

Broadly Boats News Special



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Meeting the Ice Queen

Alpha Global Expedition 2005/2006/2007



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ALPHA GLOBAL EXPEDITION

Follow Adrian Flanagan's progress on-line at
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Save the Children

Save the Children fights for children around the world suffering poverty, disease, injustice and violence.

Having been born in Africa and travelled widely throughout Asia, India and Sri Lanka, Adrian has witnessed first hand the ravages of war, poverty and a lack of education on children. Save the Children's work in emergencies, HIV and Aids, health, education, children's rights and exploitation is uncompromising, focussed and unrelenting.

Visit: www.savethechildren.org.uk



The new Oxford Children's Hospital on the site of the famous John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, England opened in January 2007. The Oxford Children's Hospital will provide state-of-the-art facilities designed specifically for children and young people.

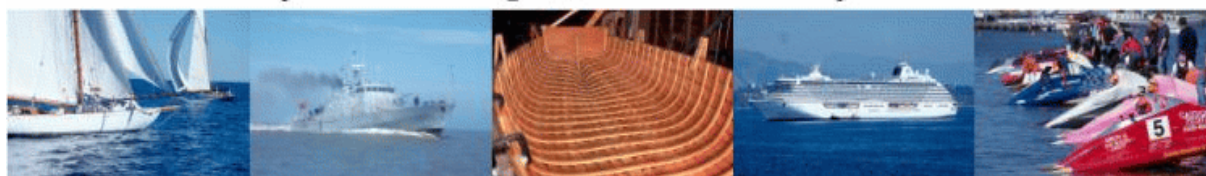
across the UK.

The Hospital will treat over 65,000 each year from Oxfordshire, the surrounding regions and for some treatments from

As a father of two young children living near Oxford, the Children's Hospital has personal significance. More importantly, the Oxford Children's Hospital will be a centre for excellence in paediatric medical research and care. Visit: www.chox.org.uk

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Broadly Boats Information Resource for the Maritime Community

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Alpha Global Expedition 2005/2006

Editor: Ian Johnstone-Bryden

2006



Adrian's route home from Nome, Alaska, to Britain follows the northern coast of Russia through seven seas, where the Arctic section presents a constant risk from sea ice.



At the start of the great adventure, leaving port in October 2005.

When Adrian set off from the Solent in October 2005, it was the start of a great adventure and a great personal challenge. In the early months, a number of commentators sneered at his expedition. The brief mass media interest at the start of the voyage, when Adrian ran into weather conditions far more extreme than forecast, soon vaporized when it became clear that there was no ‘Captain Calamity’ story.

It is strange that magazines and newspapers search for the most negative news and show little interest in success. Of course there was nothing personal, the press is ready to ridicule anyone. British solo rower, Roz Savage, is a recent example where a national newspaper devoted a quarter page to her. The journalist was not interested in a woman setting out to row the Pacific, having previously successfully rowed the Atlantic, but was interested that she had run aground within sight of her Californian starting point. They must have been very disappointed when she leaped over the side, pushed her boat off the sandbank and rowed off into the wide Pacific.

Those who took the trouble to find out how Adrian had prepared for his adventure were able both to appreciate the scale of the challenge he had set himself, and the careful preparations he had made. Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, in sending his best wishes, recognized that Adrian had set himself a “very serious challenge”. Sir Robin fully understood what it would be like to attempt some-

thing that no one had ever achieved before, and to do it alone.

Adrian set out as a rookie. It was his first voyage alone and although he had started sailing dinghies in Thailand as a boy, Sailed yachts in the Army and crewed on one leg of a Challenge Race, he had very limited sailing experience, with several long gaps between experiences. He had taken a concentrated Yacht Master course at the UKSA, based on the Isle of Wight. A combination of theoretical and practical tuition that was to help him meet his objectives.

All solo sailors learn on the voyage, whatever their previous experience of sailing. There is nothing that adequately prepares a sailor for the experience of being alone, a long way from assistance and reliant on personal resources.

Adrian quickly expanded his knowledge as he sailed South down the Atlantic to the fearsome Cape Horn and the Antarctic. He learned how to survive one terrible storm but then had to learn again, in the unique experience of coping with the conditions at Cape Horn, a task that few have mastered, even in well-crewed larger vessels. He managed to sail North through the Pacific, and another enormous storm that sank large ships and damaged many more, to Honolulu where damage to his mast could be repaired.

From Honolulu he sailed North and put in to Nome, Alaska, to replace a cutless bearing on the prop shaft. As at Honolulu, he managed to repair Barrabas in record time but, a combination of delays in obtaining permits from the Russian Federation, and an early southward movement of the ice fields, meant that it was necessary to leave Barrabas ashore in Nome for the Arctic Winter.

2005 and 2006 had been eventful years for Adrian. He had demonstrated an ability to learn quickly, an adaptability to some of the most dangerous conditions that anyone could encounter, and a determination to fight through to the end. In the process a number of people had lent help when it was needed and been enthused by the pro-

ject. Through this there were two battles and two people. The story of the Alpha Global Expedition is naturally a story of the sailor and the boat, meeting the challenges, facing the risks, making the decisions at sea. There is also the story ashore of an Expedition Manager who was learning on the job.

As Adrian sailed South to the Antarctic and then North to the Arctic, ex-wife Louise was learning about expedition man-



Igor Ponomarev helped by identifying the issues that needed to be addressed and corresponding with the NSR administration. Sadly he died suddenly in London during 2006 at the early age of 40.

agement. It soon became apparent that the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office had been complacent and optimistic about the process of obtaining essential permits from the Russian Federation. Louise discovered that FCO advice and assurances were unfounded and that she had to start again, with Adrian already at sea. Fortunately she found people able to help her. They worked quietly and effectively. Without their help the permits would not have been obtained, but two people played key roles.

The challenge was that the Russians had never allowed any sailor to navigate their Northern Sea Route single-handed and the regulations applicable to the NSR were drafted for the commercial vessels that were expected to make use of this unique waterway. As a private yacht, Barrabas was nei-

ther designed to commercial standards, nor certified in the manner of an ice-hardened commercial vessel. Adrian had set himself the goal of a single-handed voyage but, even if he had been prepared to lose that status, Barrabas simply did not have the space to accommodate a crew, every space being crammed with food, spares, fuel and other essential supplies and equipment.

Igor Ponomarev proved to be an important early part of the solution. Igor was a naval architect and the Russian Permanent Representative to the IMO in London, chairing several committees. The IMO is there to help nations work towards safe and unpolluted seas, having a brief to support commercial shipping. It has no brief to look to the interests of the yachtsman. Igor used his experience as a naval architect, a regulator and a Russian public servant to identify the key issues to be addressed in order to obtain the vital permit. Sadly, he died suddenly at the age of only forty, shortly after making his contribution to the success of the Alpha Global Expedition.



Roman Abramovich is internationally recognised as a young Russian billionaire and for ownership of a British football club. Perhaps less well known is his Governorship of Chukotka Province.

Another key helper was Roman Abramovich. Perhaps more widely known

as the owner of a British football club, and as one of the newly rich Russian billionaires, he also served as Governor of Chukotka Province which faces Alaska across the Bering Strait. He assigned his staff to the process of obtaining the permits. Without his help it is very unlikely that Adrian would have received permission to use the NSR, leaving him only the option of taking the North West Passage around Alaska and Canada. Although the permits were not obtained in time to complete the voyage in 2006, the precedent had been set. All those involved now understood exactly what was required, and obtaining a fresh permit for a transit in 2007 was expected to be a relatively straight forward process.

Adrian was able to concentrate on preparing Barrabas to face the Arctic win-



Expedition management is much more than administration and public relations. For Louise it was a matter of learning on the job.

ter, before flying back to Britain.

Having to learn how to negotiate with government agencies is enough of a challenge for many, but Louise also faced two other major challenges. Damage to Barrabas, rounding Cape Horn, required a rendezvous at sea for supplies. This then turned

into a need for dockyard facilities when the damage was made critical by a later storm. Louise had to make all the necessary arrangements from her home in Oxfordshire by phone, email and Internet. She contacted strangers in places she had never visited and won their support. The result was the very rapid repair of Barrabas with the help of the Waikiki Yacht Club, who also sent an escort out to meet Adrian, as he had no charts for the area, Honolulu not having been part of his planned route.

When Louise had to repeat the process, after failure of the cutless bearing, she had at least a route map to follow in locating suitable ports and then making arrangements once Adrian had decided which port to aim for. Once again, Louise's arrangements worked well. Strangers became friends and Adrian was lucky that there were people in both ports who warmed to his expedition and provided a total effort to support him.

The Restart

Adrian needed to arrive in Nome towards the end of June, and no later than early July, to get Barrabas back into the water. Roman Abramovich's aide, John Mann, had been working hard to obtain the permits and his liaison work gave the confidence that the permissions would be issued in time for the voyage, without requiring Adrian to remain in Britain until they were formally issued. By the time of his flight to Nome, Louise had already pulled together a file of documents, leaving only one critical document to be received before Adrian sailed from Nome. With that document, and the file Louise had built up, Adrian could present himself at Provideniya and receive one last document once the formalities of inspection and FSB interview had been completed.

When Adrian departed from London Heathrow on June 25 it was to a mixture of



Heathrow and off on the final stage of the voyage. After a winter in Britain, there would be things to relearn and adjustments to make.

emotions. He was looking forward to achieving his dream of completing his expedition. There was also trepidation, conscious of the gap since he had last navigated Barrabas and of the unknowns ahead. Rick



Barrabas had survived the cruel Arctic winter well. Much of the winter she had been deeply buried under the snow, the bulldozer, used to dig her berth, keeping her company and providing protection from the cold winds.



Rick Kostiew (left), with Adrian in Nome, Alaska. Rick had helped Adrian prepare Barrabas for winter and kept an eye on her and the equipment in storage.

Kostiew had kept a close eye on Barrabas through the long Arctic winter, but there was a mountain of work required to refit her and lower her into the water once more.

The trench berth had been a complete success and Barrabas had emerged unscathed through the melting ice and snow that had encased her. Visually, she was unmarked. Everything, that could be removed for the winter, had been taken and placed in several locations for storage. The solar cell array had remained in place and would have to be carefully tested once the batteries were reinstalled. Inside there might be damage from corrosion of the electrical systems, the engine would need an overhaul, as would the fuel system with its main tank, header tank and dual filter system.

Equipment removed for winter storage had to be located, checked and refitted. Rick had made sure that those items that needed checks during the winter were attended to, but the batteries would require a full recharge and discharge testing to make sure that they were still unimpaired by their winter respite from use.

There was also new equipment to fit and test. Furuno had provided a new radar system and C-Map the electronic charting software. This would offer a very welcome upgrade in capabilities, the original Furuno radar being as old as Barrabas and it would have required a new feeder cable because



The new Furuno radar and chart system would be a major enhancement of the navigation systems aboard Barrabas, providing a compact display and alerts for objects that were potential threats.

the original cable had to be cut to remove the mast for storage. Although Furuno radar is extremely popular amongst the vessels operating from Nome, qualified engineers are not based there. To simplify the situation and to equip Adrian for first line repairs during the voyage, he had been trained in the installation, operation and maintenance of the new equipment before he flew back



(Left to right), IJB, Adrian, John Curry. The benefit of flying back to Britain for the winter was that Adrian could meet many people at the London Boat Show. Its one thing communicating by email via satphone but so much better to meet face to face. John Curry was able to hear first hand how 'Harry' had performed and consider sending a new Hydrovane to Nome.

to Nome, but the acid test of completing the installation and testing was yet to come.

