



# ANTARCTICA...

## ... land of icy history



Taking a picture of the Aurora Australis (right), while other members of the expedition (left) are trapped in a sudden snowstorm.

MELBOURNE, Thursday. AUSTRALIA is making plans to ensure the preservation of historic remains and relics in Antarctica.

Among the memorials to be made permanent are the graves of seven Russians and a German, members of the Soviet Antarctic Expedition who died in a fire on Buromskiy Island in August 1960.

The eight lonely graves will be evidence of one of the large historic facts of Antarctica — the frozen continent has been the scene of one of the most successful experiments in international collaboration.

A treaty signed in 1959 by 11 nations provided for complete freedom of access of scientific expeditions to any part of the Antarctic continent for interchange of scientific information and personnel.

### Treaty

Under the treaty's terms, no military activities of any kind may be carried on, and a system of inspection by national observers ensures that the provision is not evaded.

The Australian Antarctic Territory has an area of about 5,896,000 sq. km (2,400,000 sq. miles) — about half the continent's total area of 14.3m sq. km (5,500,000 sq. miles). This is a little less than the combined area of the United States and Australia.

Antarctica's climate is the coldest and harshest in the world. At the coast the mean annual temperature is 0 deg. C (32 deg. F); 300 km (300 miles) inland it is minus 30 deg. F; and 900 km (900 miles) inland it is minus 60 deg. F.

The intense cold is aggravated by strong winds which sometimes blow with extreme force.

Antarctica has stirred the interest of scientists and explorers from many countries. Australians have been among them.

The most famous of the Australian explorers was Sir Douglas Mawson, who was a member of Sir Ernst Shackleton's first expedition to Ant-

arctica in 1907. Mawson joined the party as a physicist. He made the first journey to the South Magnetic Pole area, a journey which ranks among the greatest in polar history.

After his return to Australia Mawson took his Doctorate of Science and a year later began planning an Australian expedition to the 2,666 km (2000 miles) of unknown Antarctic coastline between Cape Adare and Gaussberg.

The expedition sailed for Antarctica in 1911; charted over 933 km (700 miles) of new coastline for the first time and penetrated 333 km (250 miles) inland. The party established bases in King George V Land and Queen Mary Land and also on Mac-

in Australian Antarctic Territory, the Australian Government's Antarctic Division of the Department of Supply is planning to restore many of them and make more permanent.

One is the hut built by Sir Douglas Mawson at Cape Denison, King George V land, in 1912 while he was with the British expedition led by Shackleton.

Another is the cross and plaque erected to the memory of Mertz and Ninnis, two members of the Shackleton expedition who died at Cape Denison in 1913.

Other restorations are planned of the records of landing by Australian explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins at Walkabout Rocks on Jan. 11, 1939. Wil-

tense cold and hard living on the ice.

Although the waters around Antarctica do not contain the great variety of marine life found in warmer regions, they are teeming with large numbers of a smaller number of species.

Life in the ocean consists of plankton, krill, squid, some bony fish and killer whales. On the sea ice and on the shore of the continent — depending on the season — there are arctic Peninsula, jutting out towards South America.

The fauna is made up of tiny invertebrates such as the are four types of seals, and a variety of penguins but mainly Emperors and Adelies.



quarie Island before returning to Australia in 1914.

Fifteen years later, in 1929-31, Mawson led a combined British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition. British sovereignty was proclaimed at seven localities and, two years after the expedition returned, the Australian Antarctic Territory was established.

To preserve in perpetuity many of the historic objects

kins had led a private expedition in 1928 to Graham Land and made the first aeroplane flight in the Antarctic.

Cairns, flags, records of landings, stone tablets and messages to commemorate landings in many parts of Australian Antarctic Territory will be restored and made permanent.

Antarctica is a unique natural observatory for the scientists who have braved the in-

Birds of flight over the ocean and around the shore line include albatrosses, skuas (the Antarctic eagle) sheath-bills, petrels, terns, fulmars and cape pigeons.

The terrestrial life of the Antarctic, by contrast with its luxuriant marine life, is sparse. There are no land vertebrates and only three flowering plants which are confined to the Ant-wingless insects known as springtails and some free-liv-

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