



ANTARCTIC HERITAGE TRUST
— INSPIRING EXPLORERS —

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

SHACKLETON'S *NIMROD* HUT

CAPE ROYDS, ROSS ISLAND, ANTARCTICA

ASPA 157 — HSM 15

SECOND EDITION 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



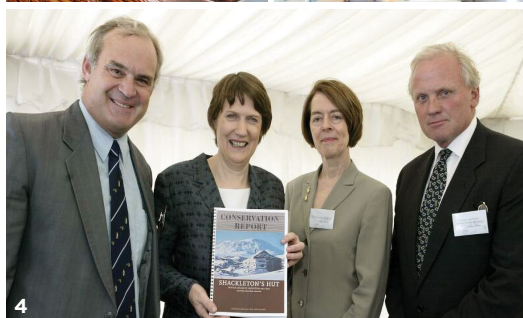
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Antarctic Heritage Trust (AHT) is a New Zealand-based charity with a vision of inspiring explorers. Through its mission to conserve, share and encourage the spirit of exploration, AHT cares for the remarkable expedition bases of early Antarctic explorers including Carsten Borchgrevink, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, Sir Ernest Shackleton, and Sir Edmund Hillary.

It shares the legacy of exploration through outreach programmes and encourages the spirit of exploration through expeditions to engage and inspire a new generation.

AHT was established in 1987 and manages the Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project (RSHRP), the world's largest cold-climate conservation project, which cares for five expedition bases in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica:

- Borchgrevink's Hut, Cape Adare
- Scott's Hut, Hut Point
- Shackleton's Hut, Cape Royds
- Scott's Hut, Cape Evans
- Hillary's Hut, Scott Base



The *Conservation Management Plan (CMP)* for Cape Royds sets out the policy framework for the long-term conservation and management of Shackleton's *Nimrod* hut, its associated structures and features, and the surrounding historic cultural landscape. The site lies within Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) 157 which contains Historic Site and Monument (HSM) 15, Shackleton's *Nimrod* hut.

This second edition, prepared in 2026, updates the 2003 *Conservation Plan*. It acknowledges the preservation work of early hut caretakers and conservation personnel and reflects nearly four decades of conservation work led by AHT, focussed in the latter two decades via the RSHRP. This *CMP* provides a basis for consistent decision-making as environmental conditions, visitation, and nearby operational activity continue to evolve.

Some of the many people involved in this project since the Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project (RSHRP) was launched in 2002.

1 HRH The Princess Royal and Antarctic Heritage Trust Executive Director Nigel Watson. 2001-2002.

2 Programme Manager, Artefacts Lizzie Meek working with the thawed whisky bottles at Canterbury Museum. 2010.

3 Artefact specialist Julian Bickersteth of ICS, packing candles for transport to the conservation lab at Scott Base. 2006-2007.

4 Antarctic Heritage Trust Chairman Rob Fenwick, Prime Minister of New Zealand Rt Hon Helen Clark, Hon Alexandra Shackleton and

Property Finance Group Chairman Barney Sundstrom at the launch of the Cape Royds CMP. 2003.

5 Conservator Nicola Stewart. 2021-2022.

6 Conservator Georgina Whiteley treating a Mackinlay's whisky crate. 2012.

7 Programme Manager, Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project Al Fastier, International Conservation Services Collections Manager Doug Rogan, Executive Director Nigel Watson, Conservator Robert Clendon, Department of Conservation Archaeologist Neville Ritchie. 2005-2006.

PURPOSE AND CONSERVATION APPROACH

The *CMP* is AHT's principal guidance document for the care of the hut, its setting, and its artefact collection. It aligns with Antarctic Treaty System requirements, including the *ASPA 157 Management Plan*, and with recognised international conservation practice. Its evidence-led approach prioritises retention of authentic fabric, least possible intervention, and thorough documentation. The *CMP* is intended to be kept under review, with scheduled regular reviews so that policies and priorities remain responsive to new information and changing risks.