Also awaiting in Nome was a new 'beefed-up' rudder and components for Harry, the Hydrovane self-steering system. John Curry at Hydrovane had been concerned that Barrabas was at the upper limits for the standard product and he was relieved to find that it had worked so well during the voyage from Britain to Alaska. He discussed the experiences with Adrian at the London Boat Show in January and was determined to send a new version to Alaska for the final stage of the voyage. The design was in part influenced by Adrian's experiences and the characteristics of such a heavy yacht. John was also sending a generous supply of spare stainless steel bolts because other Hydrovane users, sailing in very cold conditions, had found that the extreme temperature and shocks from striking ice fragments could cause the steel to develop stress fractures and fail. He knew that Adrian was likely to experience cold and ice for many days as he attempted to find a passage through and round the ice fields.

A complete set of new Tacktick wireless instruments had been ordered and these



Artist at work - Cam Kristensen in Nome.

were amongst the last items to arrive in Nome.

It was not just a matter of attending to the essentials of refitting a boat after the winter lay-up. Barrabas was always something of an artwork with the unique image of Neptune engraved into her bow, but now



Pal-ai-yuk tattooed along the join of the top two chines on both sides of the hull. The Inuit believe that this mythical creature protects the hunter in the Arctic wastes.

she sported new artwork on the stern quarters. Local marine engineer and artist, Cam Kristensen, had tattooed the Inuit mythical half serpent, half crocodile pal-ai-yuk on both sides of the hull for extra good luck in the ice fields.

The refit had gone smoothly with the help of Rick and the marine engineers at Crowley marine. Barrabas was back in the water, alongside in Nome harbour. It remained only for the last items to arrive and



One final touch was to raise the Slocum Society Burgee.

the final finishing touches of provisioning for the next stage in the expedition.

On April 24, 1895, at the age of 51, American born Joshua Slocum departed Boston in his tiny sloop Spray and sailed around the world single-handed, a passage of 46,000 miles, returning to Newport,

Rhode Island on June 27, 1898. This historic achievement made him the patron saint of small-boat voyagers, navigators and adventurers all over the world.

The Joshua Slocum Society International (JSSI) is a non-profit corporation first incorporated in 1972. It was founded in 1955 by sailing enthusiast Richard Gordon McClosky to record, encourage, and support long distance passages in small boats. In pursuit of these goals it has become an international association of people of similar interests: First, in reporting and recording the adventures of small boat sailors. Second, in recognizing significant voyages and acts of heroism at sea. And third, in keeping sea history alive, especially the memory and legacy of Captain Joshua Slocum. In June 1998, the Society promoted and attended ceremonies in Bristol and Newport, R.I. and Fairhaven, Mass. celebrating the centennial of Joshua's return from his solo voyage around the world.

So it was with tremendous pride that Adrian flew the Slocum Society burgee which was kindly sent to him in Nome by the JSSI.

Adrian and Rick had hoped to say their farewells as Barrabas pulled away from the quay on her great adventure. This was not to be. Rick had to leave for Anchor-



At the end of the refit, Barrabas was once more lifted from the dock and into the water. This being the third crane movement, the operator was well practiced in what is a very tricky lifting operation with the mast already stepped and rigged.



Barrabas sailed from Nome under grey skies.

age to be with his wife who had undergone major back surgery before Adrian could set sail.

Adrian's gave an account of his departure:

I finally got away from Nome at 1430 local time, three weeks to the day and almost to the hour since I arrived back in Alaska to prepare for the Arctic Phase. I had allocated myself exactly that, three weeks, to prepare. I could have got going sooner but the time was as much for mental preparation as for the various jobs and procedures that Barrabas needed done.

Winds are light and out of the west. The next three days look to be similarly fair. Provideniya is 200 miles across the northern part of the Bering Sea so I expect to make port sometime on Friday. However, I will be crossing the International Date Line so will warp forward 24 hours. It will be Saturday local in Provideniya, which gives me Sunday to rest from this first stage.

Barrabas and I need to become reacquainted. This short crossing should see to that. I was naturally anxious when I slipped my lines in Nome Harbour. The Crowley team saw me off and Joy Baker, the Harbour Master (is there such a thing as a Harbour Mistress?). I spoke at length with Louise on the eve of departure and I told her that part of the mental tuning is to stay in the moment - not to project back and certainly not forward. It's a technique that works well for me and does much to still the worry that would otherwise be tugging uncomfortably.

A slight hiccup at the outset was the unwelcome discovery that the ship's main GPS unit was not working. The instruments are wired into this so I was getting no display. I went to a handheld GPS back-up, then traced the problem to a section of cabling in the dark recesses of the lazarette. The protective sheathing had been breached and corrosion broken the core connection. I cut, cleaned, spliced and soldered, tried the unit and bingo, we picked up six satellites and Barrabas and I were back in business. I followed this with a meal of fried eggs, Malinda's 'historic' fried bread, salami and wild Alaskan blueberries.

Ahead of him, Adrian had approximately three days sailing to the Russian port of Provideniya. On July 19 he reported:

After motoring clear of Nome harbour which was in the lee, Barrabas seemed to settle comfortably back on the open water. I kept the engine running but not engaged for 24 hours - after nine months of standing I wanted to make sure she worked well and that the fix to the cutless bearings had held true. Had there been a problem, I would then have been close enough to Nome to return, if somewhat ignominiously, to sort out the problem. As it was, the engine ran sweet as a nut.

Although I could have left Nome at an earlier date, I wanted to wait for a decent weather window. Usually winds are straight out of the west making getting to Provideniya a horrible beat into wind. Yes-

terday morning I spent six hours tacking back and forth and going precisely nowhere. Then, the wind backed to SSW and we were cruising, nose to target. Range to Provideniya as I write is 100 miles. These winds are expected to hold until late this evening. I should be able to close by 50 miles. I then go through the back and forth and nowhere routing for 5-6 hours while the winds veer north which should be enough to see me into port sometime Saturday (having jumped forward 24 hours after crossing the IDL).

5 hours decent sleep last night and I am feeling okay. My appetite has gone on holiday, destination unknown, but I'm putting that down to the process of getting my sea legs back. Maybe Russian food will go



Finding a method of formally recording the Expedition was an early challenge. The World Sailing Speed Record Council was established by the International Yacht Racing Union (now renamed the International Sailing Federation) in 1972. The object was to provide impartial results for increasing numbers of claims to high speed sailing craft (on water: never on ice nor land!). Although the terms of the WSSRC did not exactly match the aims of the expedition it was the only body that might provide a formal record.

some way to luring it back...

This was the stage of his circumnavigation when Adrian first used the engine to drive the boat. Leaving Nome under sail in the conditions at that time would have been unwise. In sailing record attempts, this was

permissible because Barrabas was returning to the point at which the sailing voyage had been suspended for repairs in port, but the Alpha Global Expedition was just that, an expedition, rather than just a speed sailing record attempt.

With so many yachting record attempts, it is very easy to become confused about the Alpha Global Expedition objectives. When Adrian first started to plan his expedition, he set an outline goal of completing a vertical circumnavigation. That meant that the first objective was to circle the globe via both polar regions, with declared antipodal points. In other words, the journey passed through two points that were directly opposite each other, so that if a rod could be passed right through the centre of the Earth from one point, it would emerge at the other point. Adrian hoped to complete this journey by sea but there were some obvious difficulties in the way of achieving that. In the years before starting off, Adrian built up a suite of plans and carefully researched each plan in turn. In the process, he discovered a need for more plans to deal with possible contingencies. As no one had ever attempted the journey before, he had no framework to follow. In fact he would be creating a framework that others may follow in the future.

He had decided that he wanted to complete the journey by sea, but the conditions in the Arctic suggested the need for the first contingency plan. This plan covered the options to review, should it prove impossible to complete the journey by sea. From the beginning, Adrian had to consider both Arctic routes. One lay through the North West Passage that threaded its way through the ice and islands along the northern coasts of Alaska and Canada. The other route lay through the Northern Sea Route, or North East Passage, that followed the Russian north coast from the Bering Strait through to the Norwegian waters around the North Cape.

Both routes were theoretically practical, but with extreme difficulty.

The North West Passage seemed to

offer the most promising route but it was longer, increasing the risk of being trapped in ice. It was also the least populated route and any emergency would potentially be beyond Adrian's capabilities to deal with unaided.

The shorter Russian route did pass close to several ports and populated areas which meant that there was the possibility of sailing in a lifeboat, or walking, ashore if the boat being used became trapped in ice. There were then options to continue the journey on land, following the coast, and taking a boat at the first opportunity to continue on water.

Having considered the options, Adrian realized that he could leave a decision until fairly late in the journey if he sailed south from Britain to the Antarctic, rounding Cape Horn, and travelling north through the Pacific to reach the Bering Strait. Once through the Bering Strait he could head East or West and still complete a circumnavigation by locating his antipodal points in the Atlantic and the sea off Japan. Heading west meant that he would also cut all lines of longitude during his expedition.

He wanted to complete as much of the journey on his own, and by sea, as was practical. That dictated the need to achieve sailing skills and acquire a suitable boat.

In life, nothing is ever that simple, and finances would require some compromises. In an ideal world, a sailor would work up gradually towards the ultimate voyage. In doing that, a reputation would be established and companies would see marketing value in sponsoring the voyage. Given an adequate number of years, and staged successes, the sailor would be able to raise the funds to commission a design and have the vessel built to meet all of the needs that would have to be met in the very different waters that would be crossed in the journey.

Adrian realized that he would have to work quickly, compressing the timescales, and be prepared to fund the expedition from his own resources. That put a limit on the cost of the boat and meant that he had to buy a boat that was already in use. As the

most testing part of the expedition would be that during the polar transits, this dictated the need for a steel hull. Adrian was fortunate to find a very special boat that was just within his budget and only eleven years old.

As a compromise, Barrabas did some things well and others not so well. Under sail she would not point close to wind and that inevitably meant a much slower journey under sail. However, a slower voyage would give Adrian more time to develop his skills from experience. Under power, performance was disappointing and was the most critical failing because it meant that the ice transit, which would almost certainly have to be made under power most of the time, gave little margin for poor Arctic summers. However, these failings were more than balanced by a very rugged construction that would withstand violent conditions, extreme ranges of temperature and impact with sea ice.

Once Adrian had found his boat he could start working through the options that had to be collected into a suite of plans. The first factor to emerge was that the speed Barrabas was capable of almost certainly meant that the voyage could not be completed in a single year and that there would have to be a series of safe havens selected so that Adrian could put into port and break the expedition for a winter. As he had allocated only two years to the expedition from the starting point, that meant everything would be finely timed and a further year could only be added if he was able to change plans already in hand for the period after the expedition had ended.

Given that Barrabas was a small sloop that would be crammed with fuel and supplies, there was a limit to the number of charts that could be carried and the planning suite was revised to reduce the number of fully provided options, but allow new plans to be slotted in very quickly in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

Once committed to the voyage, Adrian did need to add new plans to meet contingencies. The goodwill of others and their generosity meant that the stops at

Honolulu and Nome could be introduced to keep the expedition alive and moving forward. The early formation of new ice in 2006, and the cutless bearing failure, required a modification of plan for the crossing from Nome to Chukotka Province. This change was that the engine would be run for most of the trip and the propeller engaged periodically to provide assurance that full engine power would be available for extended periods in navigating the Northern Sea Route.

