but Xavier was by now very sick. Douglas tried to help his friend by giving him the softest part of the dog meat, the liver, and the rest of the other food, but now Xavier was so sick he could not eat.

They were all alone and in great danger. Just how much danger they had no idea. There was no one to tell them that the liver was poisonous. Arctic explorers had learnt not to eat husky dog liver from the Eskimos. However, there was no one in the Antarctic to help Douglas and poor Xavier. No Eskimos to enter their tent, smell the dog liver and say "Stop! Do not eat! This smells like polar bear liver which we do not eat because it is poisonous!"

Sixty years later scientists at Adelaide University showed that one husky liver could cause the slow death of eight men! However, back in 1912 all that Australians knew was that sheep's liver was very good for you. They did not know that if you ate the liver of an animal that ate sea creatures that ate sea plants the high carotene in the plants would produce poisonous overdoses of vitamin A in the liver. How could they? Carotene and vitamin A had not been discovered.

Douglas Mawson was a very big man and so the poison was slower to work in him. Xavier Mertz felt sick almost at once and so Douglas in his kindness gave him extra dog liver. It was as though the bad fairy of ignorance had entered their tent.

On New Year's Day Xavier was too sick to get out of his reindeer sleeping bag. After a few days he tried to get up and walk on but he caved in after four miles and spent another day in bed. The following day he let Douglas place him on the sled in his sleeping bag. Douglas tied himself into the dog harness.

Douglas was so weak himself that it was easier to crawl than to walk. So he got down on all fours like a sled dog and pulled his friend along. The harness cut into him as the sled jolted over sastrugi, frozen ridges of snow drift, but he did not mind. Anything was better than staying put in the tent. He wanted to go on and on, but after only two and a half miles Xavier began crying out in pain with each jolt of the sled.

Sadly, Douglas stopped and once again set up camp for his dear friend. "If only I could get on," he wrote in his diary. "But I must stop with Xavier, and he does not appear to be improving - both our chances are going now."

Douglas nursed Xavier all the next day. He was so sick that Douglas decided it was due to a burst appendix. He had no idea that both he and Xavier had been poisoned. The final stages of the poisoning included diarrhoea. He cleaned Xavier as he has done for him previously. Then the final stage, fits and madness. Xavier broke one tent pole then Douglas held him tight to prevent him hurting himself and the tent any further. Finally, Xavier Mertz relaxed. That night he died peacefully in his sleep.

### **On His Own**

Now Douglas was all alone. He knew that staying with Xavier had cooked his chances of

making it back to the Hut.

“However,” he wrote in his diary, “I shall make an attempt. I shall do my utmost - to the last.” He did not mind for himself that he would not get back but he wanted to get as far as he could for all his friends back at the Hut, all his supporters.

In particular he wanted his diaries to be found for the sake of Paquita and all his family and loved ones, so they would know why he had not come back to them. For himself, he did not mind, but he would do it for them.

Just when he'd decided to give it his best a gale came stabbing and roaring around the tent reminding him of what lay ahead. How much easier to stay put.

Then he looked on the bright side. If he'd broken camp and set out before the gale blew up he would never have been able to put the tent up in such a wind on his own. He was lucky to be stuck in the tent. After all, if he lay still the hunger pains did not stab as much and there was less danger of bumping his frost-bitten toes and fingers. Not to mention that having lost layers of skin, the new skin underneath rubbed raw with every body movement. Far better to just lie there, forever, stay put.

Then over the top of such thoughts, from the powerful well-spring of his culture, came two lines from a poem:

“Buck up! Do your damndest and fight;  
It's the plugging away that will win you the day.”

He overcame the dangerous urge to give in and began to make plans. When the wind died down, he lightened his load, even threw away the cover of his diaries. He cut the sled in half, sewed and rigged a sail, sorted his pitiful collection of dog meat, boiled the goodness out of the bones and then threw them away. Not the prayer book. Even after reading the burial service over poor Xavier, and building a cairn of snow for his cross, he kept the prayer book.

Conditions were not good but he set out and within six days he was back on the first glacier. The deadline for reaching the Hut, January 15th, was over now and he was hoping the others had all made it back when suddenly his thoughts switched to himself.

“So, this is the end,” he said to himself, as he plunged down a crevasse.

Then, to his surprise, his fall stopped. The rope held and the sled stuck firm in the snow at the lip of the great crack in the ice. He was all alone, without a mate to pull him out. The rope was knotted for easy grip but starved as he was, and sick too, he found it hard to reach up to the first knot. Knowing he'd be dead by now if the sled had fallen in too, he decided to make the most of the chance he had been given.

With great effort he hauled himself to the lip of the crevasse, up onto the ice, and then it gave way and down he went again. Now he was truly tempted. He had only to reach for his knife and cut the rope for all his pain and troubles to be over. Besides, it would be exciting: surely exploring the last great unknown would be better than exploring one planet. Why, he thought to himself, think of what might be waiting for us all after death, of the vast unknown worlds beyond.

