

Cape to Cape on Bark Europa

*A fairly
long trip from
Cape Horn to
Capetown via Antarctica, South Georgia
and Trístan da Cunha*



At the beginning of February 2017 along with 39 other people joined the tall ship Europa at Ushuaia in Argentina for the start of a voyage which promised to be the trip of a lifetime. I had tried to book this trip back in 2015 hoping to board in 2016 only to find that the passage was fully booked within two hours of the booking opening, so I immediately booked for 2017. This gave me a year to ready myself both physically and mentally for such a long and arduous voyage. I had a small worry that I might be the oldest person on board. I need not have worried, I was only the second oldest! Of the other 39 people who became "voyage crew" we were a very mixed bunch. Ages ranged from late twenties to early seventies. Nationalities included Dutch, Swiss, German, English, French, Israeli, American, Australian and New Zealand. Some people were experienced sailors and some had never been to sea before. The permanent crew were just as varied although the senior crew members were all Dutch. The language spoken on board is English. Several people had left their jobs to come on this trip and others saw the trip as an opportunity for an extended mid life holiday. Not everyone had booked a year ahead. Indeed one person had booked a holiday in Argentina in the hope of getting a cancellation.



So on the morning of 10th February this disparate group of people cast off from Ushuaia for a journey that would take them to amazing places and keep them safely out of touch from world affairs for 52 days.....

This is where we went.....





Wednesday 8th February

Left Gatwick for a gruelling 28 hour journey to Ushuaia. Gatwick is the usual morning scrum but the Air Europa flight to Madrid goes well. I'm told my luggage will go through to Ushuaia without any help from me! Adolfo Suarez airport is big and not well signed but eventually I find Gate B and for the second time today I take my boots off and unpack my rucksack for security. The question arises, what do you do in the departure lounge for six hours? After a salad and coffee I take a walk around the shops which seem remarkably similar to the ones at Gatwick. Then I work my way through the Times and the Daily Telegraph from cover to cover (crosswords included). Finally at 18.00 my name is called on the tannoy and I am given my boarding pass for Ushuaia but told I have to retrieve my bags at Buenos Aires.

Flight UX 3043 is packed but I get a window seat 43G at the rear of the plane. My neighbour is a charming young Argentinian girl who unfortunately speaks not a word of English.....so for thirteen hours conversation is strictly limited. All in all an exhausting and uncomfortable flight (Think about business class next time)

Thursday 9th February

I arrive at Buenos Aires at 04.30 rather bleary eyed where we all have to walk miles to passport control and then baggage control where I am amazed to see my sailing bag duly appear on the belt. To get to Ushuaia now involves a ten minute trolley push to Terminal C where I have to check in all over again and then for the third time in 24 hours I take off my boots and unpack my rucksack (but they didn't mind me leaving my belt on!)

Finally at 07.15 we are taken by bus to our plane which is only half full so I get three seats to myself! An hour later we land at Trelew which seems to be a very small place in the middle of nowhere by the sea. The countryside reminds me a bit of the African bush, all scrub and sand. We don't get to leave the plane so it is not a very meaningful visit. Eventually the plane fills up. How do so many people from such a small place all want to go to Ushuaia?

We land at Ushuaia airport at midday. What a relief to get off the plane. Lovely airport, no hassle straight through to baggage reclaim and then outside for a whirlwind taxi ride to Puerto Commercial where Europa is moored. The last half kilometre has to be done on foot, as the taxi is not allowed in the port. Sounds easy but 33 kilos of luggage is really quite heavy.

Left my bags on board and went off to explore the town before the official embarkation at 17.00. Ushuaia known as el fin del mundo or the end of the world is not unlike one's idea of a Wild West town. Not very big but full of people and many foreigners from the many cruise ships which visit the



gateway to the Antarctic. The architecture, both old and new is essentially corrugated tin in bright colours (bright yellow is very popular). The souvenir which one associates most with Ushuaia is undoubtedly the penguin of which there are many including plastic, porcelain and humans in penguin suits! So on what does the economy of Ushuaia rely? Well apparently 90% of Antarctic tourism comes through Ushuaia. There are always many cruise ships in the harbour. The other industry which takes place here is the high tech industry. It is in a way Argentina's answer to Silicon Valley although it is not that obvious at first sight. Looking at the wall graffiti me thinks it best not to advertise my English nationality!

Come five o'clock everyone gathers on the main deck where we all have to sign on. This involves, among other things, a test to see if we are able to use the emergency evacuation ladder. Fortunately passed this test. Then we are all introduced to Captain Eric who has been a captain of Europa for twenty years and flies his own personal ensign at the mast head which has 45 embroidered on it to signify he passed out in 45th place from naval college (There are in fact three captains who take four month turns.) Whilst waiting I have a chat with the permanent doctor on board who has been told that I am diabetic so he checks to make sure I have my medication with me otherwise I would not be allowed to go on the cruise. After dinner I can hardly keep my eyes open and tumble into my bottom bunk F in cabin 10 which I share with two Dutch, a German and a Frenchman.

So who are my fellow travellers?

We are 40-guest crew on this trip and nationalities include Dutch, German, French, Swiss, American, Australian, British and New Zealand. When I signed up for this trip I did worry that I might be the oldest person on board. This proved to be the case although there are quite a few just a couple of years younger. The ages range from thirties through fifties to late sixties. Reasons for being here vary considerably from trip of a lifetime to just love sailing and extended holiday.

Phil and Vivienne from San Francisco (English but been in US 38 years) see this as part of a six month sabbatical which includes trekking in South African and visiting Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Jan who is in my cabin is French, lives in Le Bouquet and works in London was going to go to Greenland but a last minute cancellation brought him here. Now going to Greenland in July.

Annette is a fifty-year-old German paediatric nurse who lives in New Zealand and has sailed on square-riggers before. Lewis who celebrates his 68th birthday on board has a flat with his partner in Chichester although they live in Sidmouth and like me wanted a long distance sailing trip but his wife doesn't do sailing. Turns out he also met my brother many years ago when he was grape picking for Chapoutier in France.

Scott and Brett are father and son from Alaska. Brett and his mother paid for the trip as a retirement present for Scott who recently retired as a captain with Alaska ferries.

Mike who is a retired oil tanker skipper used to live on the Isle of Wight and now lives in France. Lot of sailing experience and just wanted an adventure.

Pete is from Kent and does lectures on ornithology on cruise ships and had a burning desire to visit Antarctica.

Claudia is Swiss but seems to have travelled in many places. She celebrated her 33rd birthday on board.

Henk is Dutch, has a commercial apple orchard in ~Holland and celebrated his 68th birthday on board.

Stella and Sue are from Australia, Stella is a Dutch geologist, and Sue emigrated to Australia from Canada.

Birthdays on board are all celebrated communally and chef bakes a small cake.

What about the ship?

She was built in 1911 in Hamburg and named Senator Brookes. Until 1977 she served as Lightship Elbe 3. In 1985 she was purchased by a Dutch consortium who had her converted to the 3 masted bark that you see today. She was re-named Europa after the character from Greek mythology (nothing to do with European Union). She is 55m long with a beam of 7.5m and draught 3.8m. Bark Europa, ocean wanderer is the only sailing ship to do regular Antarctic voyages.



10th February Friday

This morning after a nice hot shower I feel more human. After breakfast we have a briefing on abandon ship, fire on board and man overboard (MOB), all serious stuff. The captain briefly addresses us to tell that we shall be sailing with one less person, as this person did not have the right medication for a previously notified condition. Then cast off and we leave the quay for the beginning of the adventure.

Once under weigh we start the familiarisation programme which includes rope handling, helming, look out duty, climbing etc. within half an hour of leaving the quayside the sails



are up and we voyage crew are learning the difference between tailing and sweating and learning that ropes coil in a clockwise direction. Later we are divided into four groups and we are introduced to the various parts of the ship including the fore deck where look outs are posted and how to contact the officer of the watch if we sight something like a growler or another ship which needs to be reported. Then we move on to the sloop deck where the life rafts are kept. Natalie explains to us the procedures for launching the



life rafts (done by crew only) and how the rest of us can then access the life rafts. We also get another talk on MOB and how to deal with it. Then we move to the poop deck where we are instructed in the mechanics of steering the ship on the right course, which can involve diverging from the ordered heading to counteract wind and tide.



After lunch we gather round to be instructed on how to wear a harness and how to climb the mast. I have to say that I didn't climb the mast along with several others with a fear of heights. With most of the sails set with the exception of the course sails we have been battling along at ten knots.