From leaving Britain, Adrian had made an unassisted, single-handed voyage, non-stop to Honolulu, creating the first sailing record of his expedition and, in the process, joining the handful of solo sailors who had rounded Cape Horn from the Atlantic into the Pacific. He had also made a single-handed, unaided, non-stop voyage under sail from Honolulu to Nome, becoming the first sailor to do this, also passing through his second antipodal point off Japan. In making the voyage from Alaska to Chukotka, safety considerations dictated that the engine might be used with sail and therefore it might not be possible to claim a solo non-stop voyage under sail for that leg



to enter the NSR. It was also a requirement that he put into Murmansk for his documents to be signed before he left for Norwegian waters. That dictated that at least one further stage to the voyage would be required to reach Britain again. As no one was too sure how long the inspection would take, Adrian arrived early. As he reported:

I've had one of the most extraordinary days of my life. Motoring the ten miles along the Bukhta Provideniya to reach the natural harbour around which the town nestles was an almost surreal experience.

Carved from the mountains the deep water fjord was wreathed in layers of mist, precipitous scree slopes showing through like a massive granite and cotton millefeuille. I made it to the town at 6.00am. Great, rusted dockside cranes reached towards the sun-punctured sky like the curved talons of some long dead pre-historic bird. I was told to berth at number 2 - it turned out to be crane 2. Three federal internal security guards ordered me to stay on the boat. Shaking hands seemed a somehow inappropriate gesture. After almost thirty hours with no sleep, the lure of the bag was too great to resist.

Loud banging brought me awake at 10.30. A posse of uniformed officials from various state departments ordered me to take Barrabas to another quay further along the town. It turned out to have been a jetty at one time, the concrete long since turned friable and crumbled leaving the twisted, rusty steel frame spokes angling danger-



Adrian (right) with his security detail and the rugged Chukotka terrain in the background.

of the circumnavigation.

Starting the NSR Transit

The Russian authorities had decided that Adrian would have to put into a Russian port for inspection before being cleared

ously towards the hull. I was asked to fill in various forms, all in triplicate. Then I was taken off to a neighbouring tug. In the relative comfort of the wardroom, I produced my wad of Russian permission letters. There was a brief discussion about the need for an ice pilot on board, but quickly dismissed once the correspondence was read. My weapon caused some anxiety, but again was quickly dealt with - a piece of paper, two actually, bearing stamps and signatures.

By noon, I had been issued my permit to sail the NSR and told I was free to go. I had been expecting to be here a week - and all this on a Sunday morning. The bureaucratic machine worked seamlessly.

Internal security has allocated a two-man detail rotating in 6-hour shifts to stay with the boat. I needed to top up on fuel. The master of the tug called the oil terminal - no-one answered so he decided to give me some of his at no charge. I gave him a bottle of rum and a bottle of Sloe Gin from Barrabas.

I went to a store to get some onions - no shop front as such, just a wooden door, bent by years of freezing winds. Inside, the place was lit by a single, naked light bulb and reeked of ancient wax and cabbage. The shelves were almost bare - a few tins here and there, some dusty bars of chocolate, candles, cooking oil. I imagined post-war rationing in a deprived area.

Back on the tug, I was offered a hot shower which I readily accepted. Uran, the tug's mate has some English. He interpreted. The tug's master knows Henk de Velde - he was here for an extended stay prior to his attempt at the NSR in 2003. So even in this strange forbidding land that time seems to have forgotten, it's still a small world and again, I have been met with the most extraordinary kindness in this most unlikely of places.

Adrian decided that once underway from Provideniya, he would use the engine on any occasion when wind was not favourable because early indications were that the ice would recede for a very brief period. He



Adrian observed drift ice early in his transit of the NSR. It was to remain never far from his course and at times he had to thread his way between ice fragments, some much larger than Barrabas.

had to navigate past the East Siberian Islands where the ice still reached down to the land, and then navigate through the Strait of Proliv Vil'kitskogo which had defeated the attempts of anything but large ice hardened merchant ships for several years.

Once into the Northern Sea Route, Adrian made daily reports on position and status. When he reached the East Siberian Islands, he faced his first hard choice. The



Heading West towards the East Siberian Islands, Adrian found the permanent ice field reaching down towards him. This narrowed the strip of clear water to 14 miles from the coast to the ice field. In places this corridor was narrower and, within it, drift ice was encountered. This created the first choke point where the deep water NSR channel was still covered with ice and impassable.

deep water NSR channel was still ice blocked. He could either anchor and hope that further melting would take place, or he could take a risk and explore the islands to find an ice free, or ice reduced, inshore channel. It did not look promising but, after two days of scouting, he found a route and came out into the Laptev Sea. He continued to make good progress and arrived at his



Taking an inshore route allowed Adrian to pass through the islands and into the Laptev Sea. At this point he was more than three weeks ahead of the original schedule.

planned holding area almost three weeks ahead of his original schedule, but the ice ahead showed no sign of being considerate.

He had encountered the ice ridge and found it only 7 miles to his North, while the coast was only the same distance to the South, creating a narrow corridor that was scattered with drift ice. The first drift ice was picked up by his radar, but was difficult to spot with the naked eye, being about the size of a large car. Larger pieces were used by groups of walrus as convenient boats and he saw his first polar bear, a young male who swam around the sloop before climbing onto a large piece of drift ice to get a better view of a potential breakfast. This area of the NSR is home to large colonies of walrus and the polar bears that hunt them. Fortunately, the young bear moved for an improved view, the ice tilted and the bear slid ignominiously tail first into the Laptev Sea. Adrian last saw him swimming off towards



Ships passing..... Adrian passed groups of walrus taking their rest on passing drift ice.

the horizon.

He would now have to find somewhere to wait and this was the point where the pioneering aspect of his voyage came out most clearly. These were lonely waters, rarely sailed. The area had not been well mapped. He turned back to find an island where the Russian Western Arctic Marine Operations Headquarters had suggested he might anchor. His charts indicated that the island might not be as marked and after quartering the area, he discovered that it did

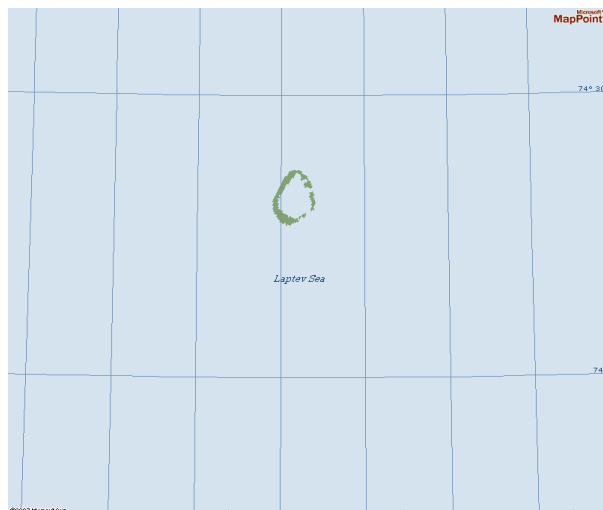


Ostrov Peschanyy is a low sand bar containing a shallow lagoon, providing scant shelter from the storms. It is also home to walrus, who attract polar bears in search of food.

not exist. He then had to head for the strange island of Ostov Peschanyy which, to his relief was where the charts showed it.

It was a bleak island, little more than a sand bar. Oval in shape, it rose no more than two metres above sea level along its western edge for seven miles. The sand on the eastern curve did not even manage that height, being broken in many places, giving

into a shallow lagoon that occupied much of the area of the island. From the island, the sea bed slowly shelved requiring Adrian to anchor half a mile offshore. When the wind blew up to gale, which it did most days, Adrian had to raise anchor and move round into the limited shelter from a changing



Ostrov Peschanyy resembles an extinct and flooded volcano but has been produced by the currents from sand.

wind direction. It was a frustrating and tiring period when he had to maintain anchor watch alone.

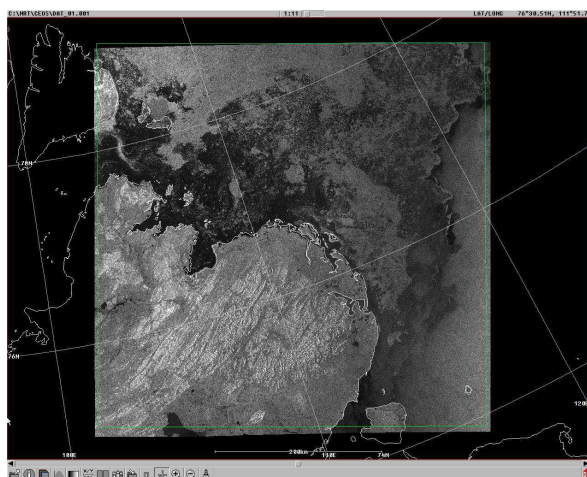
Operations HQ in Murmansk then suggested that he sail to another island, Os-



Ostrov Preobrazheniya proved a more substantial haven and even included the first signs of human life with a small research stations overlooking the bay.

trov Preobrazheniya. This was a more satisfactory holding area, the island being

shaped like a comma with a sand and gravel bay on its western shore, the land rising towards the East to give real shelter. When Adrian arrived he met the first person since leaving Provindenya. This was someone dropping supplies at the small research sta-



The excellent satellite radar images provided by MDA became a daily reviewing task. The first images of the ice around PVK were not encouraging. They showed the ice field as solid at 7/10s and above.

tion on the island.

As Adrian had moved to the new holding position. Louise and the small team of volunteers had been working hard on the problem of finding a route through the ice at Proliv Vil'kitskogo. KSAT in Norway and MDA in California had offered to provide satellite radar scans in sponsorship. This was an enormous help because the high quality images from RADARSAT in polar orbit were downloaded to MDA who then processed the raw data into excellent jpg images which could be emailed to the AGX support team. MDA also recommended that the Russian polar research institute AARI be asked to make a skilled interpretation of the images and add local knowledge. AARI agreed to help and agreed with the AGX team that the best chance of getting past PVK was by using a narrow and shallow in-shore channel. From his holding position at Ostrov Preobrazheniya Adrian had to rely on voice and email communication, taking

on trust the images he could not see.

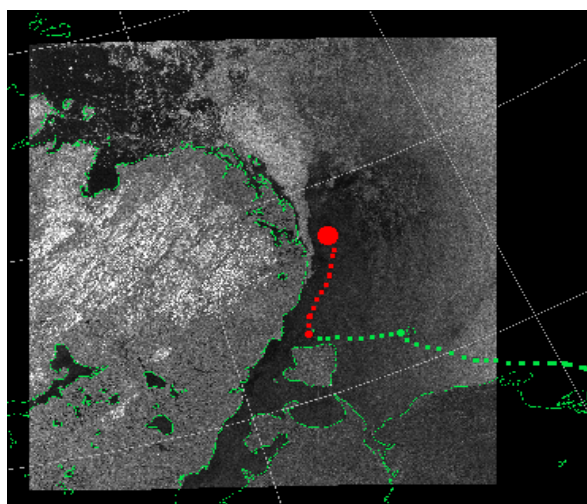
At this point, a difference of opinion developed between AARI and Marine Operations in Murmansk with Adrian in the middle. Marine Operations had responsibility for control and were used to bringing large ice-hardened merchant ships through PVK with aid from their huge nuclear-powered ice breakers. They knew and understood the deep water channel well. AARI was used to mounting expeditions in remote polar areas and were familiar with the risks inherent in research and pioneering navigation. That inevitably meant a conflict of skilled opinion. AARI and the AGX team acknowledged the risks of making a dash through the inshore channel but were looking at different forecasts. Marine Operations were banking on a favourable southern wind moving the ice back long enough for Adrian to go through the deep water channel with an escorting icebreaker, possibility in company with merchant ships.

