



## Media release

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### **Antarctic artefacts discovered in MetService archive as they prepare to move from Kelburn HQ**

A meteorological logbook which recorded the conditions during the rescue mission to save members of Ernest Shackleton's 1914-16 Trans-Antarctic Expedition from Ross Island in Antarctica, has been uncovered by MetService staff as they prepare to move out of their Kelburn headquarters.

The 1916/17 logbook from the famed sailing vessel *Aurora*, is just one of several historically significant treasures. Other finds include two logbooks (1910, 1911) from *Terra Nova*, the ship that carried Captain Robert Falcon Scott and team on his tragic mission to be the first people to reach the South Pole; in addition to inventories and letters from Sir Douglas Mawson, a famous Australian geologist and Antarctic explorer.

MetService Chief Executive Stephen Hunt who has been to Antarctica himself recognises the significance of this discovery.

"These artefacts document early years of Antarctic exploration and travel through the Great Southern Ocean. Those expeditions included scientific discovery and research, including meticulous recording of geographical, weather and ocean conditions. Scott, Shackleton, and Mawson faced extreme polar conditions and went to great lengths to record observed and measured data in hand-written logs.

"Today, the documents certainly have meteorological value but more significantly, they are priceless historical artefacts from an era of extreme courage and sacrifice. The discovery of these logs and records, in the MetService archive, is remarkable and we are now seeking an appropriate home for them. I have met with the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust and have informed appropriate Government agencies."

"The timing of this find is somewhat serendipitous as this year MetService celebrates its 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of scientific weather observations in New Zealand. Acknowledging that Māori observed and forecast the weather and oceans long before Western science arrived in Aotearoa, these historical documents provide a tangible record of MetService's place in history. Today, MetService's role is to keep New

Zealanders safe through our national severe weather warning service. Atmospheric and weather data is still meticulously recorded albeit digitally and automatically.”

From December, MetService will relocate its head office and National Forecasting Centre from Kelburn to, another iconic building in Wellington’s CBD. The temporary relocation is because the MetService building atop Wellington’s Botanical Gardens requires earthquake strengthening.

Hunt says, “30 Salamanca Rd has been the home of the NZ Meteorological Service since 1968, but like many Wellington buildings, it is considered safe to occupy, however the National Building Standard (NBS) places it in the earthquake risk category and in time will require strengthening.”

“We want to ensure we are providing a resilient environment for our people and the essential services we provide.” says Hunt.

MetService’s head office will be relocated to Seabridge House on Featherston Street in Wellington’s CBD at the end of the year/into January, while the organisation looks further into restrengthening options.

“The transition to our new but temporary home has been months in the planning and will not affect any of the services we provide the New Zealand public or our business customers.”

“We’ve refitted our space at Seabridge House to provide a choice-based style working environment offering greater flexibility for our people,” explains Hunt.

The distinctive satellite dishes on the roof of the MetService building in Kelburn will be permanently relocated to the organisation’s Paraparaumu office. One of the satellite receivers is New Zealand’s primary source of weather satellite imagery which comes from the billion-dollar Himawari-8 satellite operated by the Japan Meteorological Agency, and the other antenna system receives high resolution temperature and humidity profiles of the atmosphere from five international polar orbiting satellites which are used in weather models.

**END**

### **Notes to the editors:**

Details of the Antarctic artefacts:

**A Meteorological Logbook from the vessel *Aurora*, December 1916 – Feb 1917**, Port Chalmers to Ross Island and back to New Zealand, part of the Shackleton Relief Expedition. Includes barograph and thermograph charts.

Sailing vessel *Aurora* - Ernest Shackleton’s Trans-Antarctic expedition (1914-1917) failed because another ship in the expedition, the *Endurance*, was crushed by sea ice and sank in the Weddell Sea. Despite this, he managed to rescue all the crew with no loss of life. The *Aurora’s* logbook

records the conditions on that rescue mission for his Ross Sea party, which was stranded on Ross Island, on the other side of Antarctica for more than a year.

**Two Meteorological Logbooks from the vessel *Terra Nova*, September – October 1910,** sailing from Simons Town, South Africa to Melbourne, Australia, with Captain Scott onboard, and another one dated July – October 1911 - in northern New Zealand Waters.

Captain Scott tried but failed to be the first man to reach the South Pole (1910-1912). He was beaten by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, and he and his team all died on the Ross Ice Shelf on their return from the South Pole in February 1912. The US research station at the South Pole is named after both of them (Amundsen-Scott Station).

**Inventories and letters from Sir Douglas Mawson on Antarctic / Macquarie Island** meteorological reports provided to the Director of the NZ Meteorological Service, 1929 – 1932.

Mawson was a famous Australian geologist and Antarctic explorer. He survived tremendous hardship in Antarctica in 1912, while reaching the South Magnetic Pole. His two companions, Ninnis and Mertz, both died on the trip, leaving Mawson alone more than 100 miles from his base at Commonwealth Bay. He somehow survived, making it back to his base through crevasses, starvation, and terrible weather. An Australian Antarctic research base is named after him (Mawson Station).

Details about MetService's move:

The MetService National Forecasting Centre will be located on level 2 of Seabridge House. There is no change to the locations of the State-Owned Enterprise's other offices throughout the country (consultants meteorologists in Auckland, media graphics unit in Christchurch who supply the weather pages for national newspapers, the Paraparumu based engineers who maintain MetService's weather radar and the national observation network, and the oceanographic team in Raglan.)

MetService owns the building at 30 Salamanca Road and has a land lease with the Department of Conservation.