

P R E S S R E L E A S E

**Historic remnants of Douglas Mawson's mono-plane uncovered in Antarctica**

1 January 2010. Mawson's Huts, Cape Denison, Antarctica: While looking for suitable shore-side landing spots for guests travelling onboard the visiting expedition ship *Orion*, Mawson's Huts Foundation team member Mark Farrell has uncovered remnant metal piping from Douglas Mawson's single-propeller mono-plane, taken with Mawson almost a century ago on his 1911 Antarctic expedition.

Built just eight years after the Wright brothers' first flight, this aircraft was the first produced by the Vickers factory in Britain, and the first taken to either polar region.

Transported to Antarctica without its wings, (removed in Australia following an accident during a demonstration flight prior to departure) the plane was used for a time as a motorised sledge. The "air tractor" was eventually abandoned because its Vickers engine succumbed to the extreme temperatures, described by Mawson as having "developed an internal disorder".

The plane was last seen in the mid-1970s when Antarctic researchers photographed the ice-encrusted fuselage. Unusually low tides, (assisted by a blue moon\*), in combination with unprecedented melting of ice had exposed the rusty remnants, found on New Year's Day 2010.

It is understood that remains of the larger segments of the plane, which have been immersed in sea water possibly as long as 30 years, are still visible and clearly identifiable from archival photos as part of the aircraft.

Don McIntyre, Antarctic Expedition Team Leader onboard *Orion*, has reported that the items found have been transferred to the Conservation Laboratory – which was transported as deck cargo onboard *Orion* to Cape Denison two years ago. In order to help conserve the parts of the plane found, Caustic Soda (provided from the ship's supplies) has allowed the Conservation Team to stabilize the corrosion.

Orion Expedition Cruises' involvement with the Mawson's Huts Foundation is part of an ongoing corporate commitment to assist and support the Foundation in their important conservation activities.

Taking advantage of excellent weather, Orion's guests were ashore at Cape Denison at 1600 to take a rare look inside the historic Mawson's Huts and surrounding environs, including seeing the tail plane/rudder of Mawson's plane, left in the hut by Mawson when he departed in 1913.

Guests onboard the last Zodiacs returned to *Orion* at 23.30 to enjoy celebratory drinks and a warm meal, accompanied by Orion's Expedition Team and 10 members of Mawson's Huts Conservation Team (who took advantage of warm showers and dinner onboard in the dining room – a welcome contrast to their life in tents while working on site).

The Australian Antarctic Division will decide whether to return the remains of the aircraft to Australia for specialist treatment or leave them at Cape Denison. Orion Expedition Cruises Managing Director, Sarina Bratton, has offered to transport the items back to Australia onboard *Orion*.

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[\* Traditionally a blue moon is the second full moon within a calendar month, usually accompanied by unusually low tides.]

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### **Orion 2010/2011 Antarctic expeditions: a once in a blue moon experience**

Imagine spending the end of 2010 and early 2011 onboard the purpose-built expedition cruise ship *Orion*, being part of an Antarctic expedition of a lifetime. A Centenary Toast to Australia's greatest Antarctic explorer, Douglas Mawson.

This amazing voyage will take intrepid modern-day adventurers from Dunedin, NZ through the sub Antarctic islands of NZ, Macquarie Island, into the Southern Ocean, crossing the Antarctic Circle before heading for Cape Denison and a memorable visit to Douglas Mawson's historic huts built for his 1911-1914 'Australian Antarctic Expedition'.

These timber buildings are rare in a world context, being one of just six complexes surviving from the 'Heroic Era' of Antarctic exploration: a period of great human adventure, exploration, research and discovery on the last continent to be explored.

Regarded as the windiest place on earth, regularly whipped by ferocious katabatic winds, it is a wonder that there are any remnants of buildings left at all. Yet, remarkably, in addition to the historic buildings, there are plentiful examples of clothing, food, crates, sleds, ropes and kerosene tins remaining, literally frozen in time.

Mawson's Huts are located at Cape Denison, 67° 0' south, further south than the position of the south magnetic pole. Magnetic compasses are useless in these waters, an area that remains mainly unsurveyed.

At over twice the length and 10 times the weight of *Aurora*, Douglas Mawson's wooden ex-whaling barquentine, *Orion* (with the benefits of oversized stabilisers, retractable sonar and ice strengthened hull) provides her 100 guests with the needs of today's adventurers: technology, safety and creature comforts that include fine food and wines, a gym, boutique, hairdressing, sauna and massage facilities - as well as 70 staff and 10 international Antarctic expedition specialists to look after every need.

Orion's 10 Zodiacs, the perfect expedition transport, will be put to good use for landings ashore in both Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic islands of the Snares, Auckland Islands and Macquarie Island, breeding ground for countless wildlife.

This 18 night expedition concludes in Dunedin, New Zealand, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2011.

A never to be forgotten centenary expedition to one of the most pristine and wondrous places on earth.

### **Mawson's Antarctica- Commonwealth Bay 2010**

#### **18 night expedition: Dunedin/ Antarctica / Dunedin**

**Expedition departs 28<sup>th</sup> December 2010** -Dunedin / Snares Islands / Auckland Islands / Commonwealth Bay region / Macquarie Island / Dunedin

NOTE: Please note that all Antarctic voyages are subject to possible variation according to prevailing weather conditions and as such are opportunistic in nature. On occasion intended destinations will need to be changed for safety or other reason.

Fares from \$19,365 per person twin share for an Ocean View category B Stateroom

Suites from \$26,710 per person twin share for a Junior Suite

Orion's spacious Owners' Suites are \$40,555 per person twin share

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### **ORION Expedition Cruises: Supporter of the Mawson's Huts Foundation.**

Almost 100 years after the explorers departed the huts the relentless conditions have taken their toll and substantial ongoing renovations are required to ensure these historic buildings remain intact for future generations.

In addition to transporting tonnes of necessary equipment onboard Orion to the Mawson's Huts site to assist with urgent re-building, generous donations from Orion's guests (exceeding \$100,000) and Orion Expedition Cruises have been presented by Sarina Bratton, Managing Director of Orion Expedition Cruises to David Jensen AM, Chairman and CEO of the Mawson's Huts Foundation, in support of necessary ongoing renovations to these historic buildings.

***Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the current Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is the world's latest purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship, featuring an unmatched range of onboard facilities.***

***With 75 crew and a maximum of just 100 passengers for all voyages to Antarctica Orion offers the highest staff to guest ratio and guest to public space ratio of any ship based in Australian waters.***

Further information on all Orion Expedition Cruises to Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, Asia, New Zealand, the Kimberley and Arnhem Land can be obtained by visiting the website [www.orionexpeditions.com](http://www.orionexpeditions.com)

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: [info@orionexpeditions.com.au](mailto:info@orionexpeditions.com.au)