

Mawson's Huts - National and International Historical Heritage. Frozen in Time!

Mawson's Huts are of national and international heritage significance. The buildings are unique and have an extremely high conservation value as the only surviving site representing the work of Sir Douglas Mawson's pioneering Antarctic research.

The main hut survives almost as it was left over 100 years ago. Snow has infiltrated the hut and Douglas Mawson's private room resembles a crystal cavern. His worn leather boots still sit on the shelf where he left them. His pillow still lies on his bunk. On the rough shelves in the dining area there are books and other artefacts, and bottles and condiments still sit on shelves in the kitchen.



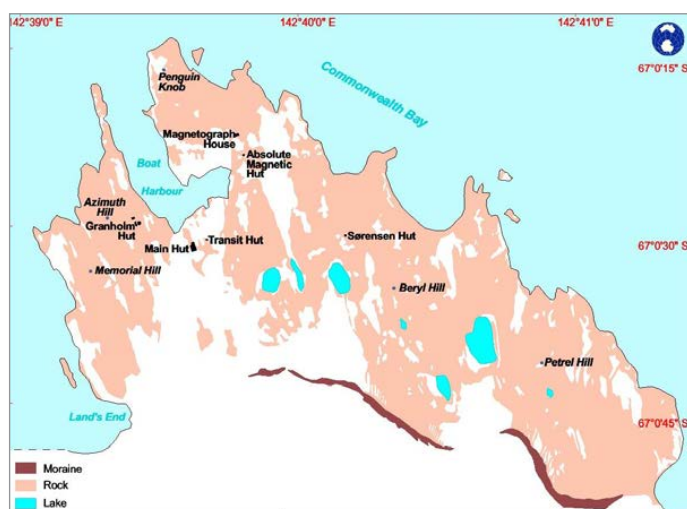
Inside Mawson's room | Photo: Mawson's Huts Foundation



Then: In the kitchen | Photo Frank Hurley



Now: The kitchen and stove | Photo Mawson's Huts Foundation



Cape Denison

Cape Denison is an ice-free rocky headland covering less than one square kilometre.

During the initial landing at Cape Denison in 1911 weather conditions were pleasant enough but its true nature of fierce katabatic winds soon revealed itself to Mawson and his men.

Cape Denison is now acknowledged as the windiest place on Earth.

Map of Cape Denison - Produced by the Australian Antarctic Data Centre, Australian Antarctic Division, Department of the Environment and Heritage, June 2000. © Commonwealth of Australia



