

Sydney Midwinter 2008

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club, 26 June.

About our Guest Speaker

Alasdair McGregor, honours graduate in architecture, is a largely self-taught painter and artist. Since the early 1980s he has devoted himself almost exclusively to self-development as an artist, later also directing his energies to writing & photography. In 1983 he helped organise the Heard Island Expedition, venturing there as artist & photographer & in the following two years, voyaged to the Antarctic continent & Macquarie Island as a guest of the AAD. Commissioned works for the AAD followed & a stamp issue for the 25th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty was made by Australia Post in 1986 featuring Alasdair's designs.

From 1996 to 2001 Alasdair was artist & photographer for the AAP Mawson's Huts Foundation, taking part in three summer expeditions to Commonwealth Bay, Antarctica. His account of the conservation work undertaken at this internationally renowned historic site was published in 1998 as *Mawson's Huts: An Antarctic Expedition Journal*. In 2001 Alasdair curated the photographic exhibition '*... that sweep of savage splendour*': *A Century of Australians in Antarctica* for the Australian High Commission in Ottawa, Canada. A biography of the exhibition 'centrepiece' – renowned Australian photographer, adventurer and photographer Frank Hurley – followed. *Frank Hurley: A photographer's life* was published in 2004.

Alasdair's most recent involvement with Antarctica has seen him working over several summer seasons as a lecturer on tourist voyages visiting South Georgia, the Antarctic Peninsula, the Ross Sea, Adelie Land and the sub-Antarctic islands to the south of Australia and NZ.

Douglas Mawson, Frank Hurley & Ernest Shackleton:

The Scientist, the Photographer & the Opportunist

Alasdair McGregor writes: "In September 1911, 25-year old Frank Hurley applied for the post of official photographer and cinematographer on Dr Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE). During the course of the following two and a half years, Hurley proved to be a highly skilled photographer in the field, and a valued member of Mawson's party, but a neglect of post-expedition duties on Hurley's part seriously compromised Mawson's ambitions. A testy relationship developed between the scientist and his photographer, made worse by the irritating thread of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Yet despite the enduring antagonism between the two Australians, fifteen years after the AAE, Mawson engaged Hurley once more, this time for the BANZARE cruises of 1929-31, Mawson's last Antarctic expedition.

"As well as briefly outlining the career of the remarkable Frank Hurley", continues Alasdair, "I'll describe the struggles – on and off the ice – of three very different and determined personalities. While not infused with the heroism of Mawson's escape from death on the AAE, or Shackleton's open boat journey to South Georgia, this is nonetheless a dramatic story of intrigue, deception, conflict, thwarted ambition and greed. As Antarctic heroes, why should these three differ from the rest of us?"