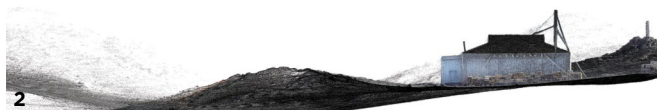


- 1** South wall of Shackleton's *Nimrod* hut, conserved Venesta cases reinstated. 2011–2012.
AHT/JOHN EVANS

SITE CONTEXT AND SETTING

Cape Royds is a small ice-free cape on Ross Island in the Ross Sea region, located on the lower slopes of Mount Erebus and bordered by McMurdo Sound. The site is remote but accessible, being regularly visited during the austral summer by personnel from nearby national programmes based at McMurdo Station and Scott Base, and by controlled tourism operating in the Ross Sea.

The heritage place lies within ASPA 157. It includes the hut (HSM 15), ancillary structures and depots, within a wider historic landscape that remains closely aligned with early expedition records. Adjacent ASPA 121 protects the nearby Adélie penguin rookery.



- 1** Shackleton's hut in the landscape at Cape Royds. 2011–2012. AHT/JOHN EVANS
- 2** Shackleton's *Nimrod* hut, longitudinal section through the site and south elevation of hut. HERITAGEWORKS
- 3** Shackleton's *Nimrod* hut, transverse section through the site and west elevation of hut. HERITAGEWORKS
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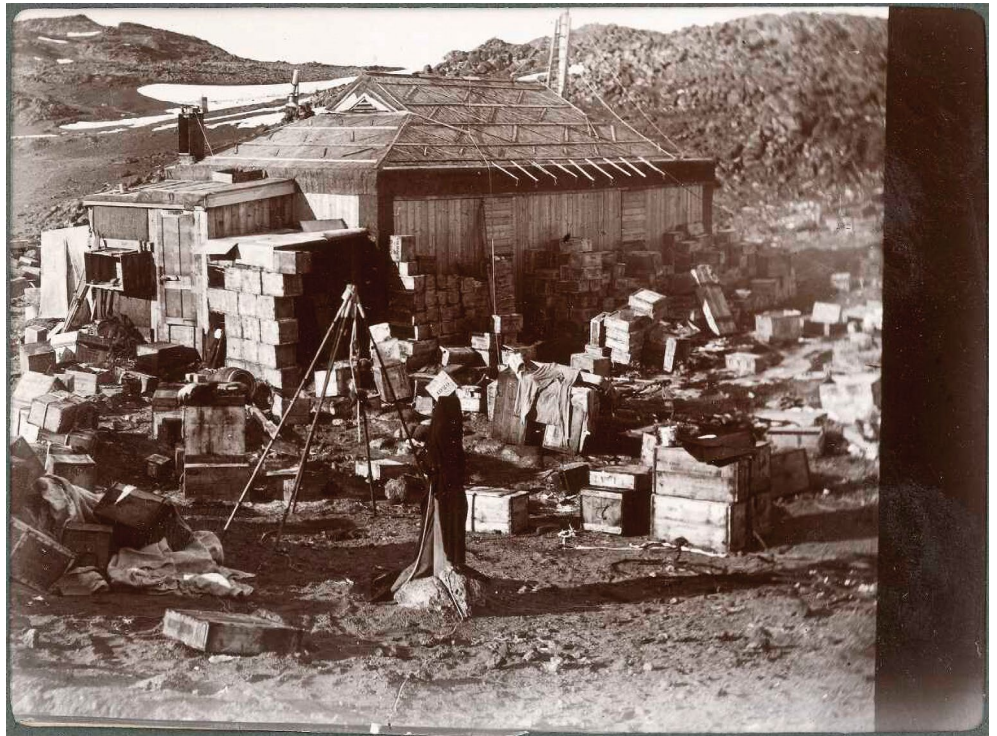
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The *Nimrod* hut is a prefabricated and specially designed building erected in early 1908 for Ernest Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition (1907-1909). It served as the expedition's base for scientific work and sledging journeys during the heroic era, including the journey to the South Magnetic Pole and the first ascent of Mount Erebus.