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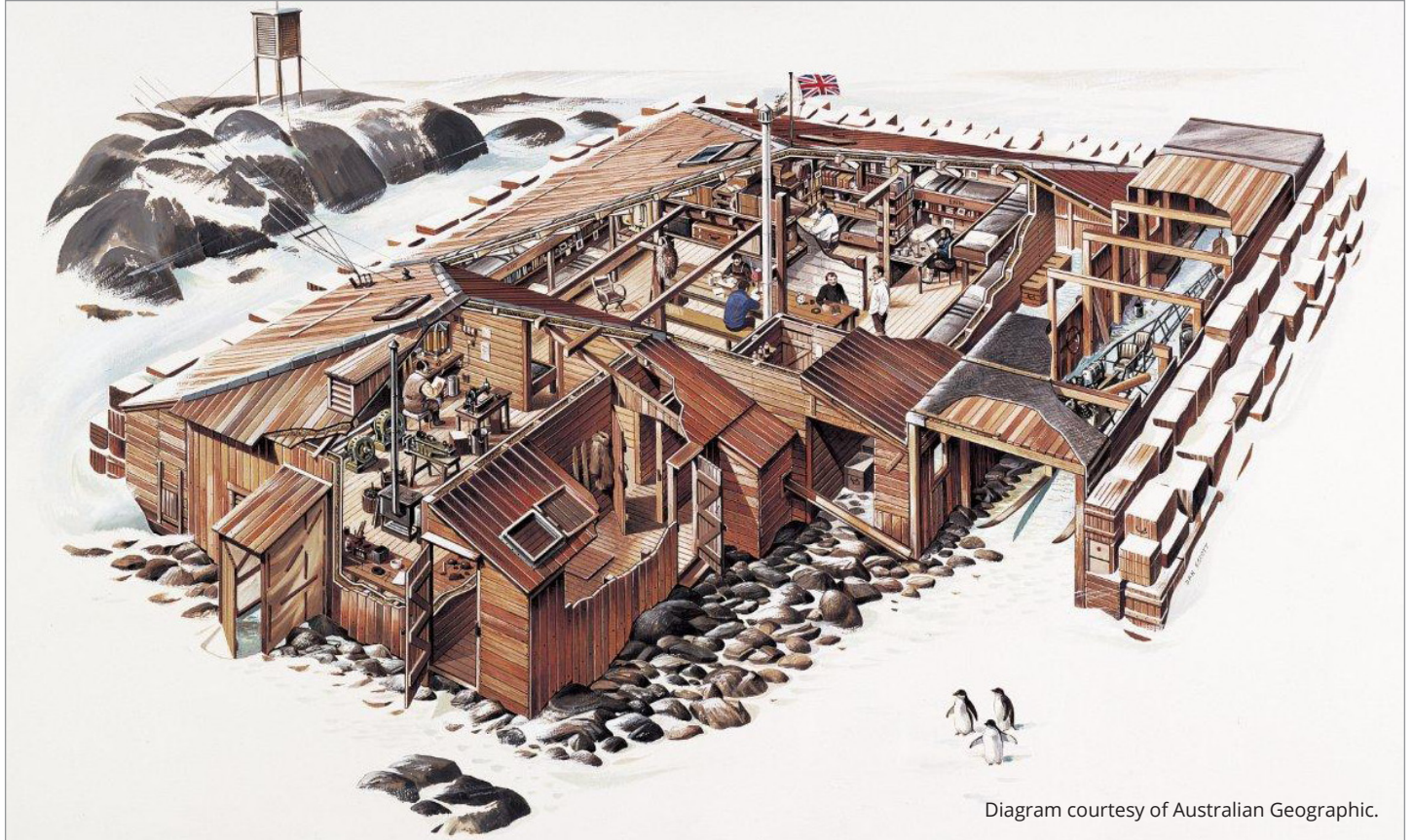


Diagram courtesy of Australian Geographic.

The main hut was home to the eighteen men of the main base party in 1912 and then home to the seven men who stayed on for a second year in 1913.

A prominent feature of the room was a long central dining table with platform seating on either side. Around the walls were the men's bunks, a room for Mawson, a corner photographic darkroom for Frank Hurley, and a kitchen with a couple of benches and a stove.



The Air tractor | Photo F Hurley

The workroom off the fourth wall contained benches for carpentry, mechanical and scientific work as well as the radio. Along one outer wall was sheltered accommodation for the 19 dogs, and along the other wall was the entrance porch and toilet.

