

# 2009 Sydney Midwinter Dinner

Celebrations began traditionally, with Homers. In and around the bar gathered past and present ANAREans, including eight members from the 1969 Casey expedition, who reunited thanks to the efforts of John Gillies. From far and wide they had come to share past experiences, and to catch up on news of current Australian Antarctic research. The AGM was followed by the mandatory group photo, after which the company found its way to the dining room.

Expeditioners entered a scene that was at once festive and icy. Blue and white balloons hovered over white-clothed tables. Upon the cloths, maps of Antarctica had been drawn. Pens were provided for expeditioners to mark the places they knew, and to pin point the current location of the south magnetic pole. Graffiti accompanied lively discussions throughout the evening.

The South Magnetic Pole was the theme of the event, to celebrate the centenary of Mawson's discovery of its location in 1909. ANAREans were delighted and honoured by the presence of Mawson's great-great grand-daughters, Emma McEwin and Dimity Mitsus. Emma spoke about the overloaded Nimrod setting out from Hobart, Mawson's seasickness, and falling into crevasses, his thoughts that younger men were needed for Antarctic expeditions based on Edgeworth David's struggles, and the the miracle rescue of the three men when the ship passed them by.

Tradition deviated, in the most respectful way, as female perspectives of Antarctica were represented and voiced. Gracing the 'Mawson' table was Flip Byrnes, representing her great great grand father, Frank Hurley. The voices of more women than men were to be heard throughout this evening.

Emma proposed that it was Mawson's love for Paquita, his future wife, which gave him the strength to survive his lone sledge journey. In Emma's fine features could be discerned traces of her forebear. Watching and hearing her speak, one could easily sense her passion for Douglas, and Antarctica. For some, Antarctica may simply be a place to go to work. But for Mawson, Antarctica seemed to be as alluring as a lover. Emma's story may resonate with some ANARE men.

Emma's presentation was followed by talks by ANARE women Denise Allen and Deputy Director of The Australian Antarctic Division, Virginia Mudie. Denise, who has worked on seven expeditions, expressed her belief in the ANARE Club as important for the fellowship it provides its members, and for the continuity it helps maintain between past and present ANAREans. When she expressed her concern that the name of ANARE has been changed, many others in the room expressed their agreement.

Virginia Mudie spoke briefly about the Antarctic Division's concern to find energy efficient ways to continue research in Antarctica. She expressed her desire to maintain good connections between the Division and the ANARE Club.

The Call of the Years proceeded as usual, but much abbreviated this year. Longest serving expeditioner, Graeme Currie, or 'Chompers', was on safari in Africa. As expeditioners stood to announce their service in Antarctica, one could imagine the presence of Mawson and Hurley.

The theme of the evening was the magnetic pole, that force that shifts in mysterious ways. Although not consciously engineered, perhaps the theme was also the shifting force of ANARE. Were there signs that the name, ANARE, will be reclaimed, to uphold the spirit of such expeditioners as Mawson, to inspire the future of Australian Antarctic research?

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