Originally home to 15 men, 8 ponies and up to 22 dogs, the cramped quarters served as a workshop, science lab, darkroom, dining, living and sleeping quarters. The first book (*Aurora Australis*) published in Antarctica was at *Nimrod* hut, and the first motor car brought to Antarctica, the New Arrol-Johnston, was housed in the garage.

The expedition's achievements, including advances in polar travel and landmark scientific work, are reflected in the hut's physical fabric, internal layout, and extensive in situ collections. The hut was a popular getaway spot for later heroic era expeditions who spent time there collecting food or specimens or staging exploratory journeys in the area. Mid-century biologists were the last to occupy the hut as living quarters, before it transitioned to being a place of recognised heritage significance and received renewed visitation linked to the establishment of modern bases on Ross Island.

1 Shackleton's hut, 1908. The entrance porch shows on the middle of the west elevation, with stores piled against the south elevation. JOSEPH KINSEY COLLECTION/ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY. REFERENCE: PA1-O-464-17



2 Men reading newspapers during the British Antarctic Expedition. 1907-1909. SIR JOSEPH JAMES KINSEY COLLECTION/ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY. INSTITUTION REFERENCE: PA1-O-463-37-3

3 Ernest Shackleton. ca 1907. QUARTERMAIN COLLECTION/CANTERBURY MUSEUM. REFERENCE: 1973.204.1

HERITAGE COMPONENTS: BUILT FABRIC, COLLECTIONS, AND SETTING

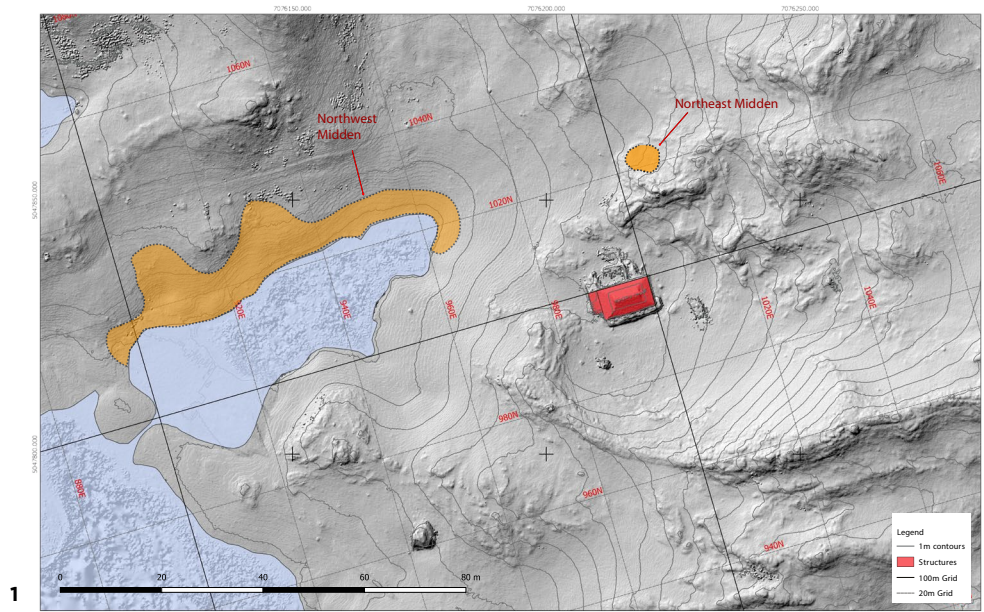
The major heritage components of the site consist of the prefabricated wooden hut and its associated fixtures and fittings, which include a heating/cooking stove and lighting plant. They also include the remains of the stables and garage, which were constructed on site from stores boxes and fodder bales.

