

Canberra Midwinters Dinner - 29 June 2012

The ACT Branch of the ANARE Club held the Canberra Midwinter dinner on Friday 29 June. It may have been a cold Canberra night when 49 members and guests met at the Southern Cross Club in Woden, but the atmosphere inside certainly wasn't cold – there was very much a feeling of warmth as people caught up with each other.

Although 49 people attended the dinner, it is also a credit to the members from the ACT that a further 17 people took the time to tender their apologies; this certainly shows that the local members have an ongoing interest in the Club and its social events – I admit that I was remiss in neglecting to send my apologies to my local branch.

As is common at most, but not all, Midwinter dinners, the meals were served on an alternate-drop basis. It started with soup: pea and ham or potato and leek, the main course was chicken breast or eye fillet of beef and the dessert was pavlova or chocolate roulade.

The Director of the Antarctic Division, Tony Fleming, was the Guest of Honour and he talked about his grandfather's time in Antarctica. His grandfather, Sir Raymond Priestley (1886 - 1974), served in Shackleton's Nimrod Expedition, where he worked with (later Sir) Tannatt Edgeworth David and (later Sir) Douglas Mawson, and with Scott's Northern party in 1911 - 1913.

It is fair to say that all present, including the catering staff, were totally rapt in both Tony's talk and the accompanying multimedia presentation.

Tony has sent the Club the following statement:

It was a great honour to attend the dinner.

The expeditioners present at the dinner represent the people that literally built the modern Antarctic program. There is a direct line between the pioneers that took part in Mawson's Australian Antarctic Expedition 100 years ago, the expeditioners at the ANARE dinner and the people that are currently at our Antarctic stations.

It was also great to meet the families of expeditioners - their contribution is largely unsung but is vital to the success of Australian Antarctic program.

Thanks again for inviting me.

As at the other dinners that he attended, the Club's national president, David Elyard, gave a short, but interesting, talk in which he described his trip to Commonwealth Bay to celebrate the centenary of Sir Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition. He also took the opportunity to remind members that the Club's AGM is going to be held on 16 July and encouraged everybody to participate.

All in all it was a great night and thanks to everybody who was involved in organising the dinner, well done.