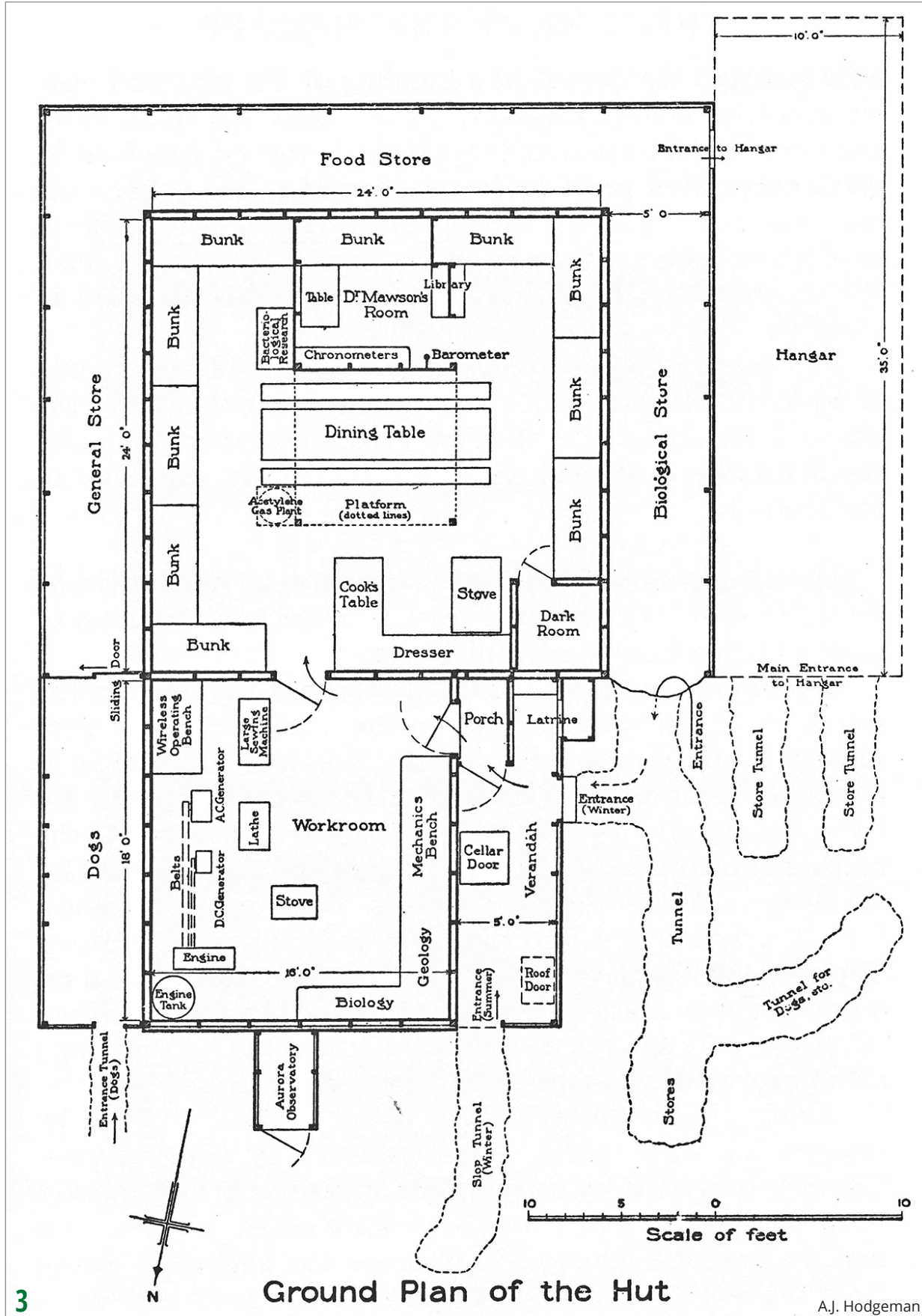
To the west of the main hut, adjoining the biological store, was the 'hangar', erected to house the Australian Antarctic Expedition's now flightless Vickers aircraft, which Francis Bickerton would maintain for use as an 'air tractor' to tow heavy sledges up the ice slopes.

The hut's survival in the most severe of polar climates attests to the merit of Mawson's design and its great strength of structure, however the main hut has sustained significant damage from the effects of wind, ice and time.

The Mawson's Huts Foundation was established in 1997, with the support of the Federal Government expressly to conserve the fragile and historic buildings at Cape Denison, East Antarctica.



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Australian Government



This fact file was supported through funding from the Australian Government's Community Heritage and Icons Grants program, and the Mawson's Huts Foundation.