“But then,” he said to himself, “there is all eternity for that.” He knew death would come soon enough, and, as the present was bound to be short, he decided to make the most of it. It was tempting, to join that last great expedition into the unknown, but he'd wait until he was called, rather than arrive uninvited. “I must try again”, he said to himself, “Try, try - it's dead easy to die.”

Just have one more try - it's dead easy to die,  
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.

Having decided to live he reached for the first knot. He did not know where the new power to climb out again came from but he slowly worked his way up the rope to the surface. He lay exhausted on the snow for over an hour and then slowly put up the tent. In the comfort of the tent in

the warm sleeping bag part of an old Persian poem passed lazily through his head:

“Unknown Tomorrow and Dead Yesterday,  
Why fret about them if today be sweet?”

“And why not enjoy what is left of my life?” he said to himself. “Why not lie here and enjoy the remaining food, finish the chocolate! Why plug on when I will not make it anyway? I’m bound to fall down another crevasse and the food will be wasted.”

He knew he was growing too weak to haul himself out again. That was a thought: instead of hauling himself out of the next crevasse why not walk out - up a rope ladder!

It was not long before he had knotted the rope into a ladder and attached one end to the sled, the other to the sled harness he wore. He was on his way, safe from two hazards - dying in a crevasse and dying in bed! He would not give in. He would plug on.

The ladder worked. Time and again he walked up out of lethal crevasses, each time thanking Providence. It took many fair-weather days and foul to cross the glacier and climb up onto the high plateau beyond it. They were days when the sled zoomed along almost uncontrollably with the wind in the sail, days of blizzard when the tent could have become a suffocating coffin of blown snow and days of white fog when all he could do was feel his way and trust to Providence.

With no more hills of ice to climb he threw away his heavy metal crampons and began the long descent in the direction of Commonwealth Bay. Now at the end of January, the snow melted to a sticky slush by day and so he travelled by the cooler light of the “midnight sun” on harder snow.

In the clear evening light, he thrilled at the distant sight of the nunatak they had seen on the way out, called Madigan Nunatak. He thought back to the two great glaciers they had crossed together. He named them after his friends, Ninnis and Mertz - like great grave stones of ice, he thought, and the grief cut even deeper.

He had named nothing Mawson or Douglas, or Paquita. In between the poems and verses he recited to himself to pass the time and lift his thoughts from food he wondered, once again, if he would get far enough to be found. He had not quite a kilogram of food left, mostly dry stringy dog meat. His body needed fat and there was no fat on the dog meat. He nibbled on a stick of chocolate and with great self-control, put it away. Due to the weather and his weak condition, it could take him another week to reach Aladdin’s Cave and fresh supplies. Self-discipline was essential. So was careful navigation.

On he went until, to his amazement, on the 29th January, he came across a cairn of snow with a food parcel on the top and a note from Hurley, Hodgeman and McLean.

“What miraculous good fortune,” he said to himself, “In this drifting snow.” The 75 kph wind blew up snow so that if Douglas had not been “spot on” with his navigation, heading N 45deg W to the Hut, he’d have missed the cairn.

The note said he was only thirty-seven kilometres from Aladdin’s Cave and that the ship was waiting for him in the bay. Douglas looked at the date on the note. His friends had been there that very morning!

Instead of despairing that he had missed them by a few hours Mawson rejoiced that he would now have enough food to reach the Hut. The food gave him such strength that he felt he could handle any problems that came his way. Besides, the wonderful pemmican, sugar, butter, biscuits, chocolate sticks and, at the very bottom, three oranges, all came in a red cloth bag hand made by Paquita.

He pictured Paquita sewing the cloth bags. “Red, yellow and orange, cheerful and bright,” she had said. “A welcome sight in all that white snow.”

If only she knew. He had never seen anything as cheerful and bright as that red cloth bag. His first contact with the outside world for three months was overwhelming.

He used the sail on the sled and sat back to enjoy the ride in high spirits but the wind blew so



hard that he was blown off course and had to get off and haul the sled along the icy slopes to the cave. This, too, was impossible. Without the metal foot crampons, which he had thrown away to lighten his load, the wind blew him down, like some cruel joker. The ship was waiting. He must not fall and break his leg and yet he must hurry.

Once again, he refused to give in and enjoy the food while waiting for the wind to drop. Instead, he got out his Bonzer tool set and broke up the wooden case of the theodolite, took out its nails and hammered them through two pieces of wood. Then he tied the pieces of wood to his poor raw feet with lamp wick. With the nails gripping the ice he started towards the cave.

This took four days, days of falling into crevasse after crevasse until, by the end of the month, the wind grew into a howling blizzard. Inside his tent he rebuilt his broken crampons and bandaged his feet yet again. Long ago he had lost the thick skin from their soles and now the nails had pushed back through his finneskos to pierce him. It was no use regretting that he'd thrown the good, comfortable crampons away. He must get to the cave. There were spare crampons in the cave, especially left there for the trip down the icy slope to the hut.

