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## **Project Blizzard**

By the early 1980s there had been several unsuccessful attempts by ANARE to establish and execute a restoration program for the site, although minor works had already been undertaken by the private Oceanic Research Foundation during a 1982 expedition (an ice tunnel was excavated and minor roof repairs were executed).

The site was proving to be too far away, too expensive, and too windy to work on for all but a few summer days. It was relegated to the too hard basket by the bureaucrats faced with shrinking budgets.

## - Jonathon Chester Going to Extremes: Project Blizzard and Australia's Antarctic Heritage (1986)

As a result of frustration with Government priorities, which were seen to be elsewhere, Project Blizzard was formed. Project Blizzard aimed to increase public awareness of Australia's involvement in Antarctica and, in doing so, conserve Mawson's Huts. In particular, they viewed the scientific work, including meteorological, biological, geological and magnetic research of the AAE, as significant. The organization immediately began to look for financial support from the community, hoping to raise capital for a privately-funded Antarctic expedition. The campaign used the slogan 'Buy a board for Mawson's Hut'.

The Project Blizzard team carried out two expeditions to the site, the first in 1984/85 and the second in 1985/86. In 1984/85 their work largely involved recording of the site and structures by surveyors, architects, archaeologists and a materials conservator. The red fibreglass Apple Hut was constructed during this visit, adjacent to the Granholm Hut. In 1985/86, they focused on stabilising the internal platform of the Main Hut, which had partly collapsed under the load of snow ingress, using metal and timber props. This work involved an associated archaeological excavation program in areas disturbed for the works.

Although there was friction between Project Blizzard and the AHC and other conservation practitioners over the prior approvals required, the nature and extent of works that were undertaken and the collection of records and access to information that arose from the expedition, the Project Blizzard efforts had two positive effects. They clearly stimulated increased efforts in conservation planning for the site and also led to further co-operative efforts between the public and private sector to conserve the Mawson's Huts.

## **Conservation Planning**

In 1986 ANARE returned to Cape Denison. The Sorensen Hut was constructed during this expedition, sited in a valley 500m to the east of the Main Hut. The structure was composed of insulated metal panels.

There were subsequently three unsuccessful attempts by ANARE during the 1980s to undertake expeditions to the site (largely due to poor weather conditions).

Meanwhile, conservation planning for the site had begun. The Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments Advisory Committee was established in 1986. In May 1987 a Statement of Significance was commissioned by the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science (Commonwealth of Australia). Although the authors of the report, Allom Lovell Marquis Kyle Architects, did not have the opportunity to visit the site, they were able to draw on the site experience gained by ANARE (1978), Project Blizzard (1984/1985 and 1985/1986) and Michael Pearson of the AHC, who had visited the site with ANARE in 1986. The objective of the Statement of Significance was to establish the cultural significance of the site, enabling policy decisions to be made.

In 1993 Michael Pearson prepared a Conservation Plan at the request of the Mawson's Huts Conservation Committee and the AAD. (This committee had been established in the early 1990s as the Derham Committee and planned conservation works.) The 1993 Conservation Plan included an outline of the cultural significance of Mawson's Huts, a description of the condition of the site at the time, an explanation of management issues, a conservation policy and a detailed implementation strategy in the form of a Draft Work Plan.

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