



The scientific era begins

The brief extension of harvesting activities to Heard Island, the middle of the 1800s saw a decline in Antarctic whaling and sealing. The time had come to move from commercial exploitation to scientific exploration.

A Tasmanian scientific journal of 1842 gave the first promotion of Australian research in the Antarctic. However, the call was not taken up until after the highly successful Challenger expedition was concluded in 1876 and the studies of the International Polar Year completed in 1883. Australian scientific societies then became keen to develop research into Antarctica's geological, meteorological and magnetic phenomena.

In 1886 the Australian Antarctic Expedition Committee was established by the Royal Society of Victoria to investigate among other things the establishment of research stations and the means of providing a means to penetrate areas inaccessible to sailing vessels. However, proposals put forward by the Committee to mount a purely scientific expedition did not bring immediate results.

A revival of interest in whaling towards the end of the nineteenth century prompted a Norwegian expedition to explore Antarctic waters south of Australia. For any whaling expedition the manager of the expedition was Norwegian Dr Jørgen Brøgger, who signed an expedition scientist was Australian geologist Professor Edgeworth David, who joined Shackleton as chief scientist officer; Bertram Armitage of Melbourne; Leo Cotton of Sydney; and Captain John King Davis, master of the expedition's vessel, who would go on to play a major part in Australia's exploration of Antarctica.

Phillip Law and the history of Australian Antarctica

Australia's long history of involvement in Antarctica has its foundations in the 18th century. In its early years Australia depended on the sea for its trade and communications and was conscious of the vast unknown region that lay close to the coast. Because of this proximity it was inevitable that Australia became closely involved in Antarctic exploration.

The sailing vessels upon which the colonies depended for their supplies and trade with Europe followed the Great Circle routes south of the Cape of Good Hope and sought the favourable westerly winds found well to the south. These voyages brought familiarity with the high latitudes, but were not without risk - in the second year of settlement HMS Guardian was almost lost after striking an iceberg.

From the first days of colonisation in 1788, Australia was closely associated with sealing and whaling industries. These industries rapidly assumed commercial importance but, as Australian waters became exhausted, the attention of sealers and whalers turned inevitably to the subantarctic islands. By 1820, just ten years after the discovery of Macquarie Island, the fur seal had been virtually exterminated and elegant seals were being slaughtered for their oil.

Over-exploitation around Australia also forced whalers to explore the southern waters. The Hobart whaler, Charles Wilkes, Dumont d'Urville and James Clark Ross, visited Australia for supplies for their southern journeys. The use of Hobart as a port of call for most of these expeditions and its support for the southern whaling and whaling industries fostered Australian interest in Antarctica.



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ANTARCTIC RESEARCH EXPEDITIONS 1947 - 1966



Australian Antarctic Territory defined

With a revival in the whaling industries and increasing international interest in the Antarctic, Mawson was keen to affirm Australia's interest in Antarctica. He proposed a two-year research expedition to the Antarctic coast from the Antarctic coast south of Australia, from Australia to Antarctica, surveying the coast with the use of aircraft. With support from three governments - British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions (BANZARE) was formed under Mawson's command and set sail for the Antarctic in October 1929. In two summer voyages Discovery and the expedition vessel Endurance, which followed a route from 45°E to 100°E and in the process defined the limits of what was five years later to become Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT). Three new landings were made and aircraft flights discovered the BANZARE Coast and Princess Elizabeth Land. The expedition also generated scientific results that were so voluminous that reports were still being published three decades later.

