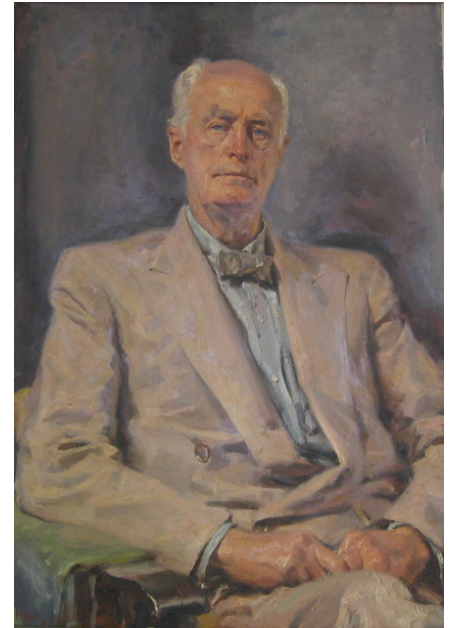


Sir Douglas Mawson (1882 – 1958)

Douglas Mawson was born in Shipley, Yorkshire, and moved with his family to Sydney in 1884. Educated at the University of Sydney, he gained degrees in Engineering (mining) and Geology. After working as a junior demonstrator in chemistry at the University of Sydney, and as geologist to an expedition to the New Hebrides in 1903, he became a lecturer in petrology and mineralogy at the University of Adelaide in 1905. The University of Adelaide served as the base for the remainder of his long career.

He became interested in the glacial geology of South Australia, and in radioactivity. He identified and first described the mineral Davidite, containing titanium and uranium, in specimens from the region now known as Radium Hill, the first major radioactive ore body discovered in Australia. Mawson named Davidite after his University professor and Antarctic companion, T.W. Edgeworth David.



In 1907 Mawson joined the British Antarctic Expedition led by Ernest Shackleton, as a geologist. He was a member of the group which was the first to ascend Mount Erebus, and for some time led the team attempting to reach the South Magnetic Pole.

In 1911 Mawson led the Australasian Antarctic Expedition to the sector of the Antarctic continent immediately south of Australia, at that time entirely unexplored. The aims were to undertake geographical exploration and scientific studies, and to find the South Magnetic Pole. The expedition was full of adventure and tragedy, and at one point, after his two companions died, Mawson completed alone a journey of 160km, taking thirty days. However, he did not discard his geological specimens, which he dragged along in a half sled. When he eventually got back to Cape Denison the ship Aurora had left a few hours earlier. Mawson and five men who had remained behind to look for him wintered another year until early 1914. During the course of this expedition, Mawson and his party, and those at West Base, had explored large areas of the Antarctic coast, describing its geology, biology and meteorology, and more closely defining the location of the south magnetic pole.

Knighted in 1914 for his Antarctic work, Mawson served in World War I as a Major in the British Ministry of Munitions.

On return to Adelaide, Mawson pursued his academic studies, taking further expeditions abroad, including a joint British, Australian and New Zealand expedition to the Antarctic in 1929 -1931. The work done by the expedition led to the formation of the Australian Antarctic Territory in 1936. He also spent much of his time researching the geology of the northern Flinders Ranges.

On retirement from teaching in 1952 he was made Emeritus Professor. He died in 1958.

Mawson is commemorated in the Antarctic by the first permanent Australian station, established in 1954, and his image has appeared on postage stamps and, from 1984-1996, on the Australian one hundred dollar note.