### **The Hut**

On 1st of February Douglas entered the sheltered heaven of Aladdin's Cave. There was food, but no crampons. Someone else had needed them. If they had been there he could have made it down to the Hut that night. Then ironically, the blizzard returned and kept him prisoner in the cave for a week. He kept busy to conquer his mental anguish. He knew the ship could not risk waiting for him, not now, when it still had to go west for the others. He faced another year, maybe all alone, even if he did get back to the Hut. He pushed such thoughts aside and remade his wooden crampons. He was tempted, of course, to put them on and rush out into the blizzard, make a run for the Hut regardless of the fact he would surely die in doing so. Instead, he reminded himself that he was lucky to get this far, and gave thanks.

Meanwhile, down in the bay, Gloomy had never looked so gloomy. He had returned on the "Aurora" as planned, to pick the men up. He sailed into Commonwealth Bay on the 13th of January 1913. Nine men rushed out of the Hut and danced and shouted on the shore to welcome him. Gloomy gave them fresh fruit. How they sunk their teeth into that fresh Australian fruit!

"Where are the others?" Gloomy enquired.

"They'll be here soon," said Hurley, "We went out exploring in five sledging parties. Two groups are back and the rest due by the 15th."

The excited yapping of twenty huskies drowned out their conversation.

"Amundsen gave us his sledge dogs," Gloomy explained. "We brought them with us to cool off, escape the Australian summer. Let's get them ashore."

On the 16th Madigan's group returned from the east over sea ice. On the 17th Gloomy said "Your leader, my friend Douglas Mawson, is not back yet. He has left a note to say if he is not back by the 15th that I am to be in charge. So, let's busy ourselves and get that wireless mast up, in case anyone has to stay here another winter!"

The next day three tiny black specks descended the icy slope behind the Hut. Who were they? When close enough to recognize, the three who had gone exploring west along the coast were given a hearty welcome. Now they were all safe home at the Hut except for Mawson, Ninnis and Mertz.

Gloomy sent out a search party ten miles to the south-east but they came back empty handed.

"I shall wait ten more days. Then I must sail west. Wild and his men will be waiting anxiously for me. Meanwhile, let's carry as much food and coal as we can spare from the ship into the Hut. We must provision the Hut with supplies for another winter, just in case."

The men set about the task with heavy hearts, hoping against hope that their three friends would return in time to sail away with the ship. They had to kill seals and store slabs of frozen seal meat in the snow outside the Hut, just in case, along with penguin eggs. Another search party set

out. Although they did not find the missing men they left some food on top of a snow cairn just in case. The ten days went by and still no sign of the missing men.

Gloomy wrote six names on a piece of paper and nailed it up in the Hut.

“These men will become a relief expedition. I will leave you here with Madigan as Leader and after picking up Wild’s men I will try to come back for you. If Mawson’s group are still not back, you will be here all winter, but I won’t forget you. I’ll come back for you next summer.”

Captain Davis had spoken and he returned to his ship, feeling as gloomy as his nickname, but he had done his duty and he knew the men would do likewise.

Just as he set sail in the Aurora a huge storm blew up. The ship could not leave the bay for another whole week. It was the same storm that kept Douglas a prisoner in Aladdin’s Cave.

At last, on the 8th February, the wind died away. As Gloomy steamed off in the Aurora to pick up Wild’s men, Douglas stepped out of the cave and set off for the Hut. The tiny speck far out to sea did not worry him. Maybe it was the ship, maybe not, it mattered not for here he was, in a happy dream, walking towards the goal he had never dreamed he would reach. Rocks loomed out of the snow, then the Hut and tiny human figures!

Way down on the coast anxious eyes looked up and saw one small dot figure hauling a tiny dot sled down towards them. Only one? And where were the dogs?

They had seen him! Douglas fell with relief against the sledge. How sweet it was to see Bickerton, good old “Bick”, and the others, Bage, Madigan, Mclean and Hodgeman, coming up behind Bick.

They had stayed behind, hoping against hope that the Boss’s group would return safe and sound, that D.I. and his men would return to base like all the others. But now, sadly, they approached the single survivor and up close they saw only a stranger, a skinny old man with a wrinkled face and sunken eyes.

“Which one?” “Who are you” they asked as they picked him up and placed him on the little sledge. He was as light as a twelve-year old boy, only forty-five kilograms. They cried as they towed their leader to the Hut and he slowly described what had happened to the others.

“You have missed the ship by three hours.” “Never mind, we can send a message!” “The wireless mast is up and working,” they all told him.

Back in the Hut, the wireless was now operated by Sidney Jeffryes. It was his job on the ship. He’d applied to join the expedition a year ago, but Walter Hannam had been chosen. In actual fact, Sidney’s mother had advised Douglas that her son would not handle the isolation. All Gloomy knew was that Hannam was keen to go home and his wireless man was keen to replace him on shore at the Hut.