A collection of just over 6,100 historic artefacts remains in situ inside and around the hut. A smaller quantity of material is held off site as part of the Reserve Collection which AHT manages in partnership with the Canterbury Museum.

The surrounding ground surfaces, archaeological deposits, including historic midden areas, and other

features within the broader landscape setting, such as the snow gauge and meteorological screen, are

treated as integral to the place, contributing to significance and to how the site is experienced.



Northwest (Pony Lake) Midden shown with local coordinate system of 20 m x 20 m grids. HERITAGEWORKS

CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND KEY RISKS

The hut and collection are generally stable following the principal conservation programmes delivered through the RSHRP (2004–2011) and are supported by subsequent monitoring and maintenance procedures. However, Cape Royds faces accelerating risks associated with climate change, including warmer temperatures, increased periods of thaw, increased precipitation, and stronger and more frequent storm events. These changes are affecting snow and water movement around and beneath the hut, thawing permafrost, contributing to corrosion and increasing biodeterioration within the buildings and collection. Some earlier RSHRP repairs are approaching the end of their service life; for example, the roofing is now 20 years old.

Increased visitation from nearby stations and from Ross Sea tourism also creates cumulative impacts that require ongoing management. These include wear, inadvertent disturbance of artefacts and archaeological material, and short-term changes to environmental conditions inside the hut. The assemblages of stores boxes adjacent to the south wall of the hut, including their contents (food tins in very poor condition), have continued to deteriorate. Much of this material is no longer clad in original fabric, and the resulting loss of interpretive understanding of these stores boxes is a significant management challenge.



- 1 Roof before restoration work. 2003–2004. AHT
- 2 Roof after restoration work, also showing installed timber battens over the exposed cladding joints. 2010–2011. AHT/GORDON MACDONALD
- 3 'Boot' flashing shown during repairs. 2022–2023. AHT/ZACK BENNETT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Shackleton's 1908 *Nimrod* hut and the surrounding cultural landscape at Cape Royds (including areas now protected as ASPA 121 and ASPA 157) are a place of exceptional beauty and cultural heritage significance, surviving in sufficiently authentic condition to be an outstanding evocation of the heroic era of Antarctic exploration. Established as the base for Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition, 1907-1909, the site is directly associated with internationally significant and famous achievements in exploration, science, and technology, including several significant 'firsts': the first ascent of Mount Erebus, the first journey to the South Magnetic Pole, the most southerly continental exploration of its time, the first use of a motor vehicle in Antarctica, and the production of *Aurora Australis*, the first publication printed on the continent.

The significance of Cape Royds extends to its later occupations by members of Scott's British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913 and the Ross Sea Party of Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1914-1917, and, later, mid-century Antarctic penguin researchers. Successive generations of hut caretakers and conservation practitioners have recognised and protected its heritage values, resulting in formal



protection in 1972, which continues to this day.

The hut, associated structures, artefacts, and archaeological deposits provide evidential value and insight into often-undocumented aspects of the daily lives, technologies, social practices, and adaptation of early Antarctic explorers. As one of only a small number of surviving heroic era expedition huts, the site remains an irreplaceable resource for ongoing historic, archaeological, scientific, and conservation research.

Cape Royds also possesses outstanding aesthetic value. Its largely unaltered landscape and dramatic setting beneath Mount Erebus, with views

across McMurdo Sound to the Transantarctic Mountains, is a place of great natural beauty. The time and weather-worn materials of the remaining building and artefacts in their original context create a powerful and evocative sense of place: contrasted against the harsh Antarctic environment the visitor is reminded of the challenges of human endeavour within it. The adjacent Adélie penguin rookery and other local wildlife including seals, skuas, whales and orcas have an enduring fascination and visual appeal.