With all of the claims and counter claims about global warming, it is easy to become very confused about the short term situation, never mind the longer term possibilities and the potential causes. Although not all climate specialists agree on the extent of global warming, the reliability of computer models, or the causes, there are strong indications that there has been a reduction in the size of both polar ice caps. Study of the last ten years of ice charts suggests a much lower rate of change than many claim, and some indications that the trend may be slowing further, or even reversing. There are also variations in the ice movement in the Arctic between the Western and Eastern sides.

In 2007, the ice covering the North West Passage melted more quickly than in previous years and the permanent ice field retreated further North. As a result, the route along the Alaskan and Canadian route was passable and even clear enough to provide a reasonable prospect of allowing a small vessel to make the transit under sail. On the Russian side, the story was different. The melting was later and slower than some

previous years. From the Bering Strait, there was a relatively narrow channel of clear water with some light drift ice, becoming narrower as it approached the East Siberian Islands. At the time that Adrian passed through using an inshore route, the NSR was only passable in the deep water channel for ice-hardened vessels, under icebreaker escort. Along the route through the Laptev Sea to Proliv Vil'kitskogo the clear water area was a narrow channel and daily storms forced drift ice down towards the coast, presenting a present danger for any small vessel.

When Adrian probed up towards PKV, he found the path blocked by thick ice that was considered difficult even for a massive nuclear powered icebreaker. Even the possible route inshore, through PVK, was firmly closed at both ends and there was considerable ice through the centre of the route. For 2007, it seems that the weather fronts have favoured the Canadian route at



Western Arctic Marine Operations HQ instructed Adrian to sail for an rendezvous with three small merchant ships and await a possible break through by an nuclear ice breaker.

the expense of the Russian route. Continuing storm fronts, from the North, both kept temperatures low, and moved ice southwards to the Russian coast.

After much deliberation, Adrian was advised by Marine Operations to rendez-

vous off the ice field with three small merchant ships that had been waiting in the Port of Tiksi for three years. The hope was that a nuclear icebreaker would be able to force a way through from the West and then escort the small convoy through PVK. This coincided with a heavy workload for Marine Operations as they attempted to aid several large merchant vessels trapped in ice to the West of PVK.

Adrian raised anchor and headed North for the RV, as he reported on 10th September:

I left my anchorage at Ostrov Preobrazheniya yesterday morning at 1000 with a decent SE breeze to put me on a starboard tack beam reach towards the rendezvous with the icebreaker, Taymyr. I made good progress, averaging 6 knots. At six o'clock in the evening, I came on deck to check for drift ice. It had been a major concern. Recent satellite images had clearly shown large tracts of drift south of the RV position.

I had just narrowly missed colliding with an isolated piece of ice which was now bobbing in my wake 50 yards astern! More to my surprise was a small ship, passing westwards across my bow at 200 yards. Astern of the lead were two similar vessels. These had to be the other three boats that, together with Barrabas and the icebreaker, would make up the convoy! To the north, at about 4 miles the horizon was phosphorescent with ice extending as far as I could see east to west. I hove-to to allow the three-ship convoy to pass without their altering course and supposed that they were heading west to find a way around the drift, or even that they were being routed round by Operations HQ. I assessed their speed at 6 knots thinking I might tag along behind. I got onto the radio and called. I received the response, 'No English, no English.' I then said, 'Tiksi, Tiksi,' and 'Taymyr, Taymyr,' the name of the ice breaker with which we were to make the rendezvous and hoping someone among their combined three crews would assimilate the information and draw the obvious conclusion. Static crackled from the radio and nothing else. I tried again,

several times but on each occasion was met with silence.

The light was fading fast. With 40 miles still to travel to the RV and having no idea of the depth of the drift ice northwards, I decided that it would be unsafe to venture further. I also concluded that if the three ships were trying to find a way round, they clearly were not prepared to go into the ice. The third piece of information I had to inform the decision was the latest weather forecast from Operations. Whereas the previous day's had indicated south sector winds until the 14th September, necessary I had been told for the icebreaker convoy to proceed, the latest forecast predicted winds from the north sector through to the end of the week. Under these circumstances, I doubted the master of the ice breaker would agree to take us through.

The decision made and with the prevailing south-easterly unfavourable to begin the haul to Tiksi, I hove-to as near darkness descended. I emailed news of my decision to Louise and notified Operations HQ before turning in.

At midnight, Louise called. My prime concern, I explained was safety and to go into the ice in the dark was unsound. I explained my accidental meeting with the other ships and just on a hunch checked topsides. There, astern of me, at 2 miles, were the lights of the three ships now progressing eastwards. They had not found a way round and I assumed were not being routed. I signalled the ships with a 500,000 candle-power spotlight. Again, no response. I got back to Louise and explained the situation. Clearly, if none of us could get to the RV and since we were in the same location, we should hold station and ask the icebreaker to come to us! Louise duly emailed Operations HQ with this idea. Meanwhile, the ships appeared to be stationary astern. Two hours later there was still no reply from Operations and with the lights of the ships still visible, I crawled into my sleeping bag having first reversed my hove-to tack so that I was now drifting towards the ships.

Well, I slept for 8 hours until 1000

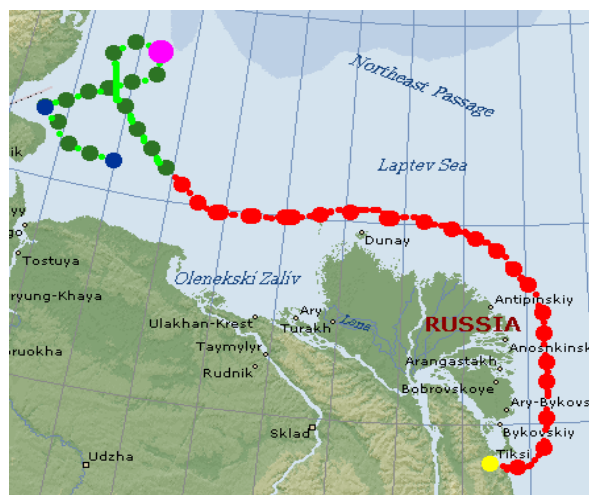
this morning! The wind had died to a zephyr, drift ice framed my eastern horizon, but of the ships - no sign. I did a 24-mile radius radar sweep. No trace. The radio had been on at full volume while I slept. If anyone had tried the VHF I would have heard it. I checked email for any response of my suggestion of re-designating the RV. Nothing. Whether the ships did meet up with the icebreaker or whether they turned back for Tiksi - I don't know. It is now 2.00pm. I still have not received any communication from Operations HQ, so with the wind veering to the south-west, I am heading eastwards for Tiksi.

Torn between options, Adrian and his shore team began working through those options in consultation with AARI. The latest satellite images were beginning to look encouraging for the inshore route. The Eastern end was now open as a 7 mile wide channel. Inside the route there were broad leads of clear water and indications that the Western end might open. AARI advised to standby at the Eastern end.

Adrian began sailing towards a new holding area on the edge of the channel. There was a definite possibility that the inshore route might become available but it was going to be a close run thing.

Western Arctic Marine Operations HQ was considerably less enthusiastic about the idea. They had been facing difficulties in extricating a number of large merchant vessels from the ice, the forecasts were not looking good and they were concerned that the inshore route was too shallow for icebreakers. If Adrian became cut off there would be no way to send in an icebreaker. If he became trapped, the ice would eventually crush Barrabas. The only option then would be to use the lifeboat, as a boat, or sledge, to reach land. If that became necessary, it was unlikely that a helicopter would be able to reach him and he would have to depend on his own resources in Arctic storm conditions and in an area that was home to a large polar bear population.

After much discussion, Adrian had to



The only viable option was to head east for Tiksi. The two blue dots show Ostrov Pechanyy and Ostrov Preobrazheniya (the latter to the left), the magenta dot shows the intended RV with the convoy and the green dots show the almost figure of eight course as the options were considered. The red dots show the 300 mile slog to Tiksi (yellow dot).

accept Marine Operations orders to sail back East to the Port of Tiksi and hope that a large ice-hardened merchant ship due to arrive in Tiksi heading to Murmansk would be able to provide a ship lift through PVK.

The voyage to Tiksi was no easy cruise. The Arctic nights were rapidly draw-



ing in and the temperature was close to freezing or below, with frequent storms and the ever present drift ice.

The conditions restricted Adrian's ability to send emails and he was followed mainly by regular contact via satphone. As he sailed East, the ship he was hoping to use

for a lift was battling west towards Tiksi with an icebreaker escort. Winter was coming early and options continued to narrow.

Adrian emailed Marine Operations on September 17 at 02:300 hrs local time,

Hello Nikolay

I arrived in approaches to Tiksi late yesterday and have anchored off a small cove south east of Tiksi. I will go into Tiksi either today or tomorrow. Please can I have some information about the Captain Danilkin. When is she due to sail from Tiksi and where will the loading of the yacht take place? Is the Captain Danilkin moored at a pier in the port or is she anchored in open water?

Regards



After days with little sleep, Adrian decided to anchor in the bay down the coast from Tiksi, get a good sleep and then head for the port in daylight.

Adrian

After a well earned rest, Adrian was awoken as he reported,

After the cancelled rendezvous with the nuclear-powered icebreaker, Taymyr last Monday morning and holding station for a further 24 hours while the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute received the latest satellite images from Radarsat and their own Envisat pictures to determine

whether the inshore channel might provide a last minute reprieve, of which I was doubtful given the forecast for northerly winds, I set sail for Tiksi, three hundred miles to the southeast. During the hours of darkness, 10.00pm to 4.00am, I hove-to unwilling to risk a confrontation with unseen ice. Gale force winds were unremitting and with the winds screeching eerily through the rigging, Barrabas being tossed unmercifully by the seas, I was too exhausted to concern myself further and slid blissfully beneath the blanket of sleep. Late on Friday afternoon the dense veil of cloud which had persisted for weeks was finally drawn aside and that night stars glimmered and moonlight struck a reluctant flame in the ocean. I made the approaches to Tiksi harbour late on Sunday. Studying my only chart of the area, I spotted a small cove fifteen miles from the port. The hills were smooth sided, sloping cautiously towards the sea suggesting that the bottom would be sand and mud shoaling gently. In the lee of the hills, Barrabas sat quietly at anchor and I enjoyed the quiet, sitting up on deck until the last light crept silently away.

I decided to stay in this place for a full day and another night before heading into the port on Tuesday to face the phalanx of uniformed people - customs, port authorities, internal security - who will inevitably descend. At 8.00am, still in my sleeping bag the noise of an outboard engine buzzed around Barrabas like an angry hornet. Two small huts at the southern end of the beach, which I hadn't seen in the twilight of the previous evening but which I knew were there from the chart and from the glow of single light which I could see while I sat up on deck, were now clearly visible. The skiff came alongside, it's floor tiled with freshly caught Arctic Cod and its driver grinning widely and jabbering in what I learned later to be Yaktucsh. He, Slava as he later identified himself, rummaged among the fish, selected the two biggest ones and offered them up. I took the gift and laid them out on the afterdeck to await gutting and filleting. After a brief tour of the boat and name ex-



Slava's cabin was a simple hut, typical of those built by hunters living around the Arctic coasts.

changes and my having spread a world chart to show Slava where I had come from and to where I was headed he seemed duly impressed, likening me to Russia's world girdling yachtsman, Fedor Korniyukhov.