Hannam tapped out the news in Morse Code to the Aurora. The ship turned around immediately but as they entered Commonwealth Bay another great gale blew up, a hard driving wind, full of snow, blew off the frozen continent in full force at the little ship and sadly Gloomy had to use common sense, go back out to sea, westwards, to Wild and his men. For if he braved the storm and lost the ship all would be lost.

Gloomy’s sensible decision was tapped out in Morse from the ship to the Hut. Then the men at the Shack on Macquarie Island sent dashes and dots. Jeffryes decoded and called out, “They are staying on too, all of them, for another year, to keep us company!”

Douglas was overwhelmed. Having arrived at the Hut, the “goal of his utmost hopes”, he was overcome with a warm and smooth feeling of thanksgiving. With such friends, why should he mind staying on another year?

Jeffryes helped Douglas send messages of sympathy to Mrs Ninnis and to Xavier Mertz’s parents. Another was sent to Mrs Scott, for Scott and his men had just been found, in the tent that had been their grave all winter. Douglas knew only too well how it must have felt for Scott and his men to be holed up, starving, just eleven miles from food but unable to set out in a howling blizzard.

Letters, news and magazines had all been eagerly read and re-read when the ship arrived. Now Douglas rested and read his mail. He had mixed feelings as he read Paquita’s letters and then

went to the wireless bench. He had survived, but would Paquita want to wait another year to marry a physical wreck such as he? Deep down he trusted she would. And he was right. Her reply was, of course, that she wanted to marry him more than ever. "Radio contact" was only actually a few brief words sent in Morse Code via the Shack on Macquarie Island to Australia.

As it turned out he was so weak that he would probably have died on the unusually rough sea voyage home. His friends cared for him lovingly, especially Dr McLean. At first, he followed them about to keep them in sight. They understood how lonely he had been and that he was still very ill.

Having no idea that he had been poisoning himself with the dog liver, Douglas began to think that he was going mad. He quickly saw to it that instead of total bed rest he kept busy, believing, as he had in the past, that busy hands cured sick minds. He made a wooden picture frame for his photograph of Paquita and hung it by his bunk. Sometimes he added to and altered a set of house plans, his dream home.

As he improved, he joined the others in scientific research and also used the time to start the book he had promised his publishers, the story of the Australian Antarctic Expedition. Both Douglas and his brother William had won scholarships to Sydney University because they excelled in English at school. Since the scholarships were for degrees in English, Literature and the Arts, they had forgone them, but now was the time for Douglas to draw on his literary skills.

When they went outside, whatever the weather, they could be sure of a warm welcome from the dogs. Amundsen's gift of twenty joined in with the three that had been born at the Hut and were too young for sledging. They were all different. Colonel, the biggest, bossed Peary a lot. Jack and Amundsen were chums, Fram quietly nervous and George was a sad loner after his friend Lassie was wounded in a fight and had to be put down. The men knew which dogs teamed up best and, thanks to Amundsen's kindness in donating the dogs, were able to continue exploring by sled.

Amundsen himself had taken no pleasure in beating Scott to the South Pole. All his life he had wanted to be first to his pole, the North Pole. He discovered the position of the North Magnetic Pole on one trip and by the time he set out again Peary and Henson had beaten him to the North Pole. So he went south in his little boat the Fram. On the 14th December 1911 he wrote in his diary that instead of feeling elated he felt topsy-turvy, having achieved the exact opposite of his life's aim by going to the opposite pole. However, when he heard that his dogs were back in Antarctica, where they were needed and cherished, he was a happy man.

The dogs stayed outside and with only seven men in the Hut, instead of seventeen, there was more room: five square metres per man in the living area, if one included the space taken up by bunks and dining and work tables. The smaller hut, which had been joined to make one building, was a twenty-five square metre workshop for the wireless radio, power generator, lathe, sewing machine, and the rock collection.

The seat at the wireless operating bench was often empty. The wireless did not work well in daylight, so the long days of summer and autumn were no good. Night time was best, as long as there were no auroras, in which case contact was impossible. Twice the mast blew down and took months to replace. The new young wireless operator was not suited to living at the end of the world and had a nervous breakdown. Luckily Bick knew Morse Code but when conditions were good the usual static was replaced with messages from all over the world which blocked the airwaves between the Hut and the Shack on Macquarie Island.

"No wonder poor Jeffryes has had a breakdown," said Bick, "Sitting up all night trying to make head or tail of it all is very trying."

Mawson remembered the advice he had received from Mrs Jeffreys.

Rock collecting and exploring continued. More animals and plants, mainly from the sea, were accumulated in the biological collection kept in the living room. It was a very hard year, but they braved it out. When no one felt like singing they wound up the gramophone and listened to the records which Gloomy had left at the Hut.

To make matters worse, 1912 was even windier than 1911 had been. To relieve the monotony of this second year at the Hut, the "Adelie Blizzard" was produced and printed each



month, with poems and plays, meteorological and magnetic notes, the newest recipes for disguising seal meat but never a mention of the ever-present wind. Dr McLean as editor saw to it that no one mentioned the wind! They kept to that rule, for the one place they could be free of the incessant wind was in their monthly magazine.

