

Lines on the ice: the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911–14

Douglas Mawson's sledging flags will fly again almost ninety years after he triumphantly plunged them into the ice at Cape Denison. The flags are part of a major new exhibition on the historic Australian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) at the State Library of New South Wales.

Lines on the ice recounts the ambitious quest made by Mawson and his team of largely inexperienced university graduates who conquered the continent's strange and often hostile environment.

More than 100 rarely seen items will be displayed, including diaries of the expedition members, original photographs, exquisite scientific sketches, maps and memorabilia. A highlight will be an AAE sled, kindly lent by the Australian Navy.

The exhibition features more than seventy photos (many by world-famous photographer Frank Hurley) covering the successful and ill-fated sledging journeys, the exotic wildlife and fascinating interior shots of the huts, as well as portraits of the men and panoramas of Antarctica's dramatic ice-scapes.

The diaries and correspondence on display provide a stunning insight into the minds and motivations of the expedition members, many of whom embarked on this 'boys own adventure' with limited knowledge of the windiest place on earth.

As Morton Moyes, 26, later recalled after spending ten weeks alone in a hut on the Shackleton Ice Shelf: 'Here in this desola-



tion, surviving like the last leaf on a branch, a person becomes aware of his manhood...'

Visitors can view the immaculate original sketches of oceanic and land-based specimens, as well as a series of charcoal sketches of the magical Aurora Australis.

Lines on the Ice: Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911–14 is free at the State Library of New South Wales until 27 October 2002. General inquiries: 02 9273 1414. ■

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