



Marion Wheatland prepares for her Antarctic mission in a freezer (left); Sir Douglas Mawson (top); the expedition's main hut today (middle) and when new (above).

PICTURES: SIMON SCHULTER
ALAN DAIN MACGILLIVRAY

Spinning a yarn to preserve our Antarctic heritage

By JARED LYNCH

UNLESS you really like ice-cream, spending three hours in a freezer is not much fun. But Marion Wheatland took to the chill to prepare for a journey to help save Australia's adventurous past in Antarctica.

Almost 100 years after Sir Douglas Mawson led a heroic expedition across the snow-clad continent, the Melbourne mother is raising money to preserve the wooden huts where his team lived.

She will spin wool at Cape Denison outside the rickety buildings, 3000 kilometres south of Hobart, and auction all her yarns.

"Most women my age holiday in more sedate locations, soaking up the sun and sand," the 53-year-old said. "But me, well... I intend to spin on the ice."

Ms Wheatland hired a portable cool room, set at minus 18 degrees, in Keilor East to prepare for the icy temperatures.

She has always wanted to visit

Antarctica and when her father died two years ago, he left her some money to fulfil her dream.

"He encouraged me to do adventurous things and I thought this would be a great way to honour his memory."

The huts were built for Mawson's 1912-13 Antarctic expedition, during which he survived being lost on the ice for weeks, and were last used in the 1950s before being left to the elements.

Mawson's Huts Foundation chair-

man and chief executive David Jensen said Ms Wheatland's fund-raising was unusual. "But it's certainly a lovely gesture and we are grateful," he said.

Mr Jensen said the foundation's yearly expedition to maintain the huts cost about \$500,000.

The foundation has reclad the buildings' roofs to stop snow and ice seeping in. Artefacts are also being recovered and restored at a nearby laboratory.

"There is a lot of ongoing main-

tenance and Marion's efforts will help us with all this conservation work," he said.

"Many people don't realise that Mawson was responsible for Australia's 42 per cent claim of Antarctica. Our work is about preserving this special site."

The foundation will send a team of eight people, including heritage builders and an archaeologist, to Antarctica in early December. Ms Wheatland will leave on December 28.

woman
had not
all have
I been
weeks to
a small
ressed
ctors
k later.
system
as due
ptem-
or by
Mnis-
A had
every
their