### **Back Home**

In January 1913 Gloomy came back for them and never was a gloomy face happier. By then, Douglas was nearly his old self. They sailed on west for soundings and map making, and the usual scientific research at sea before heading for home, and, for Douglas, love and marriage, with Gloomy as best man and brother Will as groomsman. (Cecil Madigan got married, too, to the girl who had waited for him.)

“My word,” said Gloomy, when Douglas and Paquita were finally reunited, “I am happy to see them together.”

They say ‘true love never runs smooth’. Their romance had been full of obstacles, right to the end. The one letter Paquita could have received, during the two year expedition was found, undelivered, in the mail box on board the Aurora. This was the love letter Douglas wrote and left on his desk should he never return. When he failed to return on time it was delivered to the ship, the ship which was still visible in the bay as Douglas approached the Hut. Paquita waited another long year, until Douglas found and delivered the letter himself! Far from blaming Gloomy for failing to deliver it, he asked him to be his Best Man!

After the wedding it was back to the practicalities of paying off the expedition’s debts. Gloomy and Dr McLean and Douglas and Paquita went by ship to England, to the publisher who had advanced money in return for a full account of the trip.

The book had grown into two volumes. It contained the entire adventure of the Australian Antarctic Expedition. Chapters were requested from all the leaders. The many expeditions from the Hut were described, as were the amazing trips accomplished from the Grottoes. Those who’d been at the Shack had two years to report on. Gloomy provided the ship’s story.

Archie McLean, the expedition doctor, was younger than Douglas, but had gained an Arts Degree, a Degree in Medicine and then specialized in surgery, before joining the expedition aged twenty-six. He assisted Douglas from the beginning of the book, all through the second winter at the Hut.

Now, in an entirely different location, at sea in the Indian Ocean, on his honeymoon, Douglas worked with Archie, Gloomy and Paquita to finish the book. The easiest part was naming it “The Home of the Blizzard”, for it was all about the windiest place on earth. The hardest part was choosing photographs from such an excellent collection. Those on coastal trips had taken wondrous scenes of vast rookeries and seal colonies. Photos “up-river” on the glaciers were hard to believe for no human architect could plan such carved heights and tiered depths.

When it was finally with the publisher, William Heinemann, Douglas and Paquita visited Mrs Ninnis to share her grief for her dear son. Afterwards Douglas was guest speaker at the Royal Geographical Society in London where he was congratulated by Shackleton. The King invited Douglas to Buckingham Palace to hear about his trip and offered him a knighthood. He and Paquita were to be received at a grand court reception followed by a ball. Then the Archduke of Austria was shot in Sarajevo and as a sign of mourning the grand ball was cancelled.

The King knighted Douglas in a simple ceremony. Paquita’s mother wrote to say she was pleased and surprised but worried the knighthood would bring extra expense, adding “But you are both sensible.” She was pleased that the ball was cancelled because it would have cost a lot to get court clothes. “What I think is so pleasant is that everyone is so pleased and thinks the knighthood well deserved. It is an honour for Australia.”

Mrs Mawson could not write to her son for she was by now nearly blind. William wrote for her. She lived with her son the doctor and his young family. Robert Mawson, their adventurous

father had passed away while Douglas was out exploring with Ninnis and Xavier Mertz. Later on, when all alone, struggling to get back to the Hut, Douglas had dreamt one night that his father was with him, cheering him up and on, ever the optimist.

Soon after becoming Sir Douglas and Lady Mawson, the young couple began a world-wide lecture tour to recover the five thousand pounds still owing for the expedition. They travelled into Europe, but there was so much unrest the lectures were cancelled. There were soldiers on the march everywhere. So, after visiting the Mertz family in Switzerland, they went home. Douglas spoke at a Science Congress in Sydney in front of their beloved Prof, Professor David.

Although war had by now broken out, they sailed on to New Zealand, South America, USA and Canada to raise the money owing. Paquita helped with the photographic slides, the most important part of their luggage, until returning to her mother in Australia to have their first baby. Douglas longed to see his baby daughter as he lectured to crowded halls in tiny towns and big cities. Slowly he paid off the expedition's debts.

Douglas was deeply saddened that many of the excellent men who had survived the dangers of Antarctica with him were now being killed and wounded at war. Nevertheless, he too, decided to join up. Hearing this, the Adelaide University insisted Douglas finish his science report of the Australian Antarctic Expedition before joining the army.

In 1916, along with many of his fellow scientists, Douglas went to war. Professor David was in France with the Australian Tunnelling Battalion. Geologists like him were useful in trench design. Gloomy was called a formal "Captain Davis" now, as he transported troops in a naval ship to the war zones. Hurley was in the army as a war photographer. Douglas was needed in England to help organise supplies of food, clothing and explosives to our soldiers in Europe.

