

*'Over the floes' Records relating to the Antarctic in the National Archives of Australia*

Records relating to the Antarctic in the National Archives of Australia include records created by Commonwealth agencies such as the Department of External Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, the Governor-General's Office and the Australian High Commission in London. I will also discuss records created by the Australian Antarctic Division including a collection of Captain John King Davis, and personal records collections of Charles Francis Lazeron, and the Scrivener family held in the National Archives.

The first British Antarctic Expedition was led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott. In 1900 he was placed in command of the National Antarctic Expedition. Scott's first Antarctic expedition was on the ship HMS Discovery.

The National Archives holds the Series "Exploration maps and charts collected by Captain John King Davis" This series is from the records of the Antarctic Division within the Department of External Affairs and includes charts relating to this expedition.

The National Archives also holds the file titled "Royal Geographical Society request for a subsidy in aid of the British National Antarctic Exploring Expedition 1901 -1902 from series A6 Correspondence files, from the Department of External Affairs.

The next expedition for the British was the British Antarctic Expedition 1907–09 which also became known as the Nimrod Expedition (after the expedition ship). Ernest Shackleton was chosen to be leader of this expedition. The Series "Exploration maps and charts collected by Captain John King Davis" (P2819 item 1360) includes a chart titled "Chart of the South Polar Regions - Nimrod

The National Archives holds the digitised file 1909/2497 "Shackleton Antarctic Expedition 1907-1909" comprising 53 pages in Series Correspondence files created by the Prime Ministers Office. Some other files relating to the Nimrod Expedition include File ANT 55 titled "Antarctic – British Expedition 1907-1909 (Sir E Shackleton) – Request for report" from the Series A981 Correspondence files, created by the Department of External Affairs and File 1088 Governor General Office – Correspondence – Antarctic vessel 'Nimrod' suggestion that she be fitted with wireless telegraphic apparatus 1907 from the Series A6662 Miscellaneous correspondence relating mainly to local (non-Imperial) matters.

Captain Robert Falcon Scott was keen to go back and make a successful attempt to reach the Geographical South Pole. So the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910 was launched – it became known as the Terra Nova Expedition – again after the name of the expedition ship. While the expedition reached the South Pole the return journey ended in the loss of the entire party.

The National Archives holds 8 photographs titled "Antarctic expedition - 8 photographs of Captain Scott's 1912 expedition [Scrivener family photographic collection] - from series M1483 Mounted and loose photographs held in the National Archives Canberra Office. This series consists of family photographs and other

photographs, letters, and postcards collected by Mrs Cruickshank, daughter of Charles Scrivener, surveyor of the Yass-Canberra district.

The Australasian Antarctic Expedition was an Australasian scientific team that explored part of Antarctica between 1911 and 1914 and was led by Douglas Mawson.

The National Archives hold the series “M583 Photographs relating to the Mawson Antarctic Expedition” which consists of a variety of photographs of the members of the Mawson Antarctic Expedition, the ship they travelled on, the Antarctic base camp, and the wildlife and landscape of Antarctica. We also hold series M584 “Photographic glass plates relating to the Mawson Antarctic Expedition created by Charles Francis Lazeron” These series are from the personal records collection of Charles Francis Lazeron who joined the Australasian Antarctic Expedition in December 1911

In the Series A1 Correspondence files created by the Department of External Affairs is a file 1915/5159 titled “Australian Antarctic Expedition (Dr. Douglas Mawson)”. This National Archives digitised file has a great mixture of material from maps to printed information and correspondence including financial contributions, shopping lists of items needed on the journey and costings etc. It is over 300 pages.

The Series A989 Correspondence files created by the Department of External Affairs includes the digitised file 1944/45/9 titled “Antarctic - Mawson Expedition 1911-14 - Particulars of Flag-Raising”

In the series A461 Correspondence files created by the Department of External Affairs is the file Q413/6 entitled Antarctic Expedition 1911-1914 – Sir Douglas Mawson. This file includes a record of a radio communication from Douglas Mawson from Commonwealth Bay via Macquarie Island and Radio Hobart to the Governor-General. It partly reads “Unfortunately Lieutenant Minnis and Doctor Mertz have both lost their lives all others alive and well”

Other files of interest relating to the Expedition are as follows:

In the series A2911 Correspondence Files created by the Australian High Commission London is File 1109/1911 titled Correspondence associated with Douglas Mawson’s 1911-1914 Australasian Antarctic Expedition . This file has been digitised on RecordSearch and is 133 pages.

In the series MP84/1 Correspondence created by the Department of Defence is File 2018/1/182 titled Proposed loan of services of Lieut R Bage RAW to Dept of External Affairs to accompany Dr Mawson’s Antarctic Expedition 1911-1913

The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914–17), was also known as the Endurance Expedition. Conceived by Sir Ernest Shackleton - the expedition was an attempt to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic continent. The expedition required two ships; Endurance under Shackleton for the Weddell Sea party, and Aurora, under Captain Aeneas Mackintosh, for the Ross Sea party.

