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‘Leave Artefacts Where they Lie!’

Martin Davies

In 1980, a young archaeologist by the name of Martin Davies conducted the first archaeological survey on Macquarie Island. Before then, visitors to Macquarie Island had been collecting historic artefacts and exhibiting at the station. Davies recommended that all visitors to the island leave artefacts where they found them.

Collecting artefacts

After the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) established its station on Macquarie Island in 1948, expeditioners used to collect historic relics from sealing and early scientific expeditions. They took many relics off the island to keep as souvenirs. Other artefacts were displayed in the ‘Artefact Corral’ at the station, a fenced off area between station buildings, or in a recreation hut known as the ‘Sealers Inn’.



Photo of Martin Davies courtesy Caleb Pedder.

In 1980, Martin Davies, a young archaeologist engaged by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, conducted an archaeological survey of Macquarie Island. He spent several weeks examining historic artefacts.

Martin Davies recommended that all visitors to the island should leave historical items where they found them.

This is because once an artefact has been removed from its surroundings, it loses its archaeological value and becomes little more than a curiosity.



The artefact corral on Macquarie Island. Photo Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.

Archaeologists rely on the local environment and on nearby artefacts to give them clues about who used the items, what they were used for, and how, when and why they were used. If the condition of the artefact is deteriorating, then archaeologists can take measures to conserve it from further decay without moving it from the local environment.



Shoes found on Macquarie Island.
Photo Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.



A clay pipe from Macquarie Island.
Photo Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.



Macquarie Island tryppots.
Photo Geof Copson.

Martin Davies died in Antarctica in 1996 while climbing the Vestfold Hills near Davis Station.



References

Davies, M., 1982, *Macquarie Island Archeological Report*, unpublished, Tasmanian Parks Wildlife Service, Hobart.

Further Reading

You can read about the setting up of the ANARE in:

[First Landing! ANARE](#)

and about the later archaeological work of Karen Townrow in

[Shipwrecks into Huts](#)