It was very sad. He had links with scientists all over the world, including Germany. German scientists had travelled to Australia for the recent science congress in Sydney. However, it was to be the war to end all wars and so everybody did their bit.

Paquita and Douglas missed each other very much. In November Paquita left her baby with her mother and travelled via America to Douglas in England.

"Take care to get a berth near the open deck," Douglas wrote, "And by the main stairs. It is easier to escape to a life boat if the ship is attacked. There are mines and torpedoes and submarines so keep your most valuable things in your handbag, and warm clothing next to your life belt."

Paquita chose an American ship for the United States was not yet at war and unlikely to be attacked. Soon she was safe in the arms of her dear husband in England.

"Tell me about our dear little baby Patricia," he said, and later on "Professor David is in hospital, recovering from a fall in a trench shaft."

Jessica Quita Mawson, their second daughter, was born in London during an air raid. A year later, November 11th, 1918, the war was over. Peace was made at the Armistice.

On the ship going home after the war Douglas wrote to the Prime Minister that Australia should change over to a metric system of measurements. "It is quite wrong for us to go on in this antediluvian way making difficulties where there should be none," he wrote. "The war has taught us that the British nation does not embody all, and we are more than ever ready to learn and adopt measures for our own good."

When he became Professor of Geology, in 1921, he wrote again from his desk at the University of Adelaide. However, nothing happened. His little girls learnt by heart feet in a mile and pounds in a ton just as he had done.

"If Australia went metric like Holland, Patricia and Jessica would have time to learn a language instead of the complexities of compound interest on pounds, shillings and pence," sighed Paquita. "I do wish someone would listen to you."

"It's not just to simplify calculations," Douglas told her. "Our factories miss out on big orders for tools and equipment to use with metric machines in Europe and South America, too. We have the iron and steel. We could manufacture so much more."

It was not until late in the nineteen sixties that Australia made the change to dollars and cents

and grams and metres.

## South Again

Douglas succeeded far quicker on another hobby horse of his, conservation, for Macquarie Island was made a sanctuary. Then he turned his attention to the whaling industry which was carried out in Antarctic waters by foreign countries. Whale oil and whale bone were still used extensively because use of mineral oils and plastics was mostly unknown. The whales, however, were killed indiscriminately with no thought for the future. Many species of both whale and seal were heading for extinction.

“If a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well,” was a favourite saying with Douglas. The Australian Government agreed but, without one Australian whaling company in business to set high standards, Australia was powerless to save the whales from possible extinction.

“Unless, of course,” said the Prime Minister, “Australians were to claim all the Antarctic land south of Australia and hence the sea in between.”

Great Britain agreed to the plan and offered to supply a ship, the Discovery. Douglas was asked to organise an expedition to claim the land he had not already claimed, in the name of the King, for Australia to control. The expedition was to be called BANZARE - British, Australian and New Zealand Research Expedition.

It took three years to raise the money for Government funds were not enough. Once again Australian firms donated food and equipment. The Melbourne chocolate maker, MacPherson Robertson, donated a lot of money as well as chocolate. He was proud to be of help. He had begun his business in the backyard as a lad, with help from his Mum, and now he had a big chocolate factory and could afford to help others.

At last all was ready. Douglas and Gloomy were discussing the trip when Gloomy's godchild entered the room to say dinner was ready. Gloomy often came to stay, but to the girls he was never Gloomy, always Captain Davis.

“Daddy, why are you going away?” Jessica asked him. She was eleven now and wore her red hair in plaits like her big sister. Her blue eyes shone with curiosity.

“The sea is mankind's last resort,” Douglas told her. “It covers most of the globe and unlike the land, it is deep. So, compared to dry land, it can support far more living things. It will become our larder one day. We must look after it and all the creatures in it.”

“Daddy will be away this summer and the next, but he will not remain away over winter,” Paquita reassured the girls, “He'll be home and snug as a bug with us for winter!”

Douglas planned the two summer trips between 1929 and 1931. Gloomy, naturally, was asked to captain the ship. The pack ice prevented them landing when they reached Antarctica. Luckily, they had a seaplane on board and did not need to set foot on the continent to claim it, flying over it and tossing out flags instead. This was far easier said than done and they had many adventures and close calls as they sailed west, trying to land. At last they stepped ashore at Proclamation Island and raised the flag.

Hurley went again, too. Both he and Douglas were struck by the devastation caused by man. The massacre of seals and penguins showed the island nature reserves were not honoured.

On the second trip they went back to the Hut. An expedition from the Hut to the South Magnetic Pole proved this pole was moving ever closer to the coast, but why? Still no one knew. They claimed nearly half (42%) of Antarctica for Australia. They made a 'royal decree' that the Australian Antarctic Territory stretched from the coast all the way to the South Pole, making it three-quarters the size of Australia. Mapping all that coast took a long time, and included the big bulge which had fitted into the Great Australian Bight when the two countries were one. Their second summer was nearly over and they had no wish to be iced in for winter. They lowered the



seaplane one more time into the water and the little plane flew up and away, guiding the ship through the pack ice out into the great Southern Ocean, bound for home.

