

Sydney Midwinter 2003

28 June 2003

Cello's Restaurant (in the Castlereagh Inn) once again played host to the Sydney Bash. NSW Council members decorated the Heritage-listed venue with pictures, paintings, posters and displays and with helium-filled balloons anchored to table weights. David Ellyard, as Master of Ceremonies, ran the entire event with pizzazz and managed to keep us more or less in order (no easy task!). At the AGM the 2003-04 NSW Council was elected - Lucinda Coates (President), Paddy Butterworth, Col Christiansen, Camilla Colebatch (a new recruit!), David Ellyard, Catherine King, Kit Scally, Phil Silvestro, Richard Stephen (rejoining the flock after some time), Hilton Swan and Bob Taylor. There was some discussion on the topic of whether eligible but unfinancial members should be allowed to attend the NSW Midwinter dinners by paying an extra fee (say \$10). Responses were noted and the matter will be taken up at the next NSW Branch Council meeting.

The President extended a special welcome to the 18 members of the 36th ANARE to Mawson 1983, whose 20th reunion it was, to Club President John Gilles and to all who had travelled the miles to get here. We had expeditioners from all over NSW and from Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. A summary of the year's activities was given by the President; a precis follows:

It was reported that the NSW Branch had forged a relationship with the Australian National Maritime Museum, inspired by their exhibition Antarctic Heroes: Triumph and Tragedy. Many lectures and films were run in conjunction with this, and ANARE Club members are now welcome to attend ANMM events at members prices. The Museum of Sydney ran an exhibition on Dumont d'Urville and put on a seminar day which was also well attended by our members. Antarctic events of note were advertised to members via our website <http://www.suburbia.com.au/~anarens/>, kept up to date by Col Christiansen. David Ellyard was newly appointed to the role of Sydney Events Coordinator.

A combined Zoo Picnic/BBQ/Slide Evening on 15 September 2002 went over very well. John Gilles, Club President, was a special guest. Due to member feedback we have now separated the events. The next Zoo Picnic Day is on Sunday 14 September 2003 and the BBQ and slide evening on 28 February 2004. [Please contact Lucinda for these.] A couple of other slide evenings were held for those who had missed out on the Club Rep slides (Casey and the Polar Bird extraction), and we also had another Zoo day where we caught up with former NSW councillors Denise Allen (visiting from Alice) and Trevor Olrog.

The President also reported on a major dental operation on Rove, a very ill male leopard seal at the Australian Marine Mammal Research Centre within the Taronga Zoo precinct. Lucinda managed to wangle observation status for herself and fellow NSW councillor Col. It was an amazing procedure and both were impressed by the mix of professionalism and obvious care shown by all staff. Unfortunately, however, after a very successful series of tooth extractions, complications developed whilst Rove was coming out of the anaesthetic. His heart stopped and, although the doctors and carers restarted it (a remarkable feat to witness), in the end Rove died. Not only sad but tragic, as the team had hopes of breeding the first leopard seals in captivity. Rove is survived by Brooke and Halley, two healthy females. Through our

members' kind support, we were able to donate \$500 last year towards their upkeep, taking the total our branch has donated over the years to \$6 800. Certificates for each year were on display for attendees to view, as well as photographic evidence of various Zoo visits.

David Ellyard and Kit Scally were renominated for the Club berth for the end of this year (David was a very strong contender for last year but had to decline due to social commitments, the only excuse acceptable by this branch!). Col was employed by the Antarctic Division as comms officer for a round trip last Sep/Oct and did the Club proud recruiting and promoting the Club and its views.

Other interesting Antarctic flavour events the NSW Branch was involved in over the past year included an historical house in Hornsby and a very special species of Antarctic beetle. Lucinda Varley, an archaeological conservator from Hornsby Shire Council, had approached the Pres at a recent lecture on unsung Antarctic heroes Edgeworth David and Frank Hurley to ask if the ANARE Club would be interested in helping to make Edgeworth David's house into a museum. Col took on the task of finding out some more. The house and garden has (as of two weeks prior to our MWD) the status of a building site, visitors not welcome yet. On completion of the project a friends group will be formed; the house is under consideration (along with several other houses in the area) for a museum. Interestingly, another house in the area belonged to Cotton (who went on the same Shackleton 1908 trip as Edgeworth David). See our website for updated details. Col, David and Kit participated in a most interesting event on 29 March. Contact had been made with a group restoring a 1962 VW beetle, number plate "Antarctic 1", that was at Mawson in 1963. Our three NSW councillors participated in a photo shoot for the newspaper "The Sun Herald", featuring articles in the drive section (front page!) on 6 April 2003.