Ushuaia to the open sea is about 70 miles. For most of this distance we are required to have an Argentinian pilot who finally left us at about 15.30. The wind in the Beagle Channel is extremely gusty and the ship heels quite a bit when she is hit by a gust. And then all of a sudden at 17.30 the wind drops just at the entrance to the Beagle Channel.

Tomorrow we start the crossing of the Drake Passage, which promises some exciting sailing. I have already taken quite a lot of photos including recording events on the ship on video. Despite the exhausting journey getting here this trip really is proving to be the experience a lifetime.



Tonight we had our first watch. White watch was on from 20.00 till midnight. Watch duties consist of look out duty on the fore deck that can be desperately cold and wet so our turn is limited to thirty minutes. We have to report to the officer of the watch anything unusual such as a ship, a growler or dolphin or whale. The second watch duty is helming and here we are also limited to thirty minute slots so that no one falls asleep or freezes. After your turn you can relax either on deck or in the deckhouse (but not in your bunk). Towards midnight the wind started to appear and at 23.55 the order went out to set sail so both the white watch and the red watch who follow us pull and heave to set the sails which included all the staysails, lower and upper topsails, t'gallants and royal. This took us around 30 minutes after which we were free to collapse in our bunks. In perfect conditions it takes 45 minutes to set all the sails and five minutes to take them down and after each operation there are miles of ropes which need to be neatly

coiled and put away.

Saturday 11th February

Now well into Drakes passage we awoke to a day of brilliant sunshine and glass calm seas, not what we had been expecting. Shower, quick breakfast and up on watch again (four hours on, eight hours off). About 09.30 the sky rather suddenly turned black and we were hit by a rain squall, which soaked us to the skin. I was on the helm at the time and struggled a bit with the wheel. Then as quickly as it appeared the squall was replaced by a rainbow and bright sunshine.

During a period when I was not on helming or look out duty I attended a talk by a crew member who instructed us in the mechanics of square sails and how to handle the miles of cordage. We learned about buntlines and clew lines and how to brace the yards when the wind changes direction. All these operations require many hands to carry them out successfully. All fascinating stuff and fiendishly difficult to remember.

When not involved in sailing activities there is plenty of spare time to read, chat, take photos etc. It was during one of these periods that I got to chatting with Lewis who lives in Sidmouth. Retired but having previously worked for Fullers Brewery I told him about Mitchells and Butlers. Ah yes says he I did know Bruce Mitchell..... and I suddenly realised that he was referring to Claude. What a small world. I am always struck by the number of amazing coincidences in life

Today we have had the engine running for most of the day, as the wind is very fluky. Drake's passage I had been expecting to be a cauldron of boiling bad weather. Still our crossing is three days to reach the South Shetland Islands there is plenty of time for things to change. Dog watch tonight, 12 to 4. First thing we put up the flying jib and then 5 mins later it taken in again. That gust gave way to just a heavy swell and SOG (speed over ground) of less than 4 knots. Look out duty has become quite acrobatic as well as very cold. After my first spell on the wheel relaxing in the deckhouse the cry goes out for hands to help with sail handling. A big session where we hoisted the course, lower upper topsail and royal as well as that flying jib. At last the wind is moving to the North as predicted and freshening to 20 knots. Finally we are stood down and I collapse into my bunk. Probably a good introduction to Drake's Passage although the heavy swell meant we lost two people from our watch to seasickness.



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Sail handling and helming and look out duties in the wind, rain and cold make one hungry. The food here is very good. Simple food but good and healthy. Breakfast is choice of cereals, ham and cheese or toast and marmalade. Lunch always includes a bowl of hot soup and choice of more ham, cheese and salad; Dinner is different every night and sometimes includes a desert. People do seem to be hungry. When the cry goes out from the galley "seconds!" there is always a stampede!

Sunday 12 February

Woke at 8.00 after 4 wonderful hours of sleep. Ablutions this morning require one to be an acrobat. Every movement needs to be timed with the roll of the ship otherwise it is easy to fall. Today the sun is shining, the 20 knot wind is in the North and we are making 6 to 7 knots.

Today Jordi gave us a fascinating talk about the birds that we see in Drakes Passage. Principally these are Wondering Albatross and Storm Petrels. Although sometimes difficult to assimilate their size the Albatross has an enormous wingspan of 3.5m and is the largest flying bird on the planet. Arctic Terns we learned fly to the Antarctic to feed before migrating back to the Arctic to breed. There are also Antarctic Terns but these do not migrate. Most creatures including birds in the Antarctic depend on krill for food. Krill is the most numerous breed of creature on the



planet and absolutely vital to the balance of nature. In much the same as sand eels in the islands off Scotland were the staple food of birds like puffins, which disappeared from the area when the sand eels were no longer available.

The weather continues to be kind with the wind in the North East and today we made 145 miles over the 24 hours period compared with only 72 for the previous 24 hours, so now we have 270 miles or two and a half days before we reach the South Shetland Islands.

Monday 13 February

Today my watch starts at 04.00 so with my alarm set for 03.30 I do my acrobatics in the shower and report for duty on the fore deck for the first look out session. It has got colder and this is a sign that we are approaching the convergence zone where the sea temperature can drop several degrees in a very short space of time. This point indicates that we are approaching the Antarctic. This morning there were two Royal Albatrosses which flew quite close to the ship so that you could appreciate their enormous wingspan. Being so big they need wind to fly and when there is no wind they tend to settle on the sea and wait for food to come to them.

At the end of the watch it is time for breakfast then a one hour nap and then it is time Jordi's introduction to penguins. It has to be said that he really is an excellent communicator, a brilliant photographer and he is very knowledgeable on his subject. All penguins are from Southern hemisphere. There were about 40 different species although this has now reduced to 17 of which 4 are found in the Antarctic. There are Gentoo with orange beak and feet, Chinstrap with black bill and, yes, a black chin strap, Adelie penguins live in the Weddell sea and nest in ice bergs rather than on rocks. They also have claws rather than webbed feet. Finally there are Emperor penguins, the largest who breed in the winter Antarctic months so we shall not see them. King penguins are a bit smaller and are mainly found in South Georgia. They lay just one egg, which rests on their feet so they have no nest.

In the afternoon we have a mandatory IAATO (International Assoc of Antarctic Tour Operators) lecture in which we are told all the do's and don'ts when landing in Antarctica. Nothing must be either added or taken away from the landscape. If you need the loo you have to ask to be taken back to the boat! And of course we are reminded to Hoover our gear and then our boots must be disinfected before each landing.

8o'Clockie: Eric tells us we have travelled 184 miles in the last 24 hours including 25 miles when we were blown off course. We have 115 miles to go and we are now using a new larger scale chart. It is not up to date and depths are marked in fathoms rather than metres.

Tonight white watch are on 8 till 12. The wind has increased quite dramatically. The ship now rolls 30degrees and watertight doors are kept shut so to get o deck is a more laborious process where we have to use the 'tween decks passageway to emerge on the fore deck and the walk the length of the ship to reach the poop deck where the wheel is. One has to choose one's moment carefully as the seas constantly break over the main deck and it is easy to get soaked or swept away if one is not clipped on to the safety line.



The numbers on the map indicate here we made landings in Antarctica



Tuesday 14th February

Despite the motion of the ship I slept like a log. Once awake an acrobatic session is required to perform one's ablutions. Taking a shower is interesting and the expression one hand for the ship is very apt in this situation.

Finally at about 11.00 this morning Smith Island hoves into view. This is a fairly large island with mountains of over 2000 metres which were climbed for the first time in the 1990's. In a way this is the gateway to the Antarctic and we were greeted with a beautiful rainbow. It really is quite a special place. Now in the lee of Smith island the sea is much calmer and we are making our way to Snow Island some 20 miles to the East where we shall most probably anchor this evening before hopefully making a landing tomorrow.



Smith Island offered no hopeful anchorages so we carried on till we reached Snow Island in bright sunshine but with quite a swell running. From the ship we can see brightly coloured tents on the shore. The beach people turn out to be a Brazilian research expedition. They are researching fossils to try to shed some light on the period when South America was separated from Antarctica, many millions of years ago.

During the 8 o'clockie (our daily evening briefing) Captain Eric tells us we have travelled 116 miles today and are now looking at an up to date chart of 1968. The programme is outlined for tomorrow and envisages three landings but this of course is weather dependant.



