

THE ADELIE BLIZZARD; MAWSON'S FORGOTTEN NEWSPAPER

1913 Preface by Emma McEwin, introduction by Elizabeth Leane and Mark Pharaoh. Adelaide: The Friends of the State Library of South Australia in association with the Friends of Mawson at the South Australian Museum, 2010. "999 copies of this edition ...have been published: 199 are hand numbered and bound in halfleather; 450 are handbound in decorated cloth; 300 are in soft covers; 50 sets of unbound sheets for presentation and custom binding. Prices: AUD295 (deluxe)[now sold out], AUD150 (hardback); AUD60 (paperback); AUD200 (sheets). ISBNs: 9781876154608 (deluxe), 9781876154622 (hardback) and 9781876154615 (paperback). Web: <http://www.australianapublications.org.au/> and <http://www.douglasmawson.com.au/AdelieBlizzardFlyer.pdf>

It's been a good year or so for the genre of 'Expedition Publications': The fourth and final volume of the *South Polar Times* saw the light of day after years of false starts, and from Australia we have *The Adelie Blizzard*, both impressive efforts. I'm holding the deluxe edition of the latter which is beautifully produced, very tall at 14-3/4 inches, bound in dark blue half leather with gilt and silver gilt lettering, rules and designs. (The other editions are the same in size, content and paper; only the bindings differ.) This is a facsimile; in other words, each page of the original foolscap typescript (8 x 13") has been photo-reproduced in color and at full size.

The *Blizzard* was produced as a single original—mostly using the blue ribbon and on occasion the red and the black of the expedition Smith Premier typewriter—and was passed around from man to man. Five numbers were issued in all over a seven-month period of the second year of the expedition. The exploring was over, and the effort was seen as a way to keep those cooped up in the hut at Commonwealth Bay occupied and focused for another year. (There was an effort to bring out the *Blizzard* during the first year, with Mawson as editor, but it came to nought, although some of the pieces created did eventually appear.) In the next attempt the expedition doctor, Archie McLean, was the editor. Just as with the *South Polar Times*, the intention was to publish the *Blizzard* once back home. McLean edited the original and added a preface. It was sent off to Smith, Elder and Andrew Melrose (but not to Mawson's publisher, Heinemann, "largely on the grounds that he was German-born"). But publication never resulted. There are numerous handwritten corrections and editorial marks throughout, presumably by McLean and probably by Mawson, too. These would suggest that the intended publication would not be a facsimile *per se* but, like the *South Polar Times*, set afresh to appear like the original. The single copy of the *Blizzard* then languished in Mawson's AAE archives until publication nearly a century after the first number appeared.

It's not the easiest thing in the world to read, given the blue typescript

(quite a light blue at that), the mostly single-spacing of the text, the many notations and the often lack of spacing between punctuation and words. So one is not likely to curl up with it on an evening. But the important thing is that it does say a lot about the difficulties of life in the Antarctic back in the Heroic Age, and, of course, it is representative of the tenor of the times. What was thought amusing then, may miss the point today. There are no illustrations to speak of (I counted 15 small sketches in the text and two full-page sketches, some apparently done by Frank Bickerton) and none in color and none particularly interesting or skilfully executed. The early numbers have nicely hand-lettered titles and running heads (the work of Alfred Hodgeman, the cartographer). The heads disappear (replaced with simply typed ones) and the titles largely disappear as well, beginning with the third number, which makes for a far less attractive look. Why, one wonders?

The one-page Preface is by Emma McEwin who is the great-granddaughter of Mawson. She explains that “writing for the *Adelie Blizzard* provided an outlet for [the men’s] thoughts and frustrations in the stifled, strained atmosphere of the hut.”

The ten-page double-column Introduction by Elizabeth Leane and Mark Pharaoh (both recognized authorities on expedition newspapers and Douglas Mawson and the AAE, respectively) provides an excellent summary of how this expedition newspaper came to be and some its predecessors. In a footnote, we learn that the “men of the Western Party [under Frank Wild] produced their own publication, the *Glacier Tongue*, which unfortunately does not appear to have survived.” If it turns up some day, what a find!

The name and birth/death dates and a photograph, plus two or three paragraphs about each member of the Main Party, make the six-page Biographies section very useful.

As to illustrations, each number of the *Blizzard* in this edition is preceded by a full-page frontispiece, at times a detail of a larger work. Three of these are by : J. Van Waterschoot Van Der Gracht, an artist new to me and very good, and one each by Charles Harrisson (painting) and Frank Hurley (photograph). The book itself has as its frontispiece a Hurley photo. In the Introduction there are another two works by Gracht, as well as two sections and a floor plan of the hut. There is a colored image of the *Aurora* by M. Stainforth but nothing is said about this artist. There are three colored maps, one showing the tracks of the *Aurora*, one of Commonwealth Bay and Cape Denison, and one of King George V Land.

The Home of the Blizzard devotes just two paragraphs to the newspaper (it also reproduces the Contents page of the first number). “It was the first Antarctic publication which could boast a real cable column of news of the day,” Mawson wrote. This explains how the first number (April 1913) includes news of the deaths of Scott and the Polar Party. The outside world had only learned of the tragedy two months before. Lady Scott and Teddy Evans even “found time, God bless them! To tender kind congratulations and sympathy to us...We have to thank the wireless for many kind expressions from the world at large, sympathising with the expedition for the sacrifices of

the lives of Lieutenant B. E. S. Ninnis, and Dr X. Mertz.” The final number of the *Blizzard* contains an account of Amundsen’s south pole triumph.

One entry that caught my eye under ‘Births, Deaths, Marriages’ in the first number:

“Deaths:– On April 23rd, suddenly, of a Winchester bullet, following severe lacerations from other dogs, *Lasseson* [sic], formerly of Framheim, Ross Sea, Antarctica.

Farewell, poor Lass, you pretty dog,
With friendly ways and training blended,
From Greenland to Antarctic ice,
At last your weary journey’s ended.

Inserted by his sorrowing master.”

(Why the Framheim reference? Amundsen gave the expedition 21 dogs when he stopped in Hobart on his return from the south. These came down in the *Aurora*. Some returned to Australia afterwards and apparently descendants can still be found there!)

What I’d be curious about would be some information on the original *Adelie Blizzard*. Was it bound? And if so, in the Antarctic or only after the expedition returned home? Were no carbon copies made? Does the typewriter still exist? Has any of it, other than the contents page referred to above, ever been reproduced. And why wasn’t Archie McLean’s Preface included?

Explanatory notes throughout would have been helpful but as this is a facsimile it might have been too difficult or awkward to do well.

The one edition I have not personally seen is the decorative cloth version; as the deluxe edition is sold out, one will be confronted with a hard choice. I think the soft cover edition represents good value.

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A Phantasm of the Snow

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Ode to Tobacco

Punch, the dinner epilogue

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The Evolution of Women
A Concise Narrative
The Daylight Proposition
Meteorological and Magnetic Notes
Calendar Rhymes
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Our Dogs
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To a Snow Petrel
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The Magneto-Flickergraph Variety Coy
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