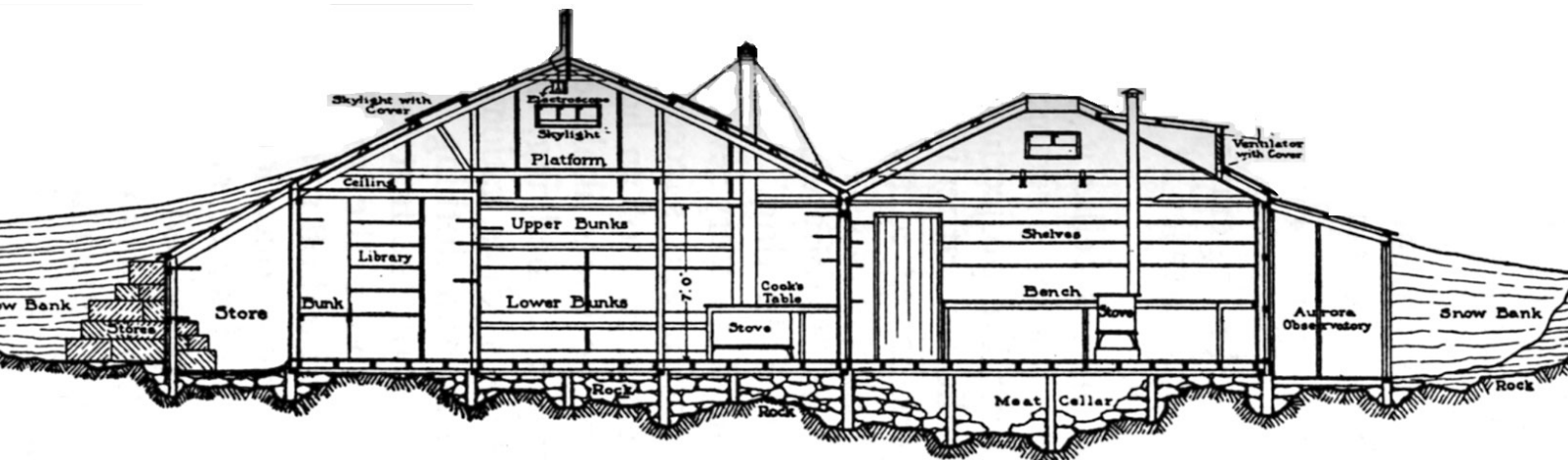
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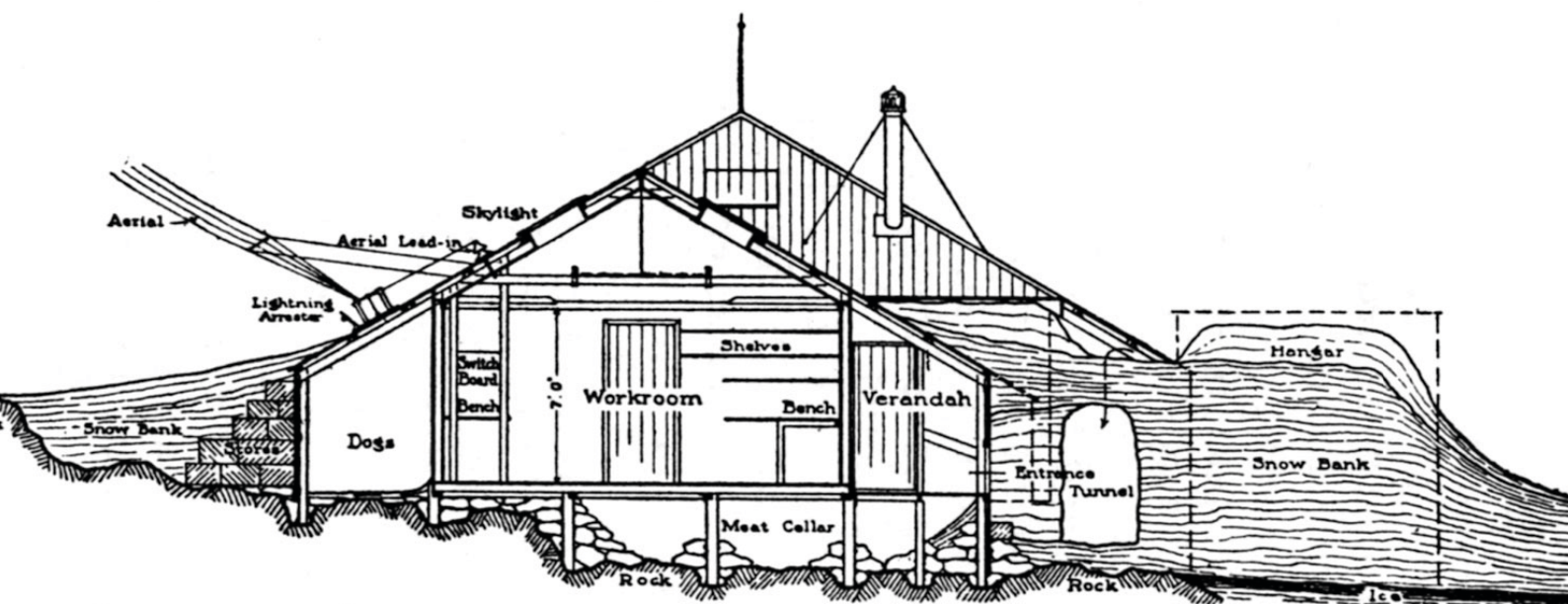
AJ. Hodgeman



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Longitudinal Section



Transverse Section

Want to know more?

- <http://www.mawsons-huts.org.au/>
- <http://www.antarctica.gov.au/environment/antarcticas-cultural-heritage/mawsons-huts-cape-denison>
- http://www.antarctica.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/114782/MawsonsHut_low.pdf

Activity:

- Use the floor plan and elevations to make a model of Mawson's main hut.
- Find out about the "Air tractor".