Wednesday 15th February

This morning we wake to thick fog contrasted with yesterday's bright sunshine. Jordi takes the Zodiac to scout for landing possibilities on Snow Island. Eventually at 09.30 the message comes through that a landing is possible. So we all get our things together, sanitise our boots, put on life jackets and pile into the Zodiac for the trip ashore.

Ashore we are greeted by the Brazilian team of researchers who give us an introduction to their research and then we get a tour of the tented camp, which is fascinating, and we are offered a cup of excellent Brazilian coffee. The team have been here for three weeks and are going home next week. They are carrying out research into the period when South America split from Antarctica by looking at fossils. On this beach there are many elephant seals who make a lot of noise. Time to leave for the ship. Jordi, Anouka and Edwardo, our guides very bravely put on wet suits to guide the zodiacs in towards the beach so that we can all embark.

During lunch we sail the 13 miles to Elephant point which is the site of our next landing. Here we encounter hundred if not thousands of Gentoo penguins who are incredibly curious and have no fear of humans at all. They approach us and stand and stare at us from as little as half a metre distant. Moving along the beach we see some huge elephant seals resting in the sun, moulting and having strange conversations. On this beach there are also giant Petrels nesting as well as Skuas and Kelp gulls. These gulls seem to be just as annoying as our own Herring gulls. It feels a great privilege to be in this place where almost no humans go, the sort of place that normally we only see on a David Attenborough programme. Eventually it is time to leave this amazing place and return to the ship.

Early supper and back into the zodiacs to visit Hannah point on Livingstone Island. Here we see both Gentoo and Chinstrap penguins. Because chinstraps sit on the nest for much longer than Gentoo the area becomes a morass of mud and penguin guano. Very smelly indeed and the elephant seals have their own distinctive smell. We are privileged to be here because none of the cruise ships are allowed to land here. Privileged but still managed to fall on the slippery guano slope and so ended up rather smelly!

And so back to the ship in the zodiacs. A long but exciting and interesting day. Overnight we shall be sailing to Deception Island where we shall anchor within the caldera of the volcano.



Thursday 16th February

When I fell I think I twisted my thumb which by now is quite painful and made sleeping quite difficult. I never realised how much we depend on our thumbs! Anyway showed it to the doctor who confirmed nothing broken.

The choice today is between a four hour hike across very rough country or a visit to the old whaling station. No dispute about the choice. When we landed in the zodiac we came across a group from the British navy who had spent the night on the beach in tents. They are from the BAS ship Protector and they told us that we would probably see us in Capetown which they reach on 28th March.

The whaling station is very interesting and we spent two and a half hours visiting the various ruins, modern archaeology. Although built as a whaling station in 1912 by 1931 it had been abandoned as the price of whale oil fell. After that it was taken over by the military during the second world war and then by the British Antarctic Survey until 1969 when a second volcano eruption demolished most of the camp. Since then it is a world heritage

site and access is strictly controlled. To reach the whaling station you have to pass through Neptune's bellows, the main entrance to the inner caldera of the volcano





After the visit we walked to a ridge called Neptune's window which offers a fantastic view. Back to the boat for lunch. When the walkers return bit is clear that visiting the whaling station was a wise choice. The walk was hard work, very muddy and in poor visibility and they didn't have time to visit the whaling station.

Quick motor to Pendulum Cove after lunch, which is inside the caldera. Here there are hot springs at 70 deg cooled a little by seawater. When we arrive there is a howling gale and it is raining horizontally! Those dozen or so people brave enough strip off and lie in deep pockets dug out of the sand. Lovely warm water but freezing when you get out. Good to get back to the boat.



Tonight we are sailing the Bransfield Strait to access the Wedell Sea and approach James Ross Island. This should be a smooth crossing but 35 knot winds are expected in the next 24 hours. We shall see.

Friday 17th February

This morning to my great disappointment the first whale was sighted, sadly when I was not on deck. We are now motoring in the Bransfield Strait and later this afternoon we shall be entering the Antarctic Sound which is the real start of Antarctica mainland. It was named after James Wedell (1787-1834), an English navigator who sailed there to latitude 74 15 in 1823, the furthest South that anyone had been at that time. He also gave his name to the Wedell Seal This is the entrance to the Wedell Sea. The view from the deck is what we all came here to see. Icebergs everywhere of all shapes and sizes. On some of them you can see large cracks where they will eventually split on their journey North. The sun is shining brightly but the wind chill factor means that staying out on deck is comfortable for only a short while. The deck house is full of people keeping warm and drinking hot coffee and tea talking about the sights outside.

This morning Jordi gave an introductory lecture on seals, of which there are many different types. Sea lions and fur seals are fairly small, able to stand with neck held high and move quite fast on land if needs be. Wedell seal (named after the Wedell Sea) have big eyes and many layers of blubber to keep well insulated but cannot move very much on land and cannot lift their necks. They grow to 3m and live 20yyears. Crab eater seals on the other hand live entirely on ice flows and can be predated by Orca. Leopard seals give birth on land and the females weigh more at 500kg than the males. The big brute of the seal world is the Elephant seal that weighs in at 3-3500kg for the male and 900kg for the female. The females are receptive a week after giving birth and consequently spend their entire life pregnant. Since they do not give birth in the water they are able to stop their pregnancy temporarily so that the birth coincides with their time on land in the summer season.

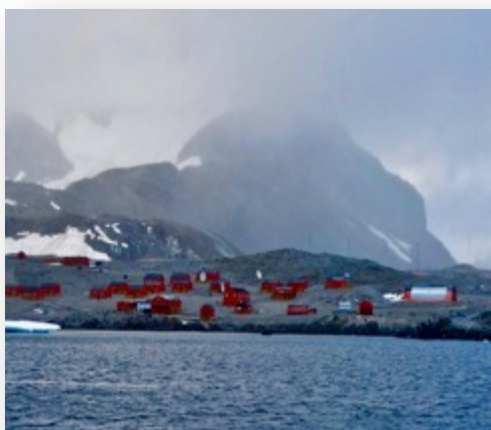
And so we sail on. In the afternoon we have a landing at Kimis Cove on Joinville Island, where there is a large rookery of Gentoo penguins. Rubber boots are the order of the day as every landing is a "wet" landing. Set amongst the army of penguins is a single enormous Elephant Seal, at least 3.5 m long and must weigh as much as a small elephant. Amongst the penguins an army of little white sheet bills rush around taking care of the guano.



Saturday 18th February

Today we visited the Base Esperanza Argentina which is a research station founded in 1953. There are 55 inhabitants including up to a dozen children who have their own primary school. The base is also the site of the stone hut, which sheltered for two years three members of the Swedish expedition of 1912. There is also the church of St Francis of Assisi (which contains a relic of the saint). We were welcomed by Father Pablo who is an army padre who stays on the base for 3 months at a time. Two years ago they had a wedding here and they have also had a baptism. The research station is involved in glaciology, seismology, oceanography etc. However, it does feel like a territorial claim waiting to happen. There are large Argentinian flags everywhere and many of the staff here are military. The Antarctic treaty insists that there shall be no territorial claims but of course in years to come that may change. Everything here is well organised down to the recycling of waste which is all shipped back to Argentina so they are all very aware that the pristine nature of Antarctica must remain. This seems to contrast rather badly with the Royal Navy group that we met on Deception Island who did not seem to worry too much about disturbing the Antarctic landscape.

In the afternoon we motored a few miles to Brown Bluff where we made a landing on the beach. One group went mountaineering, which included a walk over the glacier. The rest of us studied the Gentoo and Adelie penguins on the beach whilst trying to keep out of the way of the quite large population of Fur Seals. Most of the chicks are now almost fully grown and in many cases larger than the parents. The parents look slim and underfed while the chicks are fat and hungry. However, this will change over the next two weeks when the adults have finished moulting and leave for the ocean. The chicks will then have to fend for themselves. When the mountaineering group returns the zodiacs are called and we start the journey back to the ship and “warmth”, but not before a group of us insist on having our photo taken on an iceberg!



Esperanza Base



St Francis of Assisi



The padre



The school class of 2015

Sunday 19th February

Last night Arnut (who is in the bunk above me) celebrated his 33rd birthday. Chef made a cake and there were balloons and singing. Overnight we sailed to Devil's Island. The ship had to drive through sea ice and at one stage came to a complete stop. When we woke up this morning we were in a bay surrounded by icebergs and growlers. We also saw a couple of tents on the shore. Not sure who the beach people were but they must have been petty cold.