The National Archives holds the file titled “Shackleton Relief Expedition 1916” from Series A2911 General Correspondence of the Australian High Commission in London.

The Series “Exploration maps and charts collected by Captain John King Davis” P2819, 1338 also includes a chart titled ‘South Polar Chart which is stamped Aurora Relief Expedition 1916’

We also hold a digitised file 1920/656 titled “Antarctic Expedition – E Shackleton” 1916-1920 from Series A2 Correspondence created by the Prime Ministers Department. It is 97 pages

BANZARE - The British Australian (and) New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition was a research expedition into Antarctica between 1929 and 1931 - It involved two voyages over consecutive Australian summers. It was a British Commonwealth initiative. The leader of the BANZARE was Sir Douglas Mawson with several sub-commanders.

The voyages were primarily exploratory but with Mawson making proclamations of British sovereignty over Antarctic lands at each of their landfalls, seven in total —on the understanding that the territory would later be handed to Australia (as it was in 1933).

In the series A461 Correspondence files created by the Department of External Affairs are a large number of files relating to the BANZARE expedition, over 60 files. 13 of them have been digitised on RecordSearch. Titles include:

E413/1 Expeditions. BANZARE Minutes of meetings of Committee 1930-1935

N413/1 Expeditions. BANZARE - Sailing orders for Sir Douglas Mawson 1929-1930

S413/1 Expeditions. BANZARE - Sir Douglas Mawson, correspondence with 1929-1931

F413/2 Expeditions - BANZARE Wireless messages to and from ‘Discovery’ - 1930 to 1931 [4cm]

F413/4 Expeditions - BANZARE - Statement of first season's results [0.7cm] 1930

C413/6 BANZARE - Annexation of territories 1930-1944

On the file N413/Sailing orders for Sir Douglas Mawson 1929-1930 the first page of the sailing orders partly reads...“On such lands or islands within the area specified in the preceding paragraphs you will plant the British Flag wherever you find it practicable and in doing so you will read the proclamation of annexation as set out in Annexure A to these sailing Orders, attach a copy of the proclamation to the flagstaff and place a second copy of the proclamation in a tin at the foot of the flagstaff. “

Photographs relating to the expedition are found in the Series A 4311 'Cumpston Collection' of documents relating to the history of Australian foreign policy created

by the Department of External Affairs and also found in the series A6180  
Photographic negatives and prints, from the Australian News and Information Bureau  
Canberra

The National Archives also holds the series B1759 Proclamations issued by Sir  
Douglas Mawson during the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research  
Expedition (BANZARE) 1930-1931 created by the Expedition. (CA2995)

The proclamations remained undisturbed insitu at the two proclamation sites until  
1957, when they were discovered and dug out by an expedition from Mawson Base,  
photographed and then returned to their original locations. The 13 January 1930  
Proclamation was again located and rephotographed in the 1970's. The original steel  
cylinder was found rusted away inside a bottle. This cylinder is also held in Series  
B1759. In the late 1970's it was proposed to the Antarctic Division that the original  
proclamations be recovered and returned to Australia. This occurred during the  
1979/1980 summer field season.

The Principal agency with responsibility for the Commonwealth Government's  
Antarctic initiatives, the Australian Antarctic Division – began as a section within the  
Department of External Affairs in May 1948. It remained within this department until  
1968. Since then it has been located within Departments responsible for  
science/environment.

The National Archives holds 43 separate record series created by the Antarctic  
Division. Some significant records series include:

B1370 Correspondence Files 1954-1972 - this is the main series for the Division up to  
1972.

B1387 Correspondence files 1972- 1992 - 291 items are listed on RecordSearch - this  
is the main series for the Division from 1972

P1469 Correspondence Files – resource management branch 1947-1963 -84 items are  
listed on recordsearch.

B1369 Personnel files of former staff members of the Antarctic Division 1949-87

MP1002/1 Official and Personal correspondence of Dr Phillip Garth Law, Director of  
the Antarctic Division 1947-1966. All items are listed on RecordSearch.

B1623 Log Books of upper atmosphere experiments conducted at Antarctic bases  
1948-1984) comprising a daily record of activities at bases which record difficulties  
encountered, or features of note.

P2677 Original films of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions  
ANARE 1946-1988. 658 items are listed on RecordSearch and record most aspects of  
life and work including fieldwork, expeditions, animals, birds etc

P2731 Video tapes of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions  
ANARE Expeditions 1935-1985. 126 items are listed on Recordsearch.

P1556 Station reports and log books 1947-77. 1423 are items listed on  
Recordsearch, 8 have been digitised

P1557 Antarctic voyage reports 1947 -2000. 472 items are listed on  
RecordSearch, 360 have been digitised

MP1604/0 Records from Antarctic Bases 1957-1969

MP1595/0 Antarctic Records Davis Base 1971

MP1511/0 Antarctic Base Records (Macquarie Island, Mawson, Casey and Davis) 1972-1974

MP1645/0 Antarctic Base Records (Macquarie Island, Mawson, Casey and Davis) 1973

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