At a previous meeting it was suggested (by Phil Silvestro) that we do something special as a thanks to Mrs Rob for her untiring years of help and support to expeditioners and their families. Phil created a "Thank you" sign and all expeditioners arrayed themselves behind it for a photo. A bold suggestion from the floor that a similar photo be taken of the expeditioners' partners (who had benefitted equally, if not more, from Mrs Rob's work) was immediately accepted and put into action. The results are posted somewhere near this article. The sign was given into the Club President's hands and will be presented en route home; the pictures will be suitably framed and sent with our love to Mrs Rob.

David Ellyard (M66) proposed the Toast to ANARE. He noted the unique Antarctic experience made possible by ANARE, an organisation founded by Phillip Law and carried on by dedicated persons. Neville Smethurst (OIC for W60) gave the Response to the Toast. He presented a wonderful history of how ANARE fits into the totality of Australia's relationship with the southern continent and also the ANARE Club itself. His conclusion, echoed by other speakers during the evening, was that PEOPLE ARE WHAT MATTERS MOST. It was great to welcome back some familiar NSW Council faces to our ding. Steve Symonds (MI72) travelled from northern NSW and was later prevailed upon (by unanimous request) to take up his former task of Expert Raffle Ticket Flogger. Trevor Olog (MI65, W67) journeyed from the Blue Mountains to catch up with his mates and to give the Toast to Expeditioners. He described being an expeditioner in the Antarctic as the experience of a lifetime and recalled the days of working hard, playing hard and working with colleagues with a wide range of backgrounds, experience and abilities. He noted the fact that the ANARE Club continues the camaraderie of expeditioners. The Response to the Toast was given by Paul (Sax) Saxby (M97/98, D99/00, C00/01, D02/03). Sax thanked the previous generation of expeditioners for

the fine traditions and standards they set. The general consensus of the gathering was that it is a great shame when communications break down and/or politics get in the way of running a Club that has so much potential.

Our scheduled guest speaker, Norman Mackay (CEO of Skytraders, the specialist air services company contracted by the Antarctic Division to fly expeditioners to the continent) was unfortunately unable to get back in time from an overseas appointment. In his stead we were lucky to have Skytraders' Director, Andrew Niemeyer, to speak to the topic of the Casey runway operations. The following is compiled from notes taken by Lucinda from his speech and from the NSW MWD 2003 Newsletter. A separate article covers Andrew's talk.

Australian Antarctic Aviation: Sir Hubert Wilkins was the first to fly over the Antarctic continent (1928), but Sir Douglas Mawson first saw the potential for aerial exploration. His 1911 expedition to Commonwealth Bay included plans to use a Vickers REP Monoplane and BANZARE (1929-1931) relied heavily on its aerial surveys, utilising a Gypsy Moth float plane. Australian expeditions have used aircraft in Antarctica for the past 75 years.

Previous attempts: The first feasibility study of building a runway near Casey was in 1983 but work was suspended when the Government decided not to provide further funding. Trial construction of a runway was undertaken near Casey during the 1989-90 summer in preparation for a RAAF Hercules C130 trial flight but poor weather and heavy snowfalls prevented it from going ahead and the project was not resumed. In 1996, Dr Valery Klovov of the Russian Antarctic Expedition undertook a study of the feasibility of establishing a runway in East Antarctica. The Casey area provided the best site. Subsequent studies (completed April 1999) concluded that opportunities existed for compacted snow runway construction near the Larsemann Hills and for a blue ice runway near the Vestfold Hills.

Current plans: Skytraders was selected as the supplier for the Hobart-Casey airlink in February 2002, the culmination for them of over two years' work involving a comprehensive evaluation process. Their proposal focussed intensely on the Division's three "Critical Success Factors" - Safety, Environment and Cost, and they believe it will be a benchmark in Antarctic aviation. Skytraders are currently in the process of ordering aircraft to be built for Antarctica.