Devil Island is a 128 ha, ice-free island about 2 km long, in the James Ross Island group near the north-eastern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. It lies in a small cove 1 km north of Vega Island, east of the Trinity Peninsula. It is characterized by several low hills rising to a maximum height of about 150 m.

We made a landing at around 09.30 and embarked on our daily hike. Today this involved climbing a scree slope up to a plateau and then descending the other side to a colony of Adelie penguins. Then we all walked in single file to the summit. Well I managed to get three quarters of the way up which I felt was quite good. The view from the top of the hill was stupendous, icebergs everywhere with a bit of open sea in between. Just being here feels very special.



Back on board we are all freezing cold and waiting for lunch. This afternoon we are heading for Snow Hill Island in Erebus and the Gulf of Terror. The water is full of sea ice and we make frequent stops to cut through the ice. We were to have made a landing at Herbert Sound but this proved not to be possible because of sea conditions. Herbert Sound is a sound in Antarctica extending from Cape Lachman and Keltie Head on the northwest to the narrows between The Naze and False Island Point on the southeast, separating Vega Island from James Ross Island and connecting Prince Gustav Channel with Erebus and Terror Gulf. On January 6, 1843 Captain James Clark Ross discovered a broad embayment east of the sound, which he named "Sidney Herbert Bay" after Sidney Herbert, First Secretary to the Admiralty. The sound proper was discovered and charted by the Swedish Antarctic Expedition, 1901-04, under Otto Nordenskiöld, who included it with the broad embayment under the name "Sidney Herbert Sound".

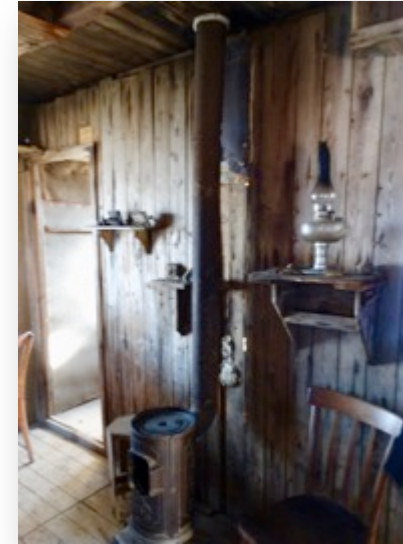


Monday 20th February

This morning when I wake up the sun is shining, the sky is blue and we are surrounded by bergs which glisten in the sun. Some of these are a beautiful blue colour and this is because the berg is formed on a glacier where a crevasse occurred and it was filled with rainwater. Apparently the light refracts in a different way on rainwater to seawater. Never mind the science the artistic result is fantastic.

We are anchored just off Snow Hill Island and this morning we are making a landing to visit an Antarctic historic site. On the beach here is the preserved hut in which six men from Otto Nordenskiöld Swedish expedition of 1901-04 spent two years. The hut is very well preserved and there are several artefacts displayed inside. This building is over 100 years old built of timber and seems to be incredibly well preserved. ~There is also a

collection of fossils outside the hut. There are strict rules in operation here. Only five people at a time are allowed in the hut and the route from the beach to the hut is also strictly controlled.



Normally the zodiac is moored alongside the ship when not in use but here because of the drifting icebergs it has to be kept suspended on davits and only lowered when it is needed.



The panoramic view from the shore is spectacular and subject of many photos. This afternoon we hope to make a landing on Ross island but this is very much dependant on the progress that we are able to make through the sea ice.

On this day, 20th February 1823, James Weddell a Scottish whaler and company, discover a vast body of water and they named King George IV. In 1900 the place is renamed as Weddell Sea. In his 1950 book *The White Continent*, historian Thomas R. Henry writes: "The Weddell Sea is, according to the testimony of all who have sailed through its berg-filled waters, the most treacherous and dismal region on Earth".

Snow Hill Island at latitude 64 21.628 South is the most Southerly point that we were able to reach. We now start sailing North again to warmer (comparatively) waters.

Tuesday 21st February

Last night we sailed through the ice to Paulet Island which reached at 03.30. The wind was blowing at 40 knots so it was quite a lively night with much breaking through sea ice. This morning we woke to bright sunshine in the lee of Paulet Island. The wind has decreased a bit, the sea temperature is 1.5 deg. The air temperature is 1deg but with wind chill it is about -5 deg. Paulet Island was discovered by a British expedition (1839–1843) under James Clark Ross and named by him for Captain the Right Honourable Lord George Paulet, Royal Navy.



After breakfast we prepared for a landing on the beach which whilst wet was relatively easy. We walked along the beach where normally there are about 100,000 Adelie penguins although most of thee have gone. There are Skuas flying overhead and we saw one attack a penguin who had become separated from the family. We also passed many fur seals as well as some

Wedell seals. There is also a nesting site for Antarctic Cormorants.

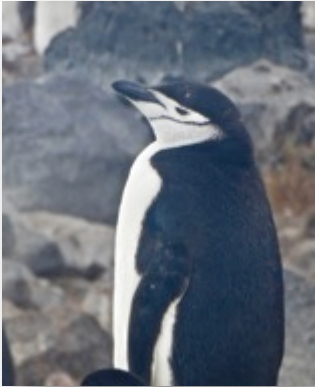
At the end of the beach we came to A stone hut built in February 1903 by shipwreck survivors, together with the grave of an expedition member, and the cairn built on the highest point of the island to draw the attention of rescuers, have been designated a Historic Site or Monument.

As we carried on we walked past a volcanic lake before a steep climb over uneven rocks, which leads to a pass offering spectacular views over the island and the coast. Descending back on t the beach we finally made our way back to the zodiac landing area and thence back to the ship



This is likely to be the last landing before South Georgia in six or seven day's time. Our first landfall was due to be Elephant Island but the wind is in the North running at 12 knots, so dead on the nose. Plan B is to head across the Bransfield Straits and make for Penguin Island off the South Shetland Islands. This will be an overnight trip and there is a possibility of a landing tomorrow morning on the island where there is a colony of Chin Strap penguins. There is also a path leading up to the volcano crater.

Wednesday 22nd February



Today after breakfast we made a landing on Penguin Island. Penguin Island was sighted in January 1820 by a British expedition under Edward Bransfield, and so named by him because penguins occupied the shores of the island. We walked to the top of the lower crater from where there is a good view. In the distance you can hear the ice breaking off from the glacier. A bit further on is a large colony of Chinstrap penguins, which you can smell from a distance. After lunch we set sail for Elephant Island. At first we have to motor as the wind is right on the nose but towards the evening the wind veers a bit and sails are put up.



This evening we celebrated Henk's 68th birthday. He is also in my cabin. I think that there will be a few more birthdays before we reach Capetown.

Thursday 23rd February

After an overnight sail we have reached Elephant Island this morning. The options here are a landing if conditions are suitable or a drive by in the zodiacs. The area to explore on shore is very small. It is the spot where Shackleton's men spent four months waiting for rescue after Shackleton and two others sailed in an open boat for South Georgia. This took them ten days in atrocious weather at the end of which they spent 30 hours climbing over 2000ft peaks to reach the whaling station on the North coast. This trek was re-created in 2008 by professional mountaineers who took three days with all modern equipment to do the same trek. After lunch Jordi, our guide went on a scout but reported back that there was too much well to make a landing. So instead we had a zodiac cruise lasting half an hour so we were able to see a bit of the shore including the monument on the beach. Great surprise this is not a monument to Shackleton but rather to the Chilean navy captain who carried out the rescue. Apparently Shackleton is not mentioned on the monument. Still one does wonder how many people travel to see a monument in such a remote and inaccessible place!



This afternoon we set out for South Georgia and the watch system starts again. This time, to my frustration I am in day watch, which the doctor tells me, is due to my diabetic condition. I do not understand this as I have stood many night watches in the past and suffered no ill effects, but apparently these are the rules. This part of our journey is likely to take seven days. This evening we were shown a re-mastered copy of a video taken by a sailor on the Pekin which was a four masted fully rigged ship on voyage to Valparaiso. Amazing footage which showed clearly what a dangerous job was sailing before the introduction of safety equipment,

Thursday 24th February

Finally discovered my duties on day watch. These are to work with whatever watch is on duty during the day. This morning it was Red watch and I did my turn on look out duty. Before the watch started some fin whales were sighted on the starboard quarter. They were quite some distance away and were quite difficult to spot as their colour merges with the sea. I did manage to get one or two not very good photos.