“Well done,” said the Prime Minister, “Now it is our ocean, between our two great land masses. Our ocean and our responsibility. As well as all the islands in between.”

### **Douglas the Prof**

Douglas remained Professor of Geology until he turned seventy in 1952. He enjoyed camping out with his students in the Flinders Ranges but he was in touch with more than just those at university. People wrote to him from all over the world, from eminent scientists to little children. He liked children because he liked people who were keen to find things out and all children like to find out how things work, even if they get into trouble doing so.

Scientists wrote with their latest discoveries. Children wrote asking questions, and sometimes a scarf or a penguin ornament arrived in the mail from women in distant places. He took care to reply to the children and thank the ladies. From all this mail Douglas saved the stamps and swapped duplicates with his grandchildren. He encouraged them in anything they were interested in. When his girls were growing up he took them to a farm on weekends and holidays. He had bought it, in the hills behind Adelaide, and called it Harewood after the farm he had left as a small boy when he migrated to Australia.

His girls, Patricia and Jessica, helped with the farm work and became very practical. When they left school, they caught the train with their father each day to university where they studied biological sciences and became research scientists. When Jessica married she went to live in the country and so she was glad that her father had taught her things on his farm, like mustering sheep and using kerosene lamps and wood stoves. Patricia married a Welsh born marine scientist, Ifor Thomas, and they raised their three boys by the sea near Douglas and Paquita.

Douglas spent many happy hours planting trees on his farm, for he loved trees. Peter, his country son-in-law, shared this love of trees and one day asked “How do you remember their scientific names so easily, Sir Douglas?”

“The same way I remember everything,” Douglas replied. “I concentrate very hard for a few moments, trying to remember, and then I stop thinking about it and let my brain do the work. It usually comes to me soon after. I find the more I use my brain and trust in it the more it does for me.”

Douglas said it didn't matter what sort of a brain a student had as long as the brain was used. Laziness upset him. One day there was knock on his door and a young father stood outside with his little boy. The little boy went to a special school for “slow learners”. He had chosen to do a project about Mawson in the Antarctic. Other children often wrote to Douglas asking for help with school projects but this little boy found letter writing very difficult. He had pleaded with his father to take him to meet Sir Douglas Mawson and now here he was, on his door step.

Douglas took them into his study. He answered all the boy's questions, showed him photographs and told him how to find out more about the Antarctic from library books.

“Books are good tools,” he said to the boy.

To the father he said, “I like boys like your son. A boy doesn't have to be bright, just keen to learn. Learning is something we can all enjoy right through life.”

Years later the boy's father told Douglas's oldest grandson about the visit:

“I have never forgotten how nice your grandfather was to my boy, speaking to him man to man. It meant a lot to me.”

Douglas did not have any sons and his brother's only son, named Robert after their father, died in a plane crash just before World War Two. Robert's mother had discouraged him from joining the Air Force, for she had a premonition that he would die in an aeroplane.

“Don't worry, mother,” Robert assured her. “There is no danger of that for I will be on the ground. I want to be an aeroplane engineer.”

Robert became a good engineer. So good that a pilot took Robert up with him so that he could listen to his engine and discover what needed adjusting. The plane crashed, killing Robert, the pilot and all on board. Douglas experienced the terrible grief of family loss, followed by the grief of seeing his university students go off to yet another war.

After World War Two came the Cold War. To Douglas's glee the Antarctic, the coldest place on earth, was the only place on earth unaffected by this Cold War. Scientists from Russia, America, France, Norway, Britain and Australia all shared their knowledge of the frozen continent. They paid friendly visits to each other's base stations, for soon after the end of World War Two scientists had returned to the Antarctic and set up bases there.

In 1946 Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions began. ANARE went first to Heard Island, in 1947, and then to Macquarie Island, to build research bases. Then, in 1954, Australia's first permanent base on the Antarctic mainland was built, in Mac. Robertson Land, discovered on the BANZARE trip and named after Macpherson Robertson, the wealthy and generous chocolate maker. The base was called Mawson and Australians have been living there ever since. It is the oldest base south of the Antarctic Circle.

Other countries established bases for their scientists. If countries had not claimed territory on the great white continent it did not matter, because no one minded where the bases were built. There was no hint of the Cold War when neighbouring Russians from Mirny visited the Australians at Mawson, which they did as often as they could.

Goodwill amongst all Antarctic men peaked in 1957, the International Geophysical Year, when twelve different nations operated fifty research stations in the Antarctic and coordinated their collection of scientific data. Douglas followed all the new discoveries with great interest and enjoyment. Stuart Campbell, his intrepid pilot on the BANZARE trips, was ANARE's first leader. Then ANARE's chief scientist, Philip Law, became the team leader for many years. Douglas always looked forward to talking with them on their return. It was good to hear that Australians continued mapping the coastline and had begun filling in the map with great tractor traverses across the frozen interior, discovering mountains and conditions beyond the imagination of most men. Douglas pictured it all in his mind's eye.