The site holds great communal value for Antarctica's international heritage community and for the wider

1 View of the site showing the hut and Pony Lake. 2021-2022. AHT/NICOLA STEWART

public. Through extensive documentation — publications, photographs, film, art, and later conservation activity and ongoing stewardship, Cape Royds has become highly symbolic of early Antarctic exploration. Its association with Ernest Shackleton, whose leadership is widely regarded as exemplary, and the dramatic stories and adventures of the British Antarctic Expedition ensure that Cape Royds continues to inspire international interest and the desire to protect the place.

DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Conservation and management at Cape Royds are governed by the Antarctic Treaty System, particularly the management requirements of ASPA 157, and the responsibilities associated with HSM 15. The Antarctic environment imposes strict

operational constraints: work is limited to short summer periods; weather frequently disrupts programmes; and the remote setting limits transport, specialist labour, and materials. The hut remains an uncontrolled environment because conventional powered

environmental systems carry high fire risk, are impractical to install and maintain, and are aesthetically at odds with the original site.

AHT's approach emphasises compatible, like-for-like repair; minimal disturbance

to archaeological deposits; controlled access and visitor supervision; and comprehensive recording to ensure accountability and continuity of knowledge.

CONSERVATION POLICY DIRECTION AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The *CMP* recognises that the current phase of stewardship requires adaptive planning and risk-based decision-making. Being cognisant of and responsive towards unexpected weather events, or changes in logistics support are key to providing timely and effective conservation interventions.

This adaptive approach is supported by sustained maintenance, monitoring, and planned retreatment of both building elements and artefacts. Policies prioritise retention of authentic material and evidence across all periods of use, and require any change to be justified by assessed significance and the principle of least intervention. Where repairs are necessary, materials and techniques are selected for compatibility and durability in polar conditions, and new work is identifiable on close inspection without being artificially aged.

The collection is managed as integral to the hut's significance and visitor experience, with ongoing



attention to corrosion, moisture-related risks, and inherently unstable materials. Visitor access is managed through guided entry, strict limits consistent with ASPA requirements, and monitoring to manage cumulative impacts.

The *CMP* identifies future priorities for major building repairs, including structural integrity and new weathertightness solutions for the roof and cladding. Collection priorities include exterior boxed food contents and large in situ items, such as the stove and acetylene

1 Conservator Nicola Stewart and Programme Manager, Artefacts Lizzie Meek updating artefact records. 2018–2019.
AHT/LIZZIE MEEK

plant, which have complex conservation treatment needs.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND REVIEW

Implementation is delivered through an annual cycle of planning, fieldwork, reporting, and review, acknowledging the variable constraints of weather, logistics, and permitting. Monitoring and documentation are central to management. They include environmental data logging, periodic spatial surveys, condition assessments, and visitor records, supported by AHT manuals, databases, and specialist procedures developed through the RSHRP. Independent technical oversight is maintained for

significant decisions and quality assurance.

The *CMP* has an intended 20-year life with scheduled reviews aligned with the ASPA review cycle. It also recognises that the hut and artefacts have finite lives and that future reviews must address the implications of ongoing change. Effective delivery relies on clear responsibilities among agencies and operators, sustained resourcing for routine maintenance and periodic retreatment, and ongoing support from donors, partners,



sponsors, government agencies, and the wider global community.

1 Dog kennels. 2018–2019.
AHT/MIKE GILLIES

SUPPORT THE FUTURE OF SHACKLETON'S HUT

The explorer bases of the Ross Sea region hold global significance.

By giving to Antarctic Heritage Trust, you are investing in the ongoing conservation of these important cultural heritage sites so that future generations can learn about Antarctica and its history of exploration and science. Your donation will ensure the stories of Antarctica's legendary explorers continue to inspire people around the globe.

Thank you for playing a part in the future of the historic huts of the Ross Sea region.

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Shackleton's hut. 2017-2018.
AHT/CHRIS ANSIN