Whaling aside. Lecture by Annuka

Historic whaling: Whaling dates back to 17th Century when the Dutch at Spitzbergen practised it. The Basques also were involved in whaling as far afield as Iceland where some of them settled. They mostly hunted then Right whale for it's bone, quality oil and baleen plates (used as springs).

The Moby Dick era of the 1850's saw sperm whale being hunted from rowing boats in the Southern oceans. Sperm whales eat mostly squid, which they Hoover up from the seabed. At this point whaling became very efficient and at one point it was thought that the North Atlantic stock had become extinct.

The 1890's saw Norwegian and Scottish expeditions to the Southern Ocean to find Right whales. This eventually brought on the near of the land based whaling station where processing was easier. Larsen started the first land station in South Georgia in 1904. Svend Foyn invented the grenade harpoon gun. After killing the whale carcass was filled with air so that it could be towed floating to the processing station or alternatively to a factory ship. All this of course had a devastating effect on the whale population.

Modern whaling: Initially there was no regulation in international waters and whales could be processed at the rate of one per hour. By the 1940's there were thought to be only 3-400 whales left in Antarctica. 1946 saw the International Convention for Regulation of Whaling (IWC12946). Subsequently grenade harpoons were banned in 1980-82 and catch limits set to zero in 1985-86. Despite this numbers killed since 1985: Japan 20,000, Norway 11,000, and Denmark 5,000. Japan objected to the moratorium but carried on with "scientific" whaling. Iceland also objected but re-joined in 2002.

Today the only whaling permitted is either scientific or aboriginal. Aboriginal whaling is carried on by small aboriginal groups in traditional ways and involves only small numbers of whales. More importantly economics and taste play a bigger part and there is now much less demand for whale meat. Slowly stocks are recovering and the sperm whale is no longer and endangered species.

Today we have sailed 139 miles on our course to South Georgia although because of wind and current we actually sailed 154 miles. 540 miles to go. We are sailing in The Scotia Sea, which was named in 1932 after the *Scotia*, the expedition ship used in these waters by the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition (1902-04) under William S. Bruce. Sir Ernest Shackleton and five others made the most famous traverse of this frigid sea in 1916 in the adapted lifeboat *James Caird* when they left Elephant Island and reached South Georgia two weeks later.

Friday 25th February

This morning we had a lecture from Eduardo about the partial solar eclipse, which is going to take place tomorrow. We are told that over the next thousand years or so as the moon becomes more distant from the earth there will be less eclipses. If the clouds clear tomorrow we hope to be able to see the eclipse at some point during the two-hour window when it will be visible.

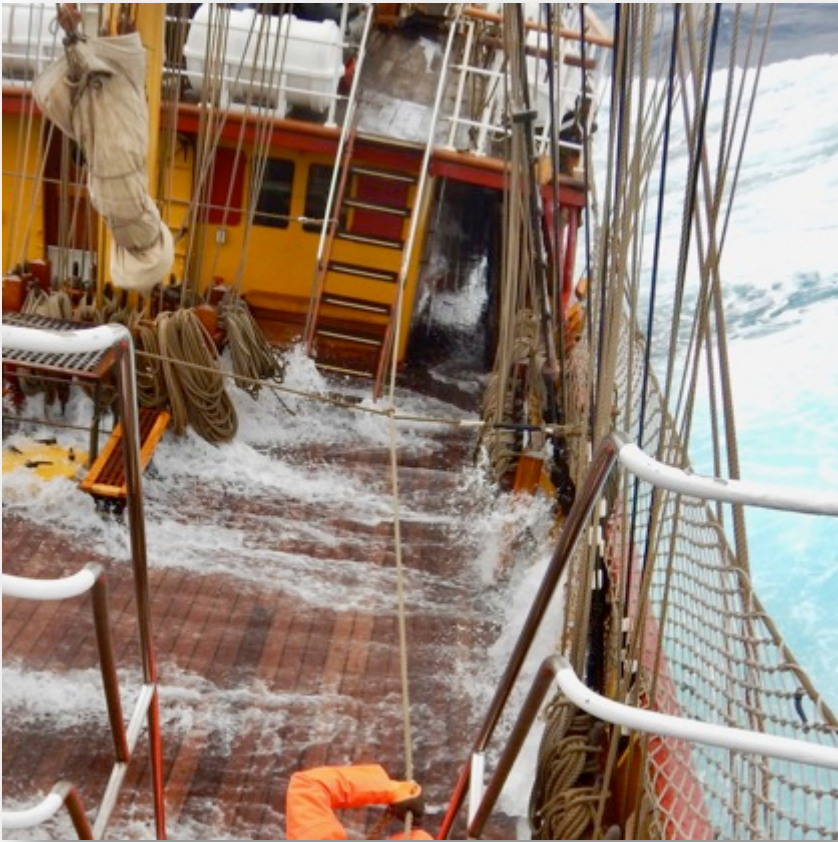
At 14.03 this afternoon the cry went up “Man overboard!” and so started our man overboard drill (MOB). Within five minutes all the sails had been lowered and the engines started. At 8 mins we were within 1 cable length (230metres) of the drowning man. At 9 mins Jordi, dressed in wet suit, was in the water approaching the casualty and 13 mins after the alarm went off Jordi was back on deck with the casualty. The water temperature today is 3degC, just about survivable for that length of time.



In the last 24 hours we have sailed 142 miles, so only 400 miles to South Georgia. Tonight the wind is set to increase to 35 knots which should give us a better speed of around 8-10 knots compared to the 3-5 knots we have been making for most of today

Sunday 26th February

During the night and this morning the wind speed increased to 35 knots, gusting 40 (Force 8-9) so sleeping quite difficult with a heel of 30deg in each direction. We had rope work instruction this morning and I am pleased to say that I was able to do most of the knots, which were demonstrated including bowline, rolling hitch and reef knot. I took over from Annette on look out duty at 10.30 because she was feeling unwell. Still very windy but managed to get a few good photos of the sea breaking over the waist of the ship. At about midday the clouds parted sufficiently to allow a small view of the partial eclipse, which Edwardo had told us about yesterday.



Monday 27th February

And so we sailed on towards South Georgia. With fresh winds gusting 35 knots we were hoping to arrive a day early. However, this was not to be. In the afternoon the wind dropped to 10 knots. By 8 o'clock we had made 184 miles in then last 24 hours which left us with 34 miles to go.

Last night all the windows in the deckhouse were blacked out to prevent sea birds from lying into the ship. Already two nights ago a Prion flew into the rigging and was rescued by our captain who kept it in his cabin overnight to be released unharmed the next day.



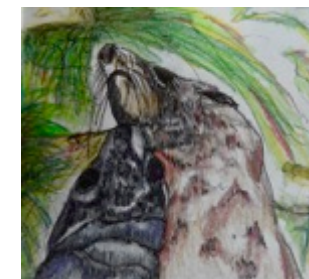
Tuesday 28th February

Last night midnight became 01.00 as we changed from Argentina time to South Georgia time. This morning we woke up in Elsehul bay on the northern coast of South Georgia, the first land we have seen for seven days. We made a landing here where we had our first meeting with the king penguin who is a beautiful bird and rather larger than the Gentoo and chinstraps that we had seen in the Antarctic. Although



the same family and at first sight

very similar to other penguins they are very different in that they do not build nests but nurse the egg on their feet till it hatches. They also have a much longer beak and a beautiful yellow collar. The beach at Elsehul they share with hundreds of fur seal pups with their mothers. The males we have already seen in Antarctica where they go after the pups are born. Both penguins and pups are very curious and apparently not afraid of humans although we have been warned to keep our distance from the mothers. They have sharp teeth and a bite from a seal it seems usually goes sceptic. Nevertheless they are very photogenic as is the landscape.