Keen to show me his world, Slava suggested coffee at his place. I knew this because he tapped the coffee pot on the stove, made a drinking gesture and pointed towards the huts whilst uttering 'koff' several times. We sped off in his boat leaving Barrabas to tug gently at her chain and shortly after and illegally, I stepped on land for the first time since Provideniya eight weeks previously. Slava's cabin, hewn from logs and lined with dried seal skins measured twelve foot square, contained a pair of bunks and a single cot, a table supporting a variety of radio equipment, an unplumbed sink and a wood burning stove. Power was supplied from an outboard engine, suspended from a trestle outside and umbilicalised to a single, naked bulb dangling from the low ceiling which light I had seen from Barrabas the previous evening. My efforts at internationalism gathered Slava's story. He owns seven knives, three guns, has a wife called Ola and two children - a boy, Ura 12 and a girl, Viola 10 and had a brother who was shot through the heart during a hunting accident last year. He himself is 34. The population of Tiksi is 2,000 down from 30,000 in 1990. In the summer he cuts and sells wood and in the winter hunts reindeer. He has

two dogs, one a sweet natured Husky, the other a Cujoesque monster of indeterminate breed. I explained by means of a red ball-point and scraps of paper that Barrabas was to be lifted onto a ship and taken to Murmansk. We drank coffee, smoked a couple of cigarettes together and inspected the new hut Slava is presently constructing. Back on board Barrabas, I gave Slava a litre of longlife milk, two tins of fruit, a jar of jam and two bottles of olive oil. Our comradeship forged we bade one another farewell and I was alone again with my ship.

Then it was time to sail the remaining miles into the Port of Tiksi and into a period of frustration and concern. In Adrian's own words,

I weighed anchor last Tuesday morning at 'Slava's Bay' for the 8 mile run into Tiksi. A cargo ship operating three deck cranes came into view around the next headland. I asked for identification on the radio. In fluent English the chief mate re-



The Kapitan Danilkin is a modern ice-hardened merchant vessel built in Finland

sponded that the ship was indeed the 'Captain Danilkin' of the Murmansk Shipping Company Line. They had been expecting Barrabas and arrangements were in process to transport the yacht through the ice and on to Murmansk. As I passed close to their bow, the chief mate came back on the radio. The immigration authorities were on board and were instructing me that I was not to proceed to port, that I did not have clearance, the border was closed and that I should instead proceed to 'international

waters'. I in turn made it clear that such action was unsafe and would place myself and the boat in jeopardy, I required safe harbour and further that I was injured (dislocated left wrist). Eventually permission was granted to enter port.

The dock area comprises a number of piers spaced like the spread fingers on a hand. Through driving sleet and poor visibility I was directed to the western pier. Someone was screaming, literally screaming over the VHF on channel 16 in Russian. It sounded to me like invective. Whether the voice was directed at me, I don't know. The pier was dilapidated and disintegrating. Iron spikes bristled seawards, bolts which at one time secured timber joists long since decayed or broken off. The pier was exposed to west winds - this and the spikes



The Port of Tiksi is a depressed area. Since the ending of the USSR, few ships have attempted a full passage along the NSR. Traffic normally comes from the Bering Strait as far as Tiksi and then returns East. Traffic from Murmansk usually goes no further than Dikson and then returns West. This leaves a gap in the Northern Sea Route that only a few vessels, such as the Kapitain Danilkin, attempt to transit.

were concerns but after I had moored in a 'clean' spot, these concerns were brusquely dismissed.

The expected phalanx of uniforms descended. A research vessel had followed me into port and had berthed at the eastern side of the dock. It's cargo of German geologists

come to say 'hello' but were told in unequivocal language to get lost. I met them later in town. After being 'processed' I was handed over to some branch of the military - expressionless faces, khaki camouflage, high laced boots. After a considerable amount of time during which my papers were handed from one man to another amid much discussion, examined, photographed and discussed again a slightly built local man of Yakut descent was brought to the



Vissarion, the interpreter, learned his English at Oxford.

boat. His name is Vissarion. He learnt his English at Oxford. I was delighted. Through Vissarion I explained the nature of my situation, the plans to transport the yacht and my desire, much as I was grateful to be here, to leave just as quickly as possible. The following days brought repeated visits and more questions. Each time Vissarion was present to translate. These Q & As took place either in a military vehicle parked dockside or on Barrabas. One time, one of the officers, clearly the designated photographer began snapping the Russian chart open on the navigation table. Why did I get? They wanted to know. England, I explained. I opened the chart table and showed them the thirty or so others detailing the north Russian coast. He gave up taking pictures of the charts after that.

Tiksi is an unremarkable place. Apparently 30,000 people lived here in 1990. Since then the population has been emaciated to 2,000. Many of the buildings are



Tiksi has the feel of a ghost town, its population reduced to under 10% of its size in 1990. This is the main street and the 'prosperous' centre of Tiksi. Much of the current population is made up of military personnel assigned to the town.

derelict, windows broken, roofing tin torn off by the winds. Most accommodation is in tenement type blocks held off ground by concrete stilts.

The asphalt is cracked, migrating slowly ditchwards as though subject to some mini-tectonic shift. Military uniforms and vehicles predominate. There are no visible shops only peeling pictures of bread or tomatoes hung askew on doors which slat on loose hinges in the constant wind. There is another settlement further to the north, and the airport. The sound of the wind is occasionally torn by the whine of turbines which fade quickly in the dense, low cloud.

I went to the bank to exchange some US currency. Most of my twenty dollar bills were handed back with the exclamation 'Niet!'. Eventually, a hundred bucks were accepted after careful scrutiny and I was given roubles. The shops, I discovered are on the ground floors of the tenements, no windows, just doors off long straight corridors. I wanted eggs. In one such shop I made the shape and flapped my arms like a chicken making clucking noises. The response was a blank stare and apathetic shrugging. I drew a picture of an egg. No translation. Then an arrow pointing to a fried egg. Still nothing. On the other side of the egg picture I drew a chicken to illustrate

the entire sequence - a chicken produces an egg which is then fried. The rouble dropped. Much rasping laughter ensued. Other shop keepers were called, each locking their doors and hurrying to the impromptu summit. My diagram was handed round and explained. It seemed that I had provided the amusement of the week. I left the 'arcade' some time later with eggs, bread, tomatoes, onions, bacon.

On Saturday the wind kicked in from the west gusting to 40 knots. By some fortuitous foresight I had scavenged among the piles of debris on the dock, discarded marine engines, bits of crane, burnt-out hulks of buses and cars and skidoos for tyres. These I hung from the quayside to cushion Barrabas's hull. By Saturday lunchtime, the boat was being picked up by the seas and hurled against the dock. The tyres undoubtedly saved the boat from serious damage. As is my habit, I talk to the Captain Danilkin every day. I asked them to contact the harbourmaster. I needed a tug to pull me off and get me to a more protected berth. Eventually a small and ancient tug pattered around the corner, approached Barrabas far too closely, lost control in the high winds and collided. Despite the mayhem, we got Barrabas out of danger and she sits now happily tethered to a rusted crane platform moored deep in the recess between two piers and sheltered from the westerlies now screaming down the frosted hills at 50 knots.

When the decision was made to take a ship lift from Tiksi, it was on the basis of a quotation from the shipping company of US \$10,000 to take Barrabas through PVK and crane her back into the water at sea on the other side. Adrian would then sail to Murmansk to have his visa stamped before leaving Russian territorial waters. The time in Tiksi proved to be unsettling and required continuous negotiation for one thing or another, as the days flashed by and the weather deteriorated. The final alternative of sailing back to Nome for another winter also vanished as the ice closed in firmly to

the East.

This created several difficulties. Adrian could not afford to abandon Barrabas in Tiksi because she represented an important financial asset to be liquidated on his return to Britain. Clearly, the experiences in Tiksi gave no confidence that the boat could survive a winter there. With the route East to Alaska now closed the only option, other than to leave Barrabas to her fate in Tiksi, was to hitch a ride on the Kapitan Danilkin and that was more complex than expected.

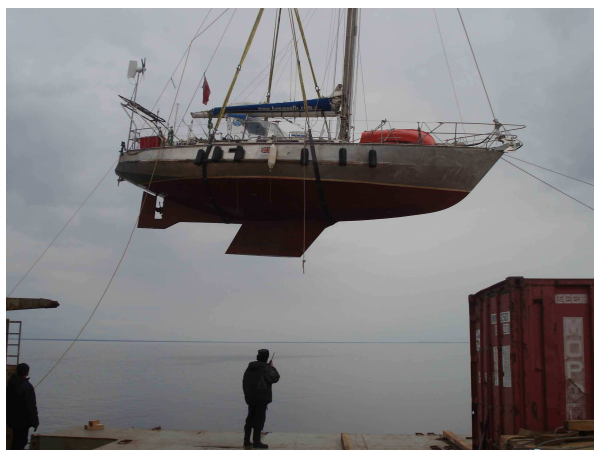
The authorities wanted to stamp the visa for an exit because it was due to expire in October. That meant that Adrian and Barrabas would have to remain on the Danilkin until she left Russian waters. The port authorities were also being uncooperative with Adrian and the Danilkin's captain and refusing to provide slings to lift Barrabas and empty containers to make a temporary berth for her aboard the merchant ship.

At the eleventh hour the shipping company decided to raise the cost of the ship lift to US\$54,000, possibly on the expectation that the move could be claimed as a salvage operation. Hard negotiations followed and the price reduced to US\$20,000 for a trip right through to Murmansk. The option of relaunching Barrabas at sea after passing through PVK had not been abandoned but it was looking increasingly risky as ice moved South all along the Russian coast.

It was with enormous relief that negotiations were concluded and Barrabas was safely lifted aboard the Kapitan Danilkin, as Adrian reported on September 29,

If there are gods about the place, they woke up smiling on Friday morning.

Dawn broke divinely calm - bronze and rose in the east fading to pewter but holding the promise of stillness. The sea around the 'Kapitan Danilkin' was plate smooth and Barrabas, moored against the ship's port side tugged gently at her lines. She knew, I'm certain, exactly what would happen later in the morning. I had explained it to her as we motored from the



Lifting Barrabas onto a ship's deck at sea is not a task for the faint hearted. The Captain and crew of the Danilkin displayed considerable skill and this very difficult operation was performed so smoothly that it looked easy.

Tiksi docks the previous evening after getting the call from the ship's Chief Mate to proceed alongside. Barrabas is an extraordinary boat. The short run from the docks to the ship, six miles, required three course changes. Without touching the autopilot, Barrabas made the turns, ten degrees to starboard on each occasion, on the mark without any input from me. She knew where she was going like a trekking horse that has trodden the same path interminably and no matter what cajoling from its rider will not deviate. Barrabas was as anxious as I to get away.

