

Australian Cultural Resource Management in Antarctica: The Case of Mawson's Huts

Using archival research and oral history interviews to uncover the history of the conservation of the Mawson's Huts Historic Site, and the development of the Replica Hut in Hobart, to explore some larger questions around understanding what the key drivers of CRM in Antarctica have been and how these have changed over time.

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Mawson's Huts 2006 Photographer David Killick

Background

Consolidation & clarification (1968-72)

- Value of historic resource recognized at the first ATCM (1961)
- Listing proposed (1968)
- Recommendations at ATCMs included:
 - guidelines for tourists,
 - signposting,
 - survey and definition of curtilage,
 - management plans,
 - regular inspections and reports on the condition of sites and
 - promotion of consultation in relation to preservation and restoration.



Codification (1990–2003)

- Environmental Principles of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty 1991
- ATCM Resolution 8 (1995) which sets out criteria for the types of sites and artefacts that could be designated as historic sites or monuments;
- ACTM Resolution 5 (2001) which provides some interim protection for sites through the adoption of guidelines for the handling of pre-1958 historic remains;
- ATCM Resolution 4 (2001) which called for a review of designated sites and provision of special protection or management by their designation as, or inclusion in, an Antarctic Specially Protected Area or as an Antarctic Specially Managed Area;
- ATCM Resolution 3 (2009). Guidelines for the designation and protection of Historic Sites and Monuments, which includes a form of “cultural significance” values to be addressed in determining the basis for the nomination of an Historic Site or Monument.



Challenges

- “A Proposal for the Designation and Protection of Antarctic Historic Resources” MA (Warren, 1990) - *“the designation of Historic Monuments by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties under the Antarctic Treaty does not adequately protect the Historic Resources of the Antarctic”*
- International Polar Heritage Committee (IPHC) founded on 1st November 2000 as a scientific committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) - that *“there is no recognised way of defining what an “historic site” is and much significant historic material is under threat because its historic value is not accepted.”*



Previous Research

- *“Archaeology on ice. A review of historical archaeology in Antarctica”* Harrowfield (2005)
- *“Twenty years of protection of historic values in Antarctica under the Madrid Protocol”* Barr (2018)
- *“Scott's and Shackleton's Huts: Antarctic heritage and international relations”* Lintott (2016)
- *“Dilapidated Huts and Piles of Rocks: The Geopolitics of Cultural Heritage in Antarctica”* Hingley (2021)
- *“Archaeology in Antarctica”* Zarankin et.al. (2022)



“Dilapidated Huts and Piles of Rocks: The Geopolitics of Cultural Heritage in Antarctica”

Hingley (2021)

- the prevailing discourse on Antarctic heritage aligns with a broader global discourse on heritage
- cultural heritage, and the managerial processes designed to conserve cultural heritage, were manipulated as powerful political resources furthering sovereignty and strategic ambitions
- non-state actor engagements with Antarctic heritage (and by inference the prevailing discourse “have cooperated with, conformed to and been absorbed by the official and legal framework for heritage management”

Why Mawson's Huts?

- “Changing approaches to the conservation of Mawson's Huts reflect developments in Australian conservation philosophy, practices, and techniques”
- (Mackay 2005: 107).
- It might be reasonable to assume therefore, that the history of how approaches to the conservation of Mawson's Huts changed over time would also offer insight into the history of CRM in the AAT and in Antarctica in general.



Main base of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) 1911-1914, led by Sir Douglas Mawson

One of six surviving sites from the 'Heroic Era' of Antarctic exploration

Designated as a Historic Site & Monument (HSM77) under the Antarctic Treaty(1972)

Within an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA 162) (2004, boundary adjusted 2014)

Placed on the Australian Commonwealth and National Heritage Lists (2004 & 2005)

Managed by the Australian Antarctic Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

History and heritage recognition



Conservation & interpretation

- 1970's conservation visits (combined private & AAD)
- 1984-85 & 1985-86 Project Blizzard
- 1997 Mawson's Hut Foundation
- 1998 & 2006 Roof encapsulation
- 2001 Conservation Plan (MHF)
- 2007 Management Plan (AAD)
- 2013 Revised Management Plan (AAD)
- 2013 Mawson's Hut Replica, Hobart
- 2018 Management Plan reviewed



Testing the hypothesis

- Three-way tension between lay enthusiasts, heritage professionals and the Australian Antarctic Division
- Competing heritage discourses vs one Prevailing Antarctic Heritage Discourse
- Has non-state actor engagement “cooperated with, conformed to and been absorbed by the official and legal framework for heritage management” OR
- Has it had a substantial impact on the way Antarctic heritage is managed?



Why oral history ?

- Oral history is a qualitative research methodology that uses interviewing techniques to record the memories of first-person witnesses.
- allows for an investigation of the agency of individual practitioners and policy makers who both create and contest heritage discourses.
- an important means of capturing potential negotiations that are not recorded in the archives
- can be used to present a challenge to simplistic notions of hegemony, the idea that dominant political or cultural forces control thought and action

A circular inset image on the left side of the slide shows a vast, flat, snow-covered landscape under a bright sky. A low, dark horizon line separates the white snow from a sky filled with soft, white clouds. A bright sunburst or lens flare effect emanates from the upper left, casting a glow across the scene.

Benefits

- An analysis of the history of Australian CRM in Antarctica
- New data – oral history interviews – accessible for future research into Australia’s relationship with Antarctica and the geopolitical use of historic sites
- New analysis and data made available for those managing or interpreting Antarctic heritage sites including tour operators and national Antarctic programs
- Foster a greater understanding and protection of archaeological and historic sites in the South

Progress to date

- Archival research into Antarctic Division and related files in the National Archives of Australia – Hobart, Melbourne and Canberra
- Archival research into transcripts of oral history interviews and documentary collections in the National Library, Canberra
- Oral history interviews and transcription of interviews of over 20 people including: cultural heritage practitioners (archaeologists, conservation architects, conservators) past officers of the Australian Antarctic Division, current members of the Mawson's Huts Foundation and Board, people who worked on the Huts during Project Blizzard, among others – 15 so far.



Questions
or
Comments
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