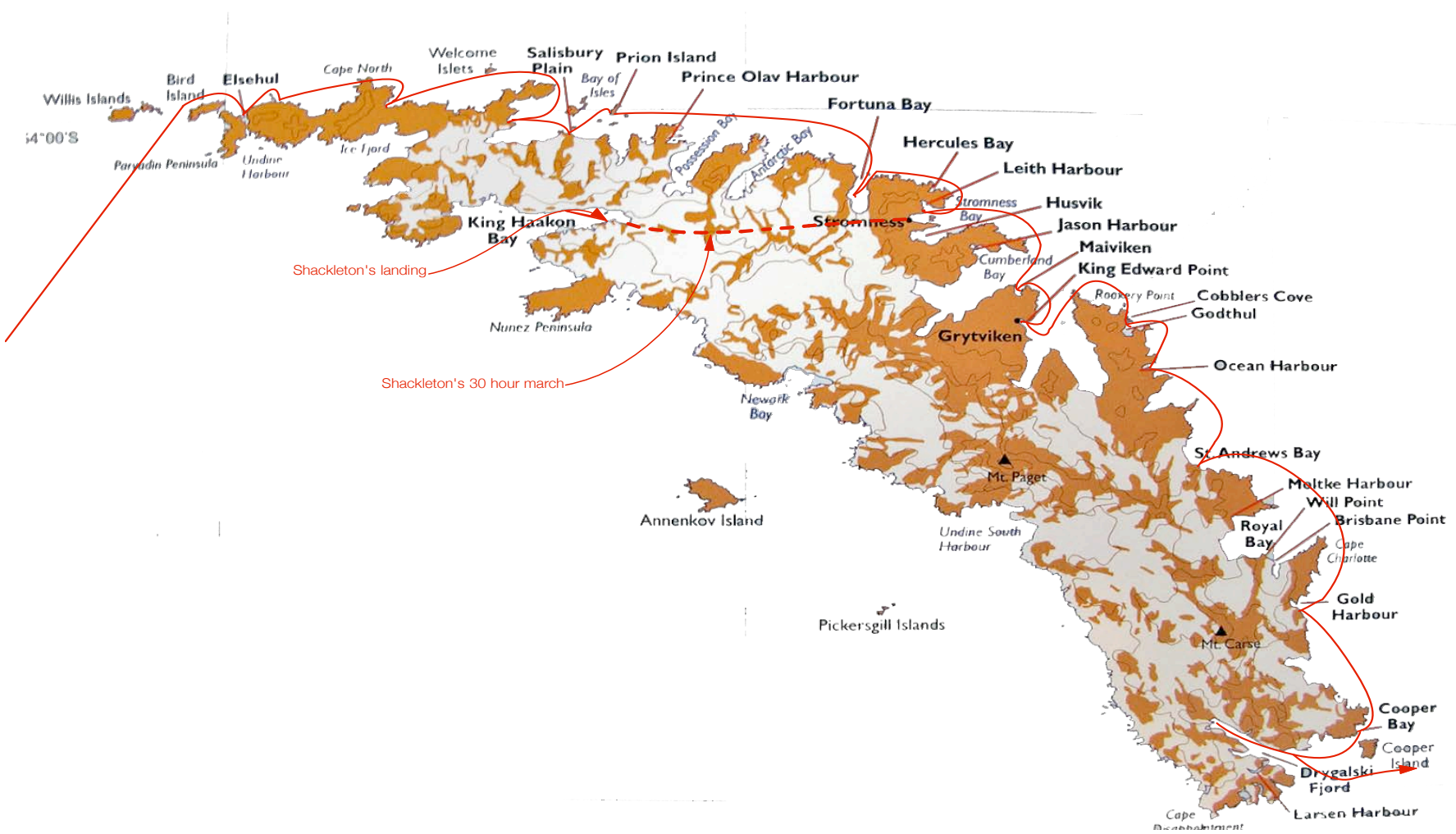
After we returned to the ship we motored 10 miles down the coast to Right Whale bay where there is a king penguin colony 100,000 strong. Altogether there are over 2 million king penguins on South Georgia. Unfortunately Right whale bay is very exposed and the wind whistles down the glacier to the sea. When we arrive the wind was gusting 50-60 knots, which made it impossible to effect a zodiac landing. These sudden very severe gusts are known as willihaws. We waited till after lunch but then it was decided that we should move on to our next anchorage at Rosetta bay.

Biodiversity security here is even more strict than in Antarctica and infringements can lead to a fine from the government. So we have to disinfect our boots before and after every landing. The main reason is that they have carried out an intensive eradication of rats on the island over the last few years because these imported rodents were destroying the wildlife by eating the eggs of the native seabirds. When we get to Grytviken it is likely that

We shall be inspected by authorities to check that we have observed the rules and have not imported any non-native seed or wildlife. Even bringing food ashore is prohibited.

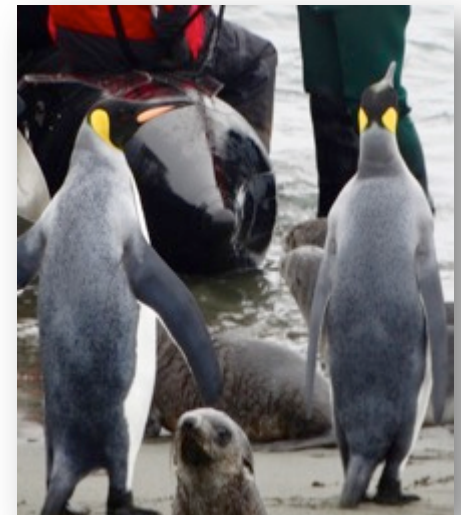
The Island of South Georgia is said to have been first sighted in 1675 by Anthony de la Roché, a London merchant, and was named Roche Island on a number of early maps. It was sighted by a commercial Spanish ship named León operating out of Saint-Malo on 28 June or 29 June 1756. Captain

James Cook circumnavigated the island in 1775 and made the first landing. He claimed the territory for the Kingdom of Great Britain, and named it "the Isle of Georgia" in honour of King George III. British arrangements for the government of South Georgia were first established under the 1843 British Letters Patent.



Wednesday 1st March

Last night we anchored in Rosetta bay and in the morning we motored across the bay to Salisbury Plain where we made a landing. There are no tanks here but there are one or two penguins. In fact there are over 200,000 king penguins. Seen from a distance the colony looks like one solid mass of penguins (or possibly a political demonstration!). The sight is really quite awe-inspiring. Here we find nesting birds, birds with chicks and older chicks who are already moulting. Before we left the ship the penguins swam out to investigate the ship and when we reached the shore they were waiting for us. They have little or no fear of humans. Their biggest predators on land are the Skuas which are constantly hovering over the colony looking for unguarded eggs or chicks. In the sea they can be eaten by elephant or leopard seals. Amongst the thousands of King penguins we spotted a single lonely Macaroni penguin who really should not have been there. One feels very privileged to be in this place and to see the sights that we have seen.



A quarter of a million king penguins waiting to say hello!

This afternoon we landed on Prion Island. The wind is almost non-existent but in return we have a snowstorm. We came here to see the nesting sites of the Wandering Albatross. We saw about 8 or 9 of these enormous birds with a wingspan of 3.5 metres. We had hoped to see them use the runway on the island to take off but in this we were disappointed. The beach is also full of fur seals some of whom can be quite nasty. However, if you bang two stones together this apparently mimics the sound of the Orca and they run away.

Prion Island is an island 2.4 km (1.5 mi) north-northeast of Luck Point, lying in the Bay of Isles, South Georgia. It was charted in 1912-13 by Robert Cushman Murphy, American naturalist aboard the brig Daisy, and so named because he observed prions on the island.

After returning to the ship we motored the few miles to Prince Olaf Harbour in Possession Bay where we spend the night.

Thursday 2nd March

Last night we anchored in Prince Olaf harbour and this morning we made a landing to visit the old whaling station which unfortunately you can only see from a distance because it is a dangerous structure and there is also a danger of asbestos, so we climbed a rocky path to a height of 200 metres to get an overall view of the whaling station which dates from 1912 and was finally closed down in the 1960's. In 1919 the station was sold to Unilever and later to Christian Salvesson. From the zodiac we were able to see the wreck of the Brutus, which sank in Table Bay, Capetown, was salvaged and towed to South Georgia where it served the whaling station as a coal store.

After lunch we motored around the headland in Possession Bay, which is apparently where Cooke took possession of the island on behalf of King George III. We made a landing here and made a 3-mile hike over fairly easy ground but with many fairly angry fur seals. Apart from a few isolated king penguins I spied and albino fur seal which looked quite strange amongst all the regular ones.

