

The Science Observer

A Journal of Stories About Scientists on Macquarie Island

Volume 7

1948

First Landing! ANARE

After Mawson returned from Antarctica in 1914, he urged the Australian Government to take an active interest in Macquarie Island and Antarctica. It was not until the end of World War II, however, that the Australian Government was prepared to listen. The first Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) landed on Macquarie Island on 7 March 1948.



Macquarie Island's storms and mists. Photo Geof Copson

*Wanted: reliable
young man trained in
meteorology!*

Soon after the end of World War II, the Tasmanian Government lobbied the Australian Government to appoint a caretaker on Macquarie Island. The Tasmanian Government argued that this would consolidate Australia's claims to the island. Macquarie Island was much in the news by 1947.

In that year, journalist, Osmar White, wrote in the 'Adelaide Mail':

'Wanted: Reliable man, trained in meteorology, young and in robust health, able to endure one of the world's most trying climates, must be fond of animals, and not afraid of his own company' ...

'The Commonwealth Government, if it decides to do something about affirming tenure of Australia's desolate outpost on the fringes of the Antarctic Ocean, 800 miles south of Hobart, will probably phrase its advertisement in officialese - but it will mean the same thing...'

'Before long something will probably be done about the appointment. But it won't be an easy job. The man - or men - who get it will have to have temperamental as well as scientific qualifications.

They will have to live in a land of almost perpetual fog and rain, where the mean annual temperature is just under 40 deg (Fahrenheit).

They will have to endure the perpetual, monotonous thunder of mountainous surf on narrow shingle beaches beneath cliffs, the screaming of countless millions of sea birds. They will have to bear with equanimity the impertinence of sea lions who make a habit of visiting camps at night, the discomfort of having - literally - not a square yard of dry ground to walk on.

And above all, they will have to contend with an atmosphere oppressive, with an isolation, a savagery, that no continental desert knows.

They must be prepared to experience frequent earthquakes and occasional landslides and tidal waves.'



The Australian Government did more than appoint a caretaker. It set up a scientific research station on Macquarie Island in 1948, with meteorologists, A.R. Martin as station leader and meteorologist. The vessel that brought the first party of the Australian National Research Expedition (ANARE) to Buckles Bay on 7 March 1948, was an ex-Army vessel with the unspectacular name of LST3501. Reaping the benefits of World War II technology, the first ANARE landing was performed using amphibious Landing Craft Vessels (LCVs).



LST 3501, Australian Antarctic Division, photo by P.J. Law, 1949 © Commonwealth of Australia.

After launching the LCV from the ship, the next challenge was to find a suitable and safe channel through which the LCV could pass. Expedition leader, Alan Martin took soundings as the craft moved parallel to the main beach then landed at Garden Bay.

Another amphibious army vessel, known as a 'DUKW' was launched from the tank deck of the LST. Launching was a tricky manoeuvre since it had to be launched backwards to allow steerage. Despite the dangers of launching into the

swell, the DUKW and its cargo of tents, survival gear and rations landed safely.

The expeditioners located the derelict hut of the 1911-1913 Australasian Antarctic Expedition. They also found an old sealers camp vanishing beneath an elephant seal wallow. When the ANARE expeditioners cleared away the remains of the roof of the old AAE hut they found what Mawson himself had probably found in 1930 when he visited with BANZARE in 1930:

... a case of metal polish and boxes of canned tea, pickles and sauce.. including cheese too 'high' to sample. On a shelf stood a rusty tin of tapioca, with the contents in perfect condition (this was later sent to Lady Mawson).



A DUKW landing on Macquarie Island. Australian Antarctic Division, photo by I. Fox, © Commonwealth of Australia.

Expeditioners pulled a temporary tarpaulin over the roof of the hut then pitched their tents. After shoveling out seal and bird dung they sat down to enjoy a stew of army rationed meat and vegetables which expert French chef,

Carl Du Toit, had flavoured heavily with a bottle of rum.

The next day the expeditioners started unloading provisions from the LST. A couple of landing craft were lost in the process of unloading supplies when kelp strands wrapped around propellers. During one of these incidents, bosun Alf Hayter scrambled onto some rocks which were almost submerged. Hayter held the DUKWs in low regard, considering them neither boats or trucks, and refused to be rescued in one. The weather worsened and it was getting dark. A searchlight rigged on the LST lit up the figure of Hayter, still stuck on the rocks, shivering and swearing. Hayter eventually changed his mind and allowed a DUKW to rescue him from what are now known as 'Hayter's Rocks'.

The road from the beach to camp site was soon churned into a river of grey mud. Men sank to their knees and bulldozers and DUKWs became bogged in the soft peaty soil and had to pull each other out. Despite the setbacks, the party dismantled the old AAE hut and put up fourteen sided prefabricated huts. Carpenters also put together a building known as 'Chippy's Church' from scrap material.

The Australian Government's vessel, *Wyatt Earp*, sailed into Buckles Bay from Antarctica on 20 March 1948, carrying additional supplies for the Macquarie Island party. ANARE staff members, Geof Mottershead and Gersh Major climbed Camp Hill with an Aldis lamp to signal the ship. ANARE leader, Flight Officer Stuart Campbell, was

aboard the *Wyatt Earp*. He spent a few days ashore discussing camp matters with station leader, Alan Martin.

Two days later the last load of stores went ashore from the *Wyatt Earp*.

The new Macquarie Island station had been set up in only fourteen days, five of which were unsuitable for working, due to poor weather.

The ANARE expeditioners then started their various scientific projects or support work.



ANARE has maintained a continuous presence on Macquarie Island since its first landing in 1948.

References

Bowden, T. 1998, *The Silence Calling*, Allen and Unwin, pp39-51

Polar Record 1949. 5 (pp 37, 38, 317 -323)

White, O., 'OUTPOST' - Lonely Macquarie Island - Fortunes were Made There'. In *Adelaide Mail*, 1947, n.d., supplied by J. Massey, Southland Museum, Invercargill.

Further **R**eadings

You can read of Mawson's first visit to Macquarie Island with the AAE in 1911 in:

Building Wireless Hill

And about his second visit with BANZARE in 1930 in::

Paradise Regained – the BANZARS