An intercontinental service from Hobart will land a Falcon 900EX aircraft on a groomed glacial ice runway on the Petersen Glacier, some 60km southwest of Casey. The runway is over 3000m long (500m longer than the east-west runway utilised by 747s at Kingsford Smith airport, Sydney), 120m wide and 600m deep and the ice has been graded to ensure a flat surface and sufficient friction for wheeled aircraft operations. A thin (5-10cm) layer of compacted snow will be rolled onto the runway in the 2003/04 season to provide a protective cap and friction (the same coefficient as for wet tarmac). Overland to Casey from the runway is about two hours via Hagglands. The intercontinental flights (just over four hours, compared to eight days by ship) will be coupled to an intracontinental aircraft service to other stations and field locations in the AAT using a ski-equipped CASA 212-400 aircraft. A second C-212 will be configured to operate in support of outfield science.

Past consideration of an Antarctic airlink faced problems with point of safe return (PSR, AKA point of no return, PNR) and environmental issues associated with the transport and handling of large quantities of aviation fuel. The French-built Falcon 900EX, a long range high performance wide body business jet aircraft, can fly Hobart-Casey-Hobart without the

need to refuel (or land, in the event of adverse weather conditions) in Antarctica, thus redefining cold-climate aviation operations. It enhances safety, removing the need to fly beyond PSR, minimises environmental risk (no on-ground refuelling) and negates the requirement for an alternative Antarctic runway. This smaller jet does not need the ground infrastructure required for larger aircraft like Hercules and four-engine jets, with their associated risks of pollution. Specs: three turbo fan engines (Honeywell TFE731-60, 5000ld thrust); max operating altitude 15 500m; cruising speed 420kts; range 4500nm and fuel capacity 11 865 litres; fitted out for 16-18 people; 25 services a year (approximately weekly from mid-October to late February). The Falcon has two-engine ferry capability and Medivac capability.

The CASA 212-400 provides range, payload and utility functions far superior to any comparable ski-equipped aircraft, opening up a range of new possibilities for the conduct of field science. A military aircraft, this will be its first time on a civil register. The new 400 series is equipped with state-of-the-art digital avionics and high efficiency power plants. It can land in higher altitudes than can the faithful Twin Otter. It is a twin engine turboprop (allied signal jet prop), fixed undercarriage STOL aircraft with rear cargo ramp/door, through which a cavernous hold is accessed (cargoes can be loaded via a power winch). It will fly up to 16 passengers to Casey-Davis (5hrs) weekly and Casey-Mawson every 3-4 weeks (overnight at Davis en route, Davis-Mawson 21/2hrs), compared to the current ship times of 12 and 15 days from Hobart to Davis and Mawson respectively. The C-212 can fly Hobart-Casey in ferry mode, and Casey-Davis or -Mawson with a reduced payload. Specs: 195kts max speed (cruises at 165-190); 1375nm max range; 800nm range with 2000kg payload; 2900kg max payload; 3000 litre fuel capacity with underwing auxiliary tanks. It can fly from Casey to Dome C in under four hours and has the range to go to McMurdo base or Heard Island.

Limited operations, runway construction and infrastructure preparation will take place in 2003/04, and the first Falcon and C212 operations will commence in the 2004/05 season.

This air transport system is a world first, providing a quicker and more flexible means of deploying expeditioners to and within Antarctica. It will bring new opportunities for airborne and remote area research and for the involvement in collaborative projects with other national Antarctic programs. The area in which scientists can research will increase and unproductive travel times will decrease. The Australian Antarctic Division has thus opened up new possibilities for science in Antarctica.

The Call of the Years AA had representatives from 1951 (Bill Storer, MI 51 and M54) to the current season, with not too many years skipped in between. After various announcements, Tom Arrowsmith spoke for the M'83 reunion, on the people who have made up ANARE. Mick Willis read a letter from the expedition's doctor, who couldn't make it on the evening. Finally it was time for the raffle to be drawn drawn. The lino-cut of penguins by Mrs Rob was won by Ron Webb, who was thrilled with his prize, as Mrs Rob had looked after him in his first visit to Antarctica (MI 72). A magnificent poster-sized photograph of Emperor penguins at Auster Rookery (taken and donated by Paddy Butterworth) was won by Bob Libbiter (M83). John Gilmour (M83), Bob Taylor (M80) and Julie Finch-Scally scored star wheels courtesy David Ellyard and three double Zoo passes were won by Kevin Miller (M61 62), Paddy Butterworth (M87 91) and yet another M83er.

With due promptings the last remaining expeditioners (comprising mainly the stalwart '83 Mawson men) drifted out of Cello's a bit before the witching hour. Unlike Cinders, however, they set a course for bar, rather than make a dash for the trusty pumpkin, and stayed there until the wee small hours. They certainly built them tough in those days!

Lucinda Coates