Friday 3rd March

Arrived Fortuna Bay round 08.00 after rather rough sail. Situation: thick fog. After an hour it is decided to abandon the Shackleton walk and we set sail for Stromness in 40 knot winds. Stromness Bay, It was probably first seen in 1775 by Captain James Cook, and named in about 1912, presumably by Norwegian whalers who frequented its harbours. Its historical significance is that it represents the destination of Ernest Shackleton's



epic rescue journey in 1916. During our sail Edwardo gave us a fascinating insight into the life of Shackleton who is buried at Grytviken where we are due to visit tomorrow,

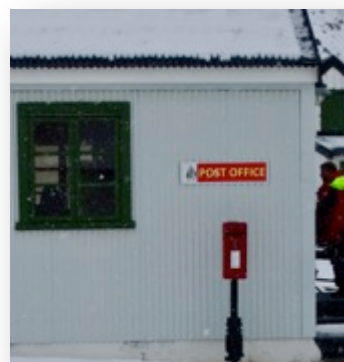
Sailing to Stromness temporarily abandoned because of adverse conditions and we anchored opposite the abandoned whaling station at Husvik to await an improvement in the weather. With the wind running at 40 knots the ship heels over quite a lot and sitting below one can look out through the portholes, which are roughly 30 cm above the waterline. In this weather they can be as much as 1m underwater. What is surprising is that looking through the water to the surface is the incredible clarity of the water, far clearer than the waters around the UK.

Saturday 4th March

Today we arrived at Grytviken to be greeted by two Harbour patrol vessels. Several staff from the research station came on board at Maiviken to join us for the sail to Grytviken. Amongst them were the curator of the museum and two assistants plus several builders who are there carrying out maintenance work. We had a talk from Sarah about the work of the South Georgia Heritage Trust, which has been managing the rat eradication programme.



Before disembarking at Grytviken our boots and clothes were inspected by a South Georgia Government official. The rules here are very strict and once landed we were told not to put our rucksacks on the ground for fear of contamination. First stop after we landed was a visit to Shackleton's grave where we all toasted the great man with a glass of whisky. This is apparently a Europa tradition. After this we had a guided tour of the old whaling station, which although not complete has been cleaned up and restored for viewing. It makes one appreciate what a massive industry whaling was. The machinery that we saw is very reminiscent of really heavy industry with great mechanised cookers and sawing plants for cutting the bones. A good flenser could process a whale in 20 mins, remembering that a whale can weigh up to 40 tons.



I made a visit to the post office where I bought cards and stamps only to discover that the next collection is on 3rd April! Then a visit to the museum that was fascinating and included displays from all the different periods including a display from the Argentinian invasion of 1982. There were of course displays devoted to Shackleton and Larson as well.

As with other places there are hundreds of seal pups who are very inquisitive and sometimes more aggressive. It seems that the shore staff are told not to fraternise with the seals since some years back a young woman was dragged below the surface and killed by a leopard seal. The leopard seal is quite large and is the only serious meat eater. It normally feeds on penguin and krill

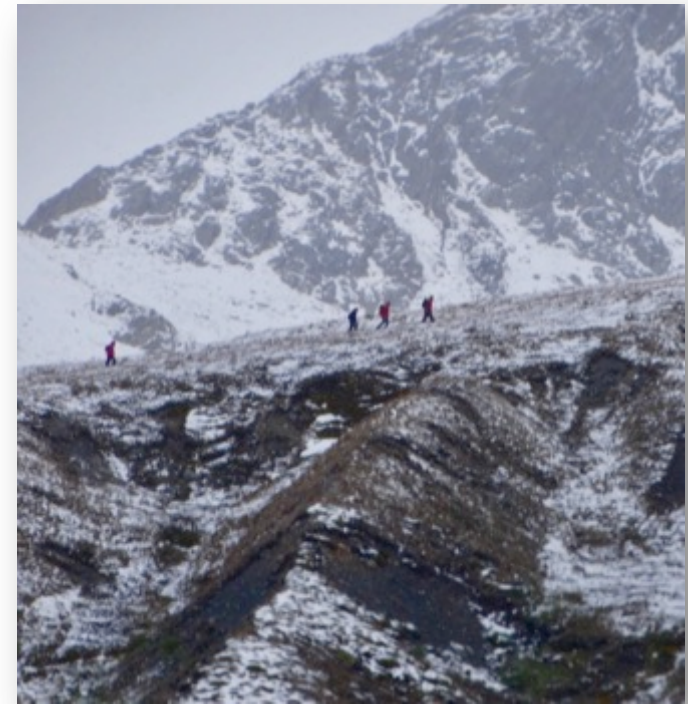
The days terminated in a seasonal barbecue on board. An awning has been erected on the main deck in order to keep out the snow, which at this stage is quite heavy. A fun evening to which guests from ashore were invited. Party ended around midnight although I was asleep before then!



Sunday 5th March

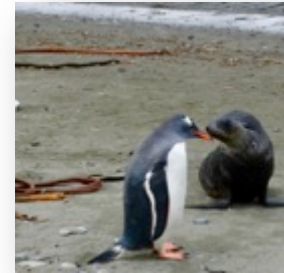
Early this morning the ship moved to Cobblers cove where those who enjoy mountaineering went to see a large colony of macaroni penguins. . Cobblers cove is a beautiful but small setting. It is not possible to anchor there, as there is not enough room for the anchor to swing, so it is a question of doing a marine three-point turn. Eric admitted that at one stage he thought the rudder had grounded!

So out of Cobblers Cove and on to Godthul, which means God Haven in Norwegian. The name was given by Norwegian whalers early in 1910's. Cobblers Cove has a large Macaroni Penguin colony called Rookery Point. Here the rest of us landed and took a fairly steep climb through the tussock grass to see the lake where there should have been a colony of Gentoo penguins. Unfortunately they seemed to have gone on holiday when we got there. Godthul, like most of the bays was a whaling station but one with a difference in that there was little infrastructure on shore as the processing was carried out on a factory ship moored in the bay. One side effect of this is that the beach is now littered with whalebones. Not much in the way of vegetation but we did find a lone dandelion



This afternoon we are in Ocean bay where the main attraction is the wreck of the bark Bayard which was wrecked in the same year that Europa was built 1912. She was built in Liverpool in 1868 67m and 1,028 tons. On 6th May 1885 she hit an iceberg, lost her stern, bowsprit, foremast but reached her destination St Pierre leaking badly. She later became a coaling station in South Georgia. In 1911 she lost her mooring in a severe gale and ran aground on rocks in Ocean Harbour where she remains today, a breeding site for blue-eyed shags. We cruised around the Bayard to take photos before landing on the beach. The Bayard, a wreck that is still an almost complete ship makes a wonderful breeding place for the pretty blue-eyed shags. Getting close to the Bayard is in itself a problem as it is surrounded by kelp, which is constantly caught in the propeller of the outboard. Some of the strands can be as much as 40 metres long. The beach where we land is unusual in that there are no restricted areas and we are free to roam wherever we choose. Like all beaches which were former whaling stations there is an abundance of whalebones scattered on the ground. Again like other beaches there are huge numbers of fur seal pups whose only ambition seems to be to play with humans. It is also a relax area for elephant seal bulls and their harems. In short supply are penguins. There are a few Gentoo and the odd King penguin but bird life flourishes. Here I have seen giant petrels, Skuas and the pipit which is the only native land bird in South Georgia. It is what one might describe as an l.b.j (little brown job) but nevertheless very pretty. There is also a very small cemetery on the hillside containing about half a dozen unnamed graves. These are apparently graves of very early sealers and date to the early 1800's. A group of hardy hikers followed Jordi on yet another mountain trek.

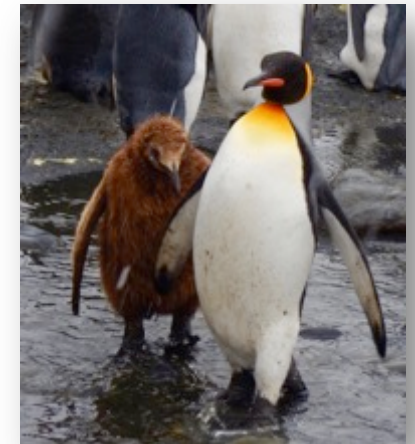




Monday 6th March



Last night we were given a briefing by Jordi on today's landing at St Andrew Bay. "It will be a wet landing as there is usually a big swell on the beach and to get to the largest King penguin colony we have to cross a river which could be waist deep and then climb a moraine to get a good view of the colony." We arrived at St Andrew Bay at around 08.00 to find a dead flat sea with no swell and the river was only ankle deep (but fast running). Once ashore it started snowing heavily and so we tramped through virgin snow for about a kilometre where we were greeted with the sight of over half a million King penguins. The noise is quite deafening but every mother finds its chick through sound recognition which seems absolutely amazing when you listen to the cacophony of sound.