Foreign scientists also visited Douglas on their way home from Antarctica. Late one summer Russian scientists paid him their respects and were delighted to be taken into the Australian bush to see huge eucalypts and kangaroos, to watch sheep grazing oblivious to the wedge tailed eagles soaring above on summer thermals, to feel the warmth of the Australian sun on their bare arms. Then they enjoyed Australian hospitality, country style on the farm house veranda, where, best of all, was a large plate of fruit. One of Mawson's grandchildren held it up, offering it wide-eyed, to the huge Soviets - Russians - until now, the invisible enemy!

The plate shook, the little hands trembled, as the big men helped themselves to bananas. Shocked, the child watched as each man put a banana in his top pocket, like a fat cigar, and reached for another. Were these men barbarians? Such manners! Then Douglas quietly explained to his four country grandchildren that bananas are like precious gold to a man who has spent a year in the Antarctic.

"They want to enjoy one quietly, later on," he said. It seemed to him such a short time ago that he had told his little girls, when they were fussy about trying a new dish their mother had prepared, "You'll never know how good food tastes until you have been without it." He knew only too well that hunger is the best sauce.

Time passed swiftly for him. When he was wrapping Peter Pan for a granddaughter it seemed to him that it was not so long ago that he was reading Swiss Family Robinson to his girls, or Hubert's Bible Stories. As they had grown up, he had encouraged them to read biographies. Douglas did not read fiction as an adult but he did collect many biographies, especially those about Arctic and Antarctic travel. These shared experiences he saw as valuable links in the kingdom of man.

After retirement Douglas continued his many projects, writing further reports on the

BANZARE trips and the geology of the Outback of South Australia, sorting collections and sending samples of rocks and other specimens overseas to fellow scientists. Former students, now busy scientists, named their discoveries after Douglas. A fossilised stromatolite, an extinct diprotodon as well as living species all bore the name mawsoni. His interest in Antarctica continued with formal ANARE meetings in Melbourne and also messages to the Australian scientists at the bases. Better radio links meant that he could make contact in the most extreme weather and he never forgot to send greetings for the Mid Winter's Day celebrations.

As Douglas grew older his arteries aged too so that sometimes the blood did not flow as well as it should. Then Paquita nursed him back to health in the big house that had been their happy home for so long. They had built the house using the plans Douglas had made during the second winter at the Hut. The dream home had become a reality when Paquita's father had given them some land behind the Delprat beach house by the sea. Paquita would change nothing, even though when you sat down the windows were too high to see much of the garden, for windows were not an item down at the Hut.

Now, as Douglas the grandfather relaxed and recovered, he loved to have his family all around him. For "grandfather" the children said "Opa", to match Paquita's preference for Dutch "Oma".

"No, don't bother your Opa with that broken bucket," he heard Paquita say to one of the grandchildren outside his door. "Run along to the beach this time without it."

It wasn't long before Douglas was up and about and asking the grandchild to bring the broken bucket down to the work bench in his shed.

"There you are," he said as he gave the little girl her tin bucket with a new handle, "Off you go and enjoy your collecting. What will it be this time? Sponges or shells or stones?"

"Everything," the little girl beamed, "Thank you, Opa. Will Oma be cross? For bothering you?"

"You leave her to me," he grinned, "Now, off you go."

Paquita tried hard to slow down the busy pace of her husband's life but he still believed that if a thing was worth doing it was worth doing properly. He had long talks with friends and professors who would edit the work that he was no longer able to finish himself. When the house was quiet, he heard echoes from the past, of tennis games and pet lambs on the lawn, while Paquita played the piano and magpies warbled in the trees. Each mail brought news of plans for a treaty to set Antarctica aside for scientific use only.

"Some people have suggested using atomic bombs to blast holes in the ice in search of Antarctic minerals," he told Paquita.

He was relieved when talks began in May of 1958 to ensure that this did not happen. Douglas was confident the talks would lead to Antarctica becoming a nuclear free peace zone. He was quite sure that this would happen. He died peacefully with his family around him, on October 15th 1958, in the same month that the Antarctic Treaty Conference was set up in Washington, USA.

The Treaty was signed in December 1958, with a plan to review it in 1992. What happened in 1992? If we could write to Sir Douglas, like so many others used to, we know he would write back explaining how to find this out in a library. If only we could write and tell *him* all the news, tell him about the battles between wicked pirate fishing ships and our Australian Navy, and how we look things up on the Internet nowadays, how the movement of glaciers is tracked by satellites, why the magnetic poles keep moving, why auroras occur in winter - and all about the things we are still trying to find out, like how do seals find their way back from the sea?

"There is so much to find out," thought the little boy as he climbed up the mast on his way to Australia.

The End

Now, in 2023, twenty-five years after this story was first written, the history of science in Antarctica and its continuing practice has become key to understanding and monitoring global climate change.