The port authorities, initially reluctant to offer any assistance to the ship by way of personnel or materials for hoisting and securing Barrabas finally relented and had sent out two sea containers and straps of sufficient strength to lift the boat. On arrival alongside, I met Dimitri the Chief Mate, a young, amiable seaman and then Captain Zagorsky. At 72, he scrambled down the rope ladder onto Barrabas's deck and leapt aboard. He is small and toughly built like a jockey. Despite the diminutive stature his greeting was akin to having your hand slammed in a closing elevator door. He immediately yelled for light in the gathering dusk and almost instantly Barrabas was ablaze beneath the port side floods mounted

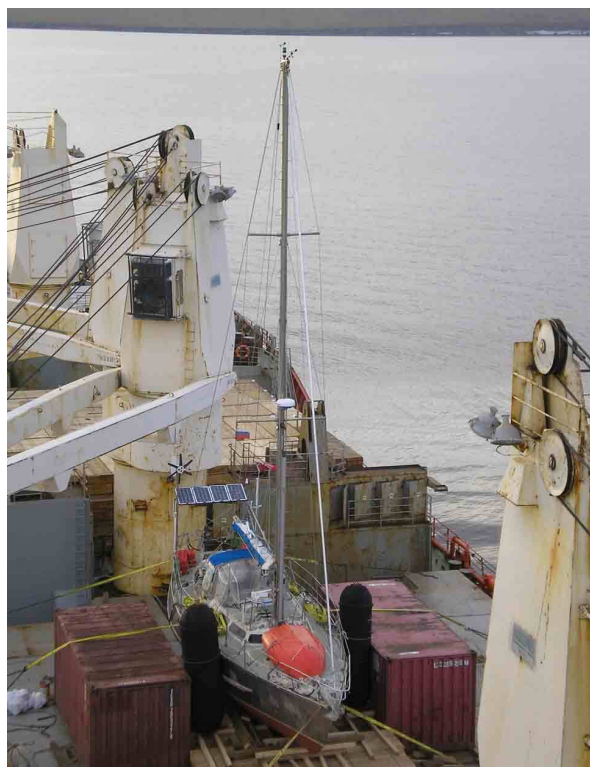
high on the ship's superstructure. I watched him carefully. Hooded eyes flicked across the yacht's deck, up the mast then down again. Shrouds and stays were tested for tension. Rapid fire Russian peppered the Chief Mate who fed the questions back to me in English. How strong was the mast? Could the backstays be disconnected? How? Could a jury stay leading aft from the mast be rigged?

How quickly? And on and on.

After several minutes of scrutiny, I accompanied the Captain onto the deck of his ship watched by the crew assembled at the port rail to take my lines then observe proceedings. He wanted to show me the arrangements he had planned for taking Barrabas on board. In a quick aside the Chief Mate told me that the Captain had not slept well for three weeks as the problem of how to stow Barrabas and get her through the ice had tumbled around in his mind.

Many meetings had been held with the ship's crew to brainstorm. The result together with the Captain's striding authority did much to alleviate my own anxiety. Each of the two sea containers was anchored on the port and starboard hatches of the central cargo wells. The yacht's keel would sit on wooden blocking laid in the central gallery running between the hatches, the sides of the gallery deepened with more wood blocking. I knew instantly that the arrangement would work.

By midday on Friday with the hoisting straps positioned beneath Barrabas, their ends then shackled to additional straps and these in turn extended by further lengths of strapping, we adjourned for a quick lunch. The crane swung outboard and the great block lowered precisely between Barrabas's twin backstays which I had loosened to permit some give should the block tap against them. Half way down the length of the mast, some 12 feet above the boom the straps were placed over the hook. On my advice to the Captain we took tension on the straps and lifted Barrabas 12 inches. The forward main strap extensions were raking backwards to the hook and I had angled their



A very professional job performed for the first time. The port authorities relented and supplied two empty containers, lifting strops and timber. Captain Zagorsky and his crew used these materials together with chains, two of the ship's fenders, and a great deal of ingenuity to secure Barrabas firmly in place on the deck

path between the shrouds. There could be no contact between the shrouds and the straps and Barrabas had to come out of the water completely level.

She did. Slowly she was lifted from the sea and swung inboard then turned with tag lines I had rigged from bow and stern and lowered to her new resting place. The blocking beneath her keel was too high and we quickly cleared the wood before Barrabas was re-lowered. Still held in the crane, the crew then set to work in a manner which had evidently been rehearsed shoring up the yacht's sides. We then positioned two of the ship's fenders, each 12 feet high and 4 feet wide vertically in the spaces between Barrabas's bows and the sea containers on either side. The final part of the operation tethered Barrabas to the deck of the ship by lines from her forward, midships and stern cleats

attached to chain made off to secure lashing points and then tensioned almost bar tight.

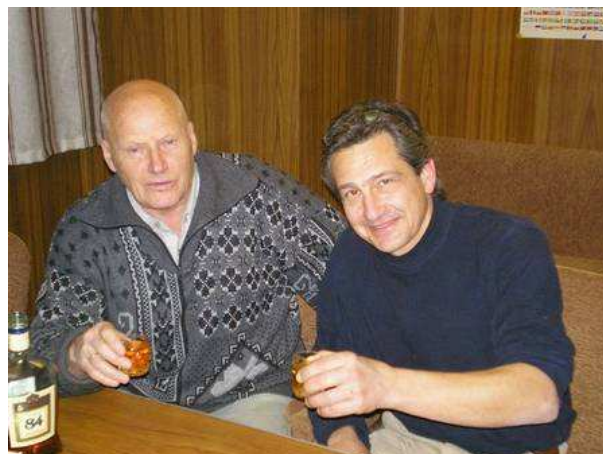
The Kapitan Danilkin weighed anchor in the late afternoon, turned hard to port and nosed eastwards out of the Tiksi roads. I watched from the bridge.

To the west the pewter had become burnished. Feathery cloud moved listlessly aloft. From high up on the bridge deck I saw that the cranes derricks had been lowered to their sea-going positions, one of them crossing over Barrabas's stern deck like a protective arm.

Adrian was relieved that Barrabas was safely onboard the Kapitan Danilkin and had to become accustomed to the very comfortable accommodation aboard after weeks in the cramped conditions aboard Barrabas. However, this was not a holiday cruise but a continuation of the expedition, following one of the options prepared in the planning suite. As agreed with Captain Zagorsky, Adrian was to spend as much time on the bridge and on deck as possible, learning more of the methods and dangers of navigating through the ice. In particular it was an opportunity see if the option of being towed through the ice might have worked—it wouldn't have worked.

Adrian reported on life aboard:

Like her master, the 'Kapitan Danilkin' is quite small at 30,000 tons but well maintained and packed with character. The wide expanse of the bridge crammed with all manner of electronic devices affords a grand view from six levels up. There is a gym and sauna with a plunge pool - of which I have made liberal use. The officers' dining hall is on level one - the food solid if unimaginative. Meals tend to be quiet, even silent affairs, more a literal re-fuelling stop than any form of social focus. The social aspect for me comes during two periods of my day - morning coffee with the Captain and the Chief Mate, Dimitri and again in the evening, tea or a drink, usually just myself and the Captain. The officer's deck is on the fifth level just below the bridge. My cabin is comfortable comprising two adjoining



Captain Zagorsky (left) with Adrian as they celebrated Adrian's birthday.

rooms, one a sitting area with a large desk, sofa, armchair and coffee table and adjacent a bedroom with en suite shower room.

Captain Alfred Zagorsky is an extraordinary man. A mariner for over 50 years and a captain since 1972 his experience of the sea and the Arctic in particular is immense. His English is sufficiently fluent that we can converse quite easily. Our conversations are wide ranging - his favourite subject seems to be the concept of 'freedom' - not that he feels in any way restricted but is keen to understand the rationale and consequences of the voyage I am making within the framework of liberating oneself from the aspirations enjoined in youth and developed and nurtured through early adulthood which, if then left unexpressed might otherwise turn sour and cancerous. It is the freedom from entrapment that ensues from a lack of fulfilment, the emergence of the unguarded self which has consumed much of our dialogue. We have covered oriental philosophies, religion, future population migration, national cultural influences and our own personal situations and circumstances.

The ship encountered the sea ice of the Taymyr massif on the evening of 30th September, our third night at sea. I stayed up late and into the early hours of Monday morning observing the ice from the freezing prow and the comfort of the bridge. I spent some time on the afterdeck with the Cap-



Russian nuclear icebreakers are able to force a passage through thick ice. In their wake they leave large floating segments. An ice hardened vessel travelling behind will brush many of these fragments aside, only for them to follow its wake. Some fragments will be over run and pass down the keel of the following ship, only to shoot to the surface in its wake, striking any vessel behind

tain. A question still hovered - could I have made it through the ice? The answer was an emphatic 'No!' Ice was at 100% cover, 3 feet thick. The reason for my vigil on the stern was to answer a second question - 'Could I have been towed and kept Barrabas in the water?' The ice breaker 'Russiya' crunched through the frozen sea seven cables ahead leaving a path of ice boulders, fragments and chippings in her wake. The Kapitan Danilkin's 38mm thick steel bows pushed this debris aside and in turn left a wake of open water. Captain Zagorsky explained that pieces of ice could be pressed beneath the bows, ride along the ship's keel and emerge at the stern. It was these hazards I was looking for - ice chunks breaking the surface from the depths of the ship's draught, 25 feet, each weighing up to one ton would cause devastating damage to a yacht following behind. It didn't happen often as the Captain and I stood in the warm

lee of the funnel stack looking sternwards, but it did happen and I surmised that a single impact like that could quite easily have sent Barrabas to the bottom. So it was with considerable relief at the vindication of loading Barrabas onto the ship's deck that I allowed sleep to overtake me in the snug nest of my cabin.

The next morning I woke a year older and, as far as navigating Arctic ice goes, a year wiser. During our morning coffee the Captain presented me with a bottle of whiskey and we lent character to the coffee with a few shots of brandy. In the evening we had my 'birthday cake' - an apple tart on a sweet bread base.

On board ship, as elsewhere during Barrabas's voyage around the world I have been met with exemplary kindness - from the Captain showing me how to operate the washing machine to his stringing a clothes line in my cabin and running a hose from his personal galley to Barrabas to fill her water tanks to providing me with the few additional provisions I need for the run from Murmansk home. But more than those, it is generosity of spirit, his concern for me and my small boat that touches me most. He has given me his private telephone number at his home. I am to call him when I make landfall in England so that he might, in his own words, 'sleep more easily.'



Pilot Yevgeny (left) and Chief Mate Dimitri (right) with Adrian.

On October 9, Adrian was able to report on



The crew of the Kapitan Danilkin relaunched Barrabas with the same skill that they had lifted her aboard.

the arrival in Murmansk and the relaunching of Barrabas,

The Kapitan Danilkin dropped anchor in the Murmansk roads late on Friday night. At 6.30 the following morning we commenced the difficult operation of unloading Barrabas. If fortune favours the brave then luck must surely reserve her smile for those prepared to step up to the plate and accept a challenge which lesser men might shy from - Captain Zagorsky is such a man.

The transportation of Barrabas through the Arctic ice on a ship not designed for such work, with a makeshift hoisting rig and a deck support structure for the yacht cobbled from sea containers, timber and chain was always going to be a risky business. But on early Saturday morning the wind stood still and, as in Tiksi we had perfect conditions. The hoist was smooth and Barrabas was once more bobbing gently in the water by 8.30am tethered to the mothership with twin fore and aft lines.

My pilot, a quiet man called Yevgeny boarded the Kapitan Danilkin at 9.00am and he and I were soon underway. As my engine fired and the lines let go, a great cheer erupted from the crew led as always by the indefatigable Captain Zagorsky. The Chief Mate, Dimitri who had worked up quite a sweat during the unloading procedure was suddenly incredulous that Barrabas had been successfully delivered to Murmansk without mishap as we stood together on the side deck shaking hands just before I scuttled down the rope ladder to the deck of my own ship.