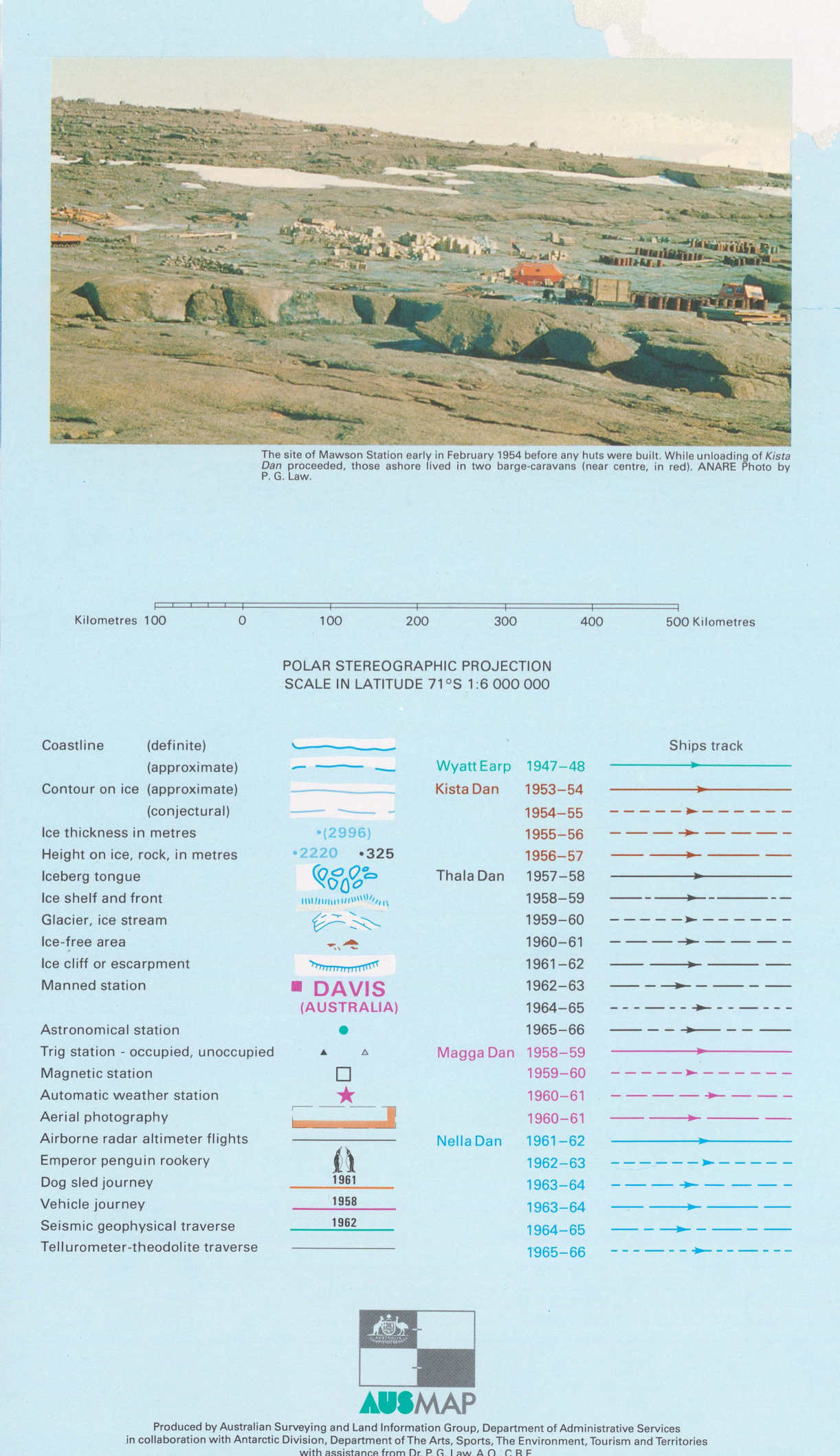
To capitalise on the achievements of BANZARE, plans turned towards the establishment of permanent Antarctic stations which could support further exploratory work as well as conduct meteorological and other studies. Wilkes' ship Wuyat Exp was purchased by the government and other studies. Wuyat proceeded to the Antarctic to reconnoitre a site for a continental station. Although weather and ice conditions prevented the small ship from reaching the coast, the voyage achieved aims of a scientific nature. However, it was clear that Wuyat Exp was not the ship for the job. Three reconnaissance flights were conducted over the Southern Ocean but the principal aim was to establish permanent scientific stations on the Antarctic continent.

ANARE is created

Australian interest in Antarctica revived after the war. The immediate interest was in Antarctic meteorology and in 1947 a number of reconnaissance flights were conducted over the Southern Ocean but the principal aim was to establish permanent scientific stations on the Antarctic continent.

Phillip Law establishes Mawson Station

Kista Dan sailed from Melbourne in January 1954 for Heard Island and MacRobertson Land. A suitable site for a station was found on a rock outcrop surrounding a natural deep-water harbour. It was ideal. The site was one of the few rock exposures along the coast and offered excellent access to the interior of the continent.



Phillip Law establishes Mawson Station

Over a period of twelve days prefabricated buildings, food, stores, scientific equipment and over-snow vehicles were landed and construction of the station was commenced. On 13 February 1954 Phillip Law opened Australia's first permanent station in Antarctica, naming it in honour of Douglas Mawson. After leaving Robert Dovers and the winter party to finish construction of the station, Law's scientific program and make a start on the inland expedition. The ship sailed east to explore MacKenzie Bay and the Vestfold Hills to Princess Elizabeth Land. This set the pattern for Law's future work, where each voyage would support the permanent stations on the continent and concentrate on the continent's scientific opportunities of Antarctica.

Law's plan to establish a second station in the Vestfold Hills, which he had visited in 1954, was therefore timely. Law saw it as essential that Australia build its second station in this extensive low ice area which promised unique scientific opportunities. Kista Dan was again used to carry the party and materials for a new station, and on 13 January 1957 Law opened Davis, naming it in honour of Captain Davis.

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The Antarctic work expands

The following season a new Laizeren vessel, 'Kista Dan', was brought into service for ANARE. The expedition conducted a coastal survey in Gates Land, in the eastern sector of AAT, completed the annual relief of Davis and Mawson stations and conducted a survey westward to Enderby Land. This complemented extensive

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