I eased Barrabas away, turned hard to port as instructed by the pilot and then gave the wheel over to Yevgeny to steer us the 2 miles to the customs quay. Within minutes of arrival the obligatory phalanx of uniformed officialdom descended. I've given up trying to understand why five officials are needed when only one of them actually asks any questions, fills forms, stamps documents, asks more questions while the other four simply chat among themselves and nose around the boat. But we were done after an hour. Yevgeny reappeared shortly after and directed me to a new mooring on pier sixteen. I'm not sure this is pier 16. There is a 300-metre quay jutting westwards and another protruding southwards both currently occupied by 50,000 ton ships. In the crotch between these two limbs is a rag-tag assortment of floating pontoon barges to which, in apparently random order are berthed a variety of tugs and bunker vessels. There is a massive tidal range here so being tied to a floating structure means I don't have to keep adjusting my lines. On one of these barge/pontoons (the one I'm moored against) is a deck housing with a small office. It is manned on a 12-hour rotation by 'watchmen'. When I arrived the two characters on duty were Ura and Ghena.

Ghena has one of those faces it is difficult not to stare at with a kind of morbid fascination. The features are all unequal, lopsided, crunched, akimbo as though he had been held down and been run over by a small tank. With various gesticulations I

showed Ghena a long piece of flex with American plugs and asked if he had a Russian plug with which I might then get power to the boat. Ghena eventually got the picture. He insisted on doing the splicing. To support the cable while he worked, he ran it through a small steel loop welded to the door (I didn't see this at the time because I had retreated to the boat). He called for me when his work was done. I made suitable expressions of pleasure, then saw the run of the flex and pointed out to him that with the plug on the end of it wouldn't come back out through the steel loop. Ura thought this hilarious. Crimsom patches bloomed on Ghena's ravaged face. We sorted it out second time round.

With heat and light on board, Captain Zagorsky eventually located me, pulling from his small bag two loaves of bread and a carton of cigarettes. I made tea and he promised to return the following day with



Captain Zagorsky (left) and Nikolay Babich (right) aboard Barrabas with Adrian.

his great friend, Nikolay Babich, the ice expert who had been advising me during my NSR transit.

On Sunday at noon, true to his word Captain Zagorsky and Nikolay appeared bearing a bottle of French Cognac which we attacked with the eagerness of comrades who have been through a unique experience together. Later, having made my farewells and nursing the kind of hangover that afflicts the unaccustomed I took a stroll along the docks. A man walking with his young

son passed me then turned and spoke in Russian. I gave my usual response of, 'Russkiy niet' to which he answered, in perfect English asking if I was Mr Flanagan? Yes, I said. Andrey Perevoznuk is the operations director of the Murmansk Shipping Company and was on his way to show Barrabas to his son, Dima. I walked with them back to the boat and after talking for a while and letting Dima play at the helm they took their leave. It was then that I discovered two packages containing bread, cheese and various Russian salami and sausages, left for me by Nikolay.

On Monday, Port State Control visited the berth to check my safety equipment. Having passed muster I then pulled down a weather Grib file for the next 5 days. There is a vicious depression to the north of Murmansk delivering west and northwest winds of 40 knots. My plan is to make for Vardo in Norway but against 40 knot headwinds there is little sense in venturing forth so I will be pinned down here until at least the



Adrian needed an agent in Murmansk, Russian bureaucracy still treating all non-military vessels as merchant ships. Adrian with Igor (left). Igor proved to be a very helpful and capable addition to the expedition, making life easy for Adrian in the port.

weekend.

On October 12, Adrian reported on his experiences in Murmansk,

Two nights of sub-zero temperatures have left Murmansk sheathed in a clingfilm of white and Barrabas painted with a ve-

neer of ice. The mutation of the seasons continues apace with the air set to chill to -6C at the weekend. It is into this wintry conspiracy that I will venture forth on Saturday morning to begin my run for home, the final short leg of a marathon that has left me elated, exhausted, wiser, older of body but younger of spirit. I will have a 40-hour window of decent winds, if the forecast bears out to get me the 100 miles to Vardo in Norway. The voyage around Norway's North Cape will, I suspect have to be made in a series of hops ducking into the fjords to seek relief from the endless succession of depressions spiralling from the north Atlantic and funnelling between the Kola Peninsula and Spitsbergen to the north. Dimitri, the Chief Mate on the Kapitan Danilkin described this area around North Cape as the Cape Horn of the northern hemisphere, a description not without merit given his two seasons aboard an ice-breaker plying the Drake Passage.

Following the snows, a brilliant day of clear skies gave me the opportunity to look around Murmansk, the biggest settlement north of the Arctic Circle in company with Igor, my agent. We first took my gas bottles to be filled, a task I was told by the largest ship's chandler's in the port was 'impossible' given the different size of the nozzles. Next, we climbed a hill (by car - getting stuck in the snow on the way) for a vista of the city. Descending to the urban sprawl, its centre ringed by sentinels of ugly, grey apartment blocks we happened across a shopping complex, newly opened and inside, a revelation of European chic and modern design. The place was abuzz with young women. In this Murmanskian King's Road, the objective is clearly to see and be seen. Collectively, these girls are monumentally attractive. There appears to be a genetic predisposition towards an extra six inches of leg length above standard proportions and a startling array of eye colour (either that or some wily entrepreneur is making a killing in the coloured contact lens business). The fashion is also linearly defined - jeans so tightly fitting as to sug-

gest aspirations towards painting them on rather than pulling them on. Shoes or more accurately boots are the de rigueur choice of footwear, ideally winkle-picked and stilettoed to the limit of walkability. After weeks, nay months of a visual diet of water, tundra and Tiksi this feast of eye-candy was, as you might imagine hugely appetizing if, as you might equally well imagine simultane-



Alexander Kondakov, (left) a director of the Murmansk Shipping Company and Sergey Minchenko, (right) head of the Murmansk Maritime Agency.

ously...well, we'll leave it there for now.

Earlier I had been visited on board by Alexander Kondakov, a director of the Murmansk Shipping Company and Sergey Minchenko, head of the agency which employs Igor, both exceptionally pleasant men. Alexander, on behalf of his company presented me with a beautiful crystal Polar



Adrian with the crystal polar bear presented to him by Alexander on behalf of the Murmansk Shipping Company

Bear, the company's logo.

By 3.00pm I was back on board from my city sojourn, during which ironically given the city's predilection for fashion consciousness I was unable to find a comb, to meet the press. Two television crews and a clutch of print journalists attracting with them a small crowd of bemused stevedores and dock workers led by Elena Zaytseva, the Murmansk Shipping Company's head of public relations looking like a young Janet Street-Porter might after a visit to a particularly talented cosmetic surgeon, arrived at my berth. I showed them Barrabas, answered questions, posed, said 'hello' to Murmansk on cue, waited patiently while we went through a number of takes because the interviewer (another example of attractive Russian womanhood) couldn't quite wrap her tongue around 'Flanagan' and proudly displayed my crystal bear for the cameras.

Later, at 7.40pm, deep in the bowels of the adjacent pontoon, I found an ancient television set in a windowless, sub-marine stevedores' smoking room and switched on to channel 2 to see the news. Watching with me were a young Sam Fox half wearing a bathing suit and a number of other pin-ups similarly unclad. Through a neon blitz of ariel dysfunction Barrabas appeared as the third news item and there I was, answering questions, saying hello to Murmansk and biting sound while Maria beside me got all tongue-tied over my name.

On October 13, Adrian was ready to sail for Norwegian waters. As he reported on October 16.

I slipped my lines at Murmansk on a gusty, dismal Saturday morning after being first visited by the immigration authorities. With comedic repetitiveness four officials arrived. This small army was necessary it seemed in order to give me permission to leave. I knew the form. There is little space below decks. I suggested through Igor, my agent and interpreter that only the official doing the work should come aboard. This was blithely ignored. I had to fill in three

forms with identical information as three forms I had completed on arrival, but I was cheered by the fact that this would be my last encounter with Russia's leaden bureaucracy. My pilot (a mandatory requirement for all vessels entering and leaving port) arrived. I had specifically asked for an English speaker since we would be on board together for a good four hours to make the twenty miles to the head of Kola Bay. The chap they allocated was seriously overweight, had difficulty getting on and off the boat and spoke barely any English. Seven miles out and we were ordered by Murmansk radio to proceed no further. Why? Because a Russian naval vessel was coming in to Severomorsk, a naval base north of Murmansk and the entire approach to Murmansk was closed to all shipping. This restriction came with no warning. We moored up to a massive buoy and sat down to a stilted lunch. Unable to communicate, I quickly gave up trying. After getting underway at 3.00pm we reached the pilot station two hours later. The pilot vessel, a powerful tug came close to. I asked the helmsman to hold a steady course at 4 knots then brought Barrabas in on an elliptical sweep so that we came beam on, our decks 12 inches



Vardo is a typical Norwegian port, except for the large communications system domes on the high ground above the port.

apart and my pilot as able to step off.

The passage to Vardo in Norway was rough with steep seas building in 30 knot winds. I crossed the Russia/Norwegian sea boundary at midday on Sunday and made

Vardo by 3.30 pm. Vardo is on a small island connected to the mainland by an under-sea tunnel. With a population of 2,000 Vardo is the oldest settlement in northern Norway. I entered through the harbour wall into the merciful calm. Pretty houses colourfully painted peppered the hillsides around the harbour. I was instructed to moor against a pontoon just inside the harbour wall. To get to land, I had to step onto the pontoon and on the other side onto a Norwegian search and rescue vessel, then up a gangway. I introduced myself to the captain of the rescue vessel, Roger Pettersen. He immediately invited me on board. I asked if I might have a shower. No problem, he said. Further, he was cooking dinner and I was welcome to join in, which I did - a traditional Norwegian dish of soupy cabbage and lamb chops followed by a nutty custard with a fruit jelly sauce. I unashamedly had three servings of each. With no sleep for almost 40 hours I collapsed



Adrian with Roger Pettersen, (left) Capt of the Vardo rescue boat - 'Oscar Tybring IV' from Redningssselskapet (The Rescue Company)

into my sleeping bag.

Next morning Roger came to have a look at Barrabas. We went over my charts and Roger was able to give me some useful bits of local knowledge in these waters which when the wind is in the north sector can be treacherous. I learned that the SAR vessel belongs to Redningssskoyta (The Rescue Company).

A fleet of SAR vessels is located at strategic



'Oscar Tybring IV' from Redningssselskapet (The Rescue Company) photographed off Vardo.

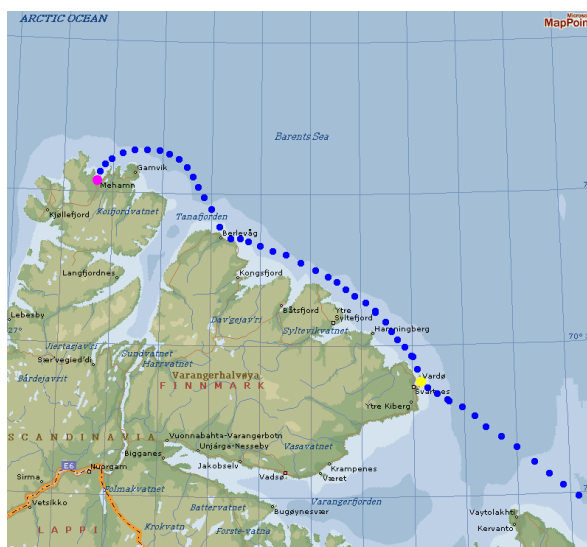
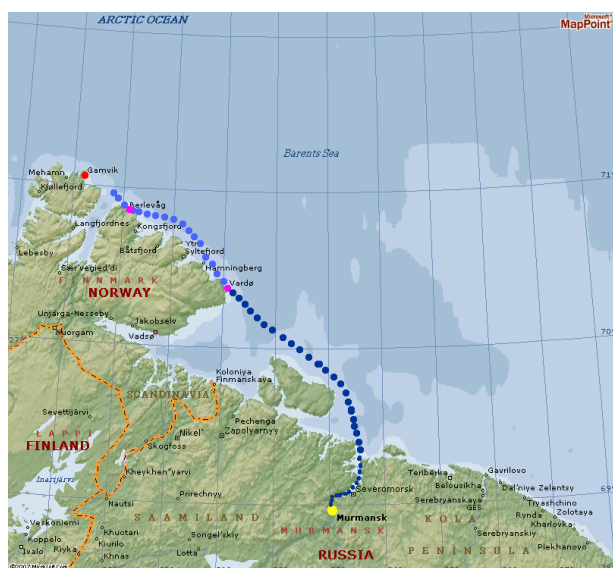
points along the entire Norwegian coast with responsibility for inshore rescue operations. The organisation is part government funded and relies on public donations and membership fees to cover the rest of its operating budget. Unknown to me, Roger had been onto his head office in Oslo, explained who I was and what I was doing and Redningssskoyta decided to offer me free membership to the end of the year, which means, should I ever need their services, there will be no charge. My plan is to stay inshore and navigate the fjords as far as Vestffjorden. Much of this passage will be under engine, so knowing that Redningssskoyta is a phone call away is a huge comfort. I will leave Vardo early on Tuesday morning. There is a 40-hour weather window and I should be able to make Honnigsvag.

To be back in Europe feels wonderful. Whilst in Russia, England seemed still so distant. But with the hundred mile passage to Vardo, it seems I have made a great leap homewards.

Adrian was now facing a new challenge. The original planning had identified a need to complete the Northern Sea Route by late August, or early September at the very latest. It was now late October and the Arctic winter was setting in rapidly. This introduced two difficulties. The days were shortening with poor light for fewer hours and total darkness for most of each day. This increased risk because very large waves

sweeping in from the Atlantic would be difficult to spot, reducing the number of hours for sailing. That would inevitably increase the number of times Adrian would have to anchor in a fjord. The other difficulty was that the wind was coming from the West and at great strength. As Barrabas does not sail well into wind, this would reduce the number of days when it would be possible to move on without resorting to engine power. Using the engine was not a complete answer either because Barrabas has a low

minutes to make Gamvik, 25 miles west before the weather deteriorates over the following 48 hours as a vicious low passes to the north. The collective weight of fatigue, mental and physical is beginning to affect my stamina and I plan to make short stages along the Norwegian coast to recover



Fjord hopping is a slow process and Adrian still had to work round the northernmost tip of Norway against the wind and currents. In many ways, this rounding of North Cape is very similar to the fearsome Cape Horn.

Adrian decided to continue on in an attempt to round the northernmost tip of Norway before seeking shelter, but conditions forced him to make port at Mehamn.

speed under power.

strength for the final push home.

On October 17, Adrian reported:

On October 24, Adrian reported:

I left Vardo yesterday morning with the promise of a 40 hour weather window. Indications were for winds at around 20 knots. But navigating close inshore along the Norwegian coast is a treacherous business. The long, high-sided fjords act to funnel and amplify the wind so that crossing the mouths of fjords is to enter a maelstrom of 50-knot blasts. My charts are peppered with warnings of dangerous waves, short, steep breakers. I was too exhausted to continue on to Honningsvåg and decided to put into Berlevåg to sleep. I will leave in a few

I am holed up in the small but well protected harbour in Mehamn. The weather is atrocious with more or less constant gales howling in from the west. Wind speeds just offshore are touching 50 knots making for treacherous sea conditions. All the fishing boats are remaining in port. The problem is not only the severity of the weather, but for my purposes the wind is unusable - coming predominantly from the west and southwest I would be headed if I ventured out into open water. This means wind on the nose and with Barrabas's ability to only point up to 65 degrees I would not be able to make any sensible headway. Inshore, in the fjord system, these winds are being amplified to 60 knots or more, so for the moment, this route is not an option either. The depressions are born north and west of Iceland then travel unopposed eastwards



Barrabas safely moored in Mehamn harbour, sheltered from 50 knot winds beyond the protective high ground. At mid day the light was little better than twilight.

across the north Atlantic, north of Scotland and are channelled between Norway and Spitsbergen. Conditions are much the same as are found at Cape Horn, with no land masses to break, slow or decay the depressions. The problem I am facing is that conditions are likely to deteriorate further going into November. It is frustrating to be so tantalisingly close to home yet between Northern Norway and the south coast of England face the prospect of the worst sustained conditions of the entire voyage - including Cape Horn. Each day I download a 7-day GRIB weather prediction. The pattern since arriving in Vardo on 14th October has been 48-60 hours of ferocity with lulls of between 6-12 hours before the next onslaught. The next six days will deliver winds touching 60 knots offshore - no breaks, so I am holding station for the moment.

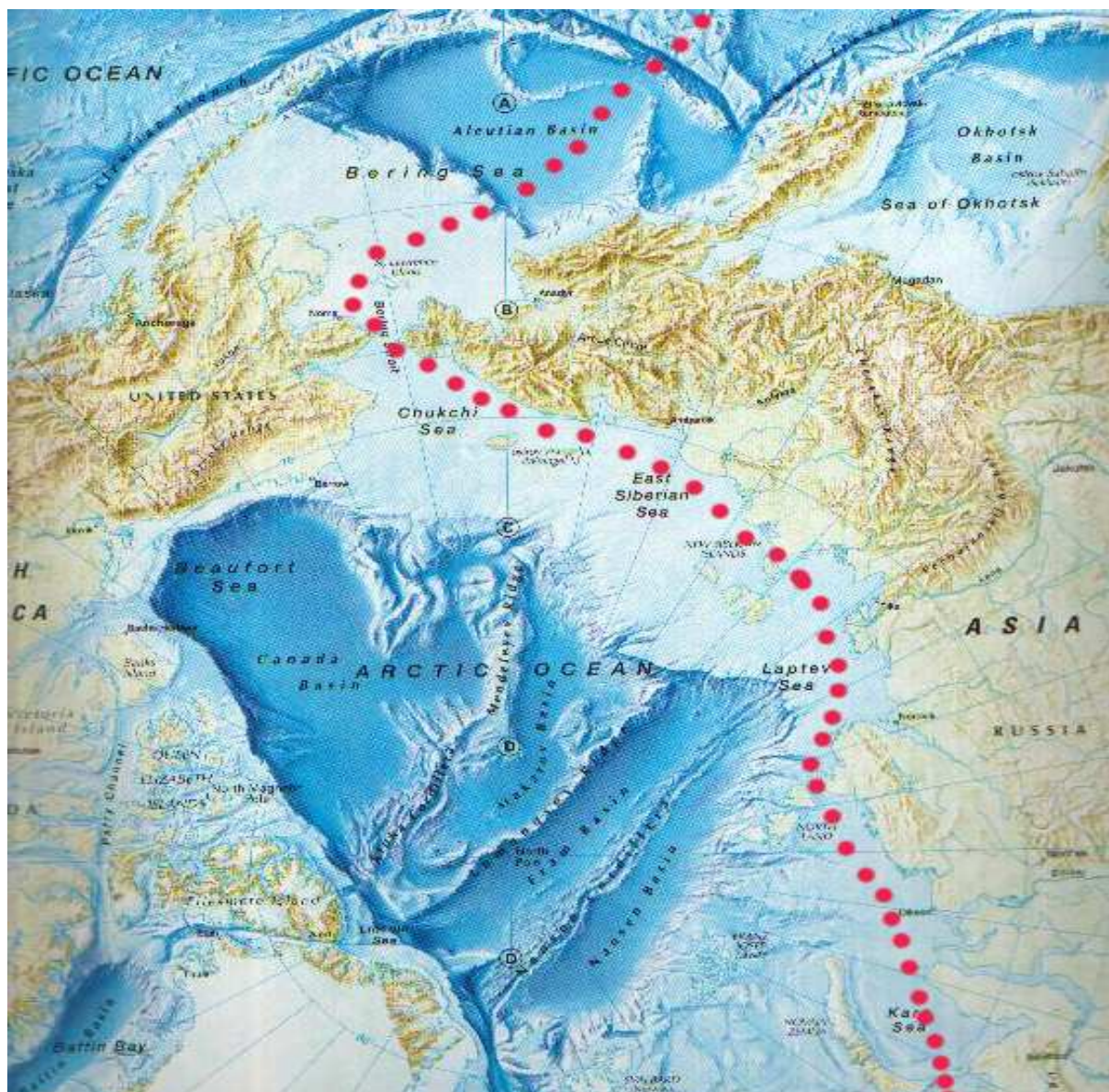
It was now time for some hard decisions. The AGX team was back to considering options. There was a great deal of pressure to complete the circumnavigation by Christmas. With winter arriving all along the European coastline, there was the option to fjord and port hop down to the finish line. This would be an exhausting and frustrating voyage through the busiest shipping lanes in the world, but it was the shortest distance from Mehamn to the Solent. There was no

guarantee that the voyage would be completed by Christmas because some of the longer range weather forecasts promised storms and very low temperatures. Attempting to swing round the west coast of the British Isles, which was one of Adrian's preferred options originally was looking to be even riskier. Local opinion in Mehamn was that the weather would not improve and a boat had just been lost outside the harbour to underline the severity of conditions.

Then there were Adrian's own emotional considerations. He knew that he would have to sell Barrabas at the end of the voyage. Not something he was looking forward to after sailing through the most hostile sea conditions around the world in her. He really wanted one last blue water cruise in farewell. Then there were the financial implications of battering down the European coast, with the prospect of damage that would reduce her selling price.

After a great deal of soul searching and study of forecasts, Adrian decided that he would take the option of wintering Barrabas in Mehamn and returning to her in June 2008 to complete his expedition. That would allow him to fly home to spend Christmas with his sons, write most of the rest of the book "Over The Top", and return to Barrabas when the weather would offer greater freedom to enjoy his final sail in her.

Originally, Adrian had allowed two years for the voyage. This was based on the assumption that the expedition would largely be funded from his own resources and that he could not afford more than two years. He would now fly back to London two years to the day since setting out from the Solent. In the summer of 2008 he would be able to dedicate three to five weeks to complete the circumnavigation. Even if the weather proves to be poor, he should be able to make a single voyage down the Norwegian coast and across the North Sea, to pass through the Channel, and back to the Solent. If the weather looks good, he will have the choice of making the final leg an enjoyable voyage, by sailing round the western coasts of the British Isles.



Looking Forward

BBN Specials

Broadly Boats will continue to closely follow the progress of the Alpha Global Expedition and a fifth BBN Special will be dedicated to the final stages, but we will all have to await Adrian's book "Over The Top", Adrian Flanagan, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Hardcover - October 11, 2007, forecast price: £16.99, as the exciting and authoritative account by this lone sailor. Hopefully, many Christmas stockings will be bulging with copies for Christmas 2008 and the Broadly Boats Book Reviewers look forward to reviewing this book for the on-line Book Reviews database that is also accessible to readers using other FIRE Project Internet Portals.

BBN Specials are produced only occasionally and the Alpha Global Expedition merits a BBN Special.

In producing BBN Specials, an important consideration is file size. Every effort is made to keep the resulting .PDF file as small as possible because many BBN subscribers still receive emails via low speed dial modems and radio links. This compact file size will result in lower image definition.

In the case of this Special, higher definition images can be viewed on the Alpha Global weblog and "Over The Top" will include high quality illustrations.

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