A second landing after lunch in Gold bay proved very productive with a multitude of wildlife. Right next to our landing site was a group of maybe two dozen elephant seals snorting and farting and generally looking like a moving jelly. The object of the exercise seemed to be to make sure that you were in the middle of the group and those on the edge of the group would try to climb over the others which always resulted in more snorting and some fighting.

Further along the beach was another colony of assorted King and Gentoo penguins. Because of the unusual breeding cycle of the King penguin the colony contained penguins on all shapes and sizes from eggs to small chicks to large chicks to adults. Always something happening whether it be a birth, a feeding or an attack by Skuas or Giant Petrels and fascinating to observe.



Tuesday 7th March



Our last day in South Georgia. This afternoon we sail for Tristan, ten days away if the wind is kind. Last night we stayed anchored quietly in Gold harbour and this morning we motored several miles down the coast to Cooper Bay. Unlike yesterday here the wind was gusting 35-40 knots which made for quite an exciting landing. Add to this almost blizzard conditions and you get the picture. Once ashore on a very small rocky beach we are faced with a forty minute climb through rocks and tussock grass to reach the colony of Macaroni penguins in the next bay. By the time I reached the colony my fingers were so cold I could hardly operate the camera. I did get some quite good shots of the Macaroni's and also the Giant Petrels and Skuas. The climb back down to the beach was just as difficult as the ascent and everyone was glad to see the zodiacs coming to take us back to the ship.

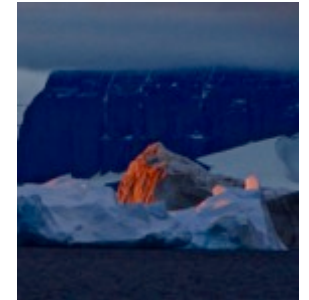
This afternoon there is no landing but the ship is going to cruise Drygalski Fjord. Drygalski Fjord is named after Erich von Drygalski a German geologist. The name was given in his honour by Wilhelm Flichner during his visit to South Georgia between 1911-1912. At the entrance to the fjord the sea mist was so thick that we could not see both sides at once but as we cruised upstream the mist lifted a bit and an amazing panorama of ice and snow presented itself enhanced by the massive sound effects of pieces of the glacier breaking off and falling into the water to join other bergy bits. Then the ship turned around as we left South Georgia for the last time and began the ten day sail to Tristan da Cunha.



This evening after the 8 o'clock briefing the results of the Europa photo competition were announced. There are categories for penguins, other animals, people, Shackleton related and icebergs. To my great surprise I won the prize for the iceberg category with a photo of the setting sun giving a golden glow on an iceberg. The prize was a bottle of wine. Watches start again this evening and as before I am on day watch but this time have made sure that I am written into the daytime watches so that I don't feel like a spare part.

Wednesday 8th March / Thursday 9th March

The sea is unexpectedly calm today although Eric our captain says that by tomorrow we shall have more wind than we need albeit from the wrong direction. This afternoon the fire alarm bell rang at 14.00 for a fire drill. We all mustered on the main deck and two crew members donned fire fighting gear to rescue Jordi from the engine room (what was he doing there?). After examination by the ship's doctor he got up looking no worse for his experience. Fire drill was followed by Edwardo's fascinating lecture on navigation and the gravitational anomalies, which mean that the North and South magnetic poles are not directly opposite each other.



Friday 10th March

Today the wind is from the East which has meant steering a diversionary course of 010deg. We have been close hauled all day with 40 knot wind which has made for an uncomfortable passage. Most of the time the ship has been heeling at 25-30deg. The direction of the wind is due to change to the North West tomorrow that means that we shall be able to resume our course to Tristan da Cunha. Today we also passed through the convergence zone. At 11.00 the sea temperature was 3 deg but by 15.00 the sea temperature had risen to 7 deg.

Saturday 11th March

Early this morning the engine was switched off and we have been sailing ever since. The wind speed has gradually risen to 35 knots, gusting 40 with a big swell and 4-5metre waves. Provided we don't have any more set backs the captain says we should make Tristan by Friday. The lecture series continues and today Peter gave a lecture on Darwin. Last night I showed my video entitled last of the Cape Horners.



Sunday 12th March –Tuesday 14th March

Wind varies between nil and 35 knots as we progress through the current low. The engine is still in use for some of the time. Skipper says we now need an average of 6.5 knots to reach Tristan in time.

Sleeping at 30 degrees: This is the normal angle of heel when the wind is blowing 30 knots or more. The bunk has a small lip on the inner edge and my bunk is on the port side so when we are on the port tack gravity pushes me against this lip. Sometimes the swell is unpredictable and suddenly the heel might reach 35 degrees with a bump. This involves then hanging on to the side of the bunk like grim death to avoid falling out and sustaining a nasty injury. Likewise getting out of bed in the morning follows a set procedure. 1) Sit on side of bunk (hanging on for dear life) 2) Wait for heel to lessen. 3) Stand up and hold on before moving.....One hand for the ship and one hand for yourself.

This morning the skipper ordered the ship to be hove to which means that the ship is only moving sideways at a slow rate. This was because up till then even with a 35 knot wind we were only making 4 knots. Skipper thought we may have caught something on the propellers. Jordi was dressed in a wet suit and sent over the side attached by an umbilical rope. Having swum round both sides of the ship his report came back "Nada!". So the conclusion is drawn that we are suffering from an adverse current. So we sail on with increasing wind gusting to 45 knots and now giving us a speed of 7-8 knots.



13.0 Wind now around 35 knots but there have been gusts up to 67 knots which is hurricane force and 11-12 knots SOG. Max recorded heel is now 60 degrees. Helming is now in the hands of the crew only. Wolfgang is the first casualty of the weather. He slid across the deckhouse and cracked the back of his head. The doctor looked after him and he now looks like a hero with a full head bandage. For supper we had apple pie to respect the celebration of PI day. Pi Day is an annual celebration of the [mathematical constant \$\pi\$ \(pi\)](#). Pi Day is observed on March 14 (3/14 in the month/day date format) since 3, 1, and 4 are the first three [significant digits](#) of π . The storm lasted but a few hours but was certainly the most memorable experience of this leg. One hand for the ship, one hand for yourself. Never were truer words said. At times it felt as if the ship would go right over. Two people were needed on the helm at all times and without a safety harness there would be a strong likelihood of being swept over board. The main deck was constantly under water with a boiling sea flooding over the rail. But we all survived!

And so we sailed on with decreasing winds until on Friday with only 100 of the 1200 miles left we were obliged to motor the last few miles and arrived at Tristan at 05.00 on Saturday 18th March.

Saturday 18th March.

We awoke to a view of Edinburgh of the Seven Seas with the volcano rearing up into the clouds behind the Settlement (as it is more commonly known). There is apparently always a swell here and yesterday a French cruise liner was able to land for only 2 hours before it had to leave. We had better luck and by 09.00 we were all ashore after a very wet and lumpy ride in the zodiac. We were met by Dawn from the tourist office who is a descendant of one of the original seven families of settlers.

First impressions are that despite the volcanic almost black rock the landscape is pleasantly green. The total permanent population of 370 live a hard but utopian life where money has very little meaning and equality reigns supreme, a form of original communism which works because the population is so small. There are some paid jobs such as working in the fish factory where fresh lobsters are processed and exported all over the world (80% of the island's income comes from this factory). There is a small supermarket where goods can be paid for or bartered. There is a post office where stamps are collector's items and letters take several months to arrive at their destination. The post office incorporates a café and gift shop.

We went on a tour of the Settlement where one of our guides was a young man who teaches geography at the school. He comes from London and is there on a six month contract. Right next to the Settlement is the site of the 1961 volcano, which actually destroyed only one house despite the entire population being evacuated to England.

For lunch we had a fresh lobster sandwich at the café (cost £1.50) and watched some of our crew play a golf tournament on the 9-hole golf course which is shared with cows and chickens. In the middle of the course is a small hut which is the international nuclear proliferation monitoring station. Apparently in seismic terms this is the best place for it.

After a tour of the fish factory where at -27deg their freezer is far colder than anything we experienced in the Antarctic. A very interesting tour but when we finished there we were told that we had to leave as the swell was rising and the harbour would soon be closed. I was in the first zodiac away and no sooner was it pointing in the right direction than an enormous wave started across the harbour entrance so we had to quickly reverse. In all a very rough ride but expertly guided by the crew. Once alongside getting out was even trickier as the vertical distance between the deck and the zodiac varied from zero to 1.5m second to second, so timing was everything. Very exciting and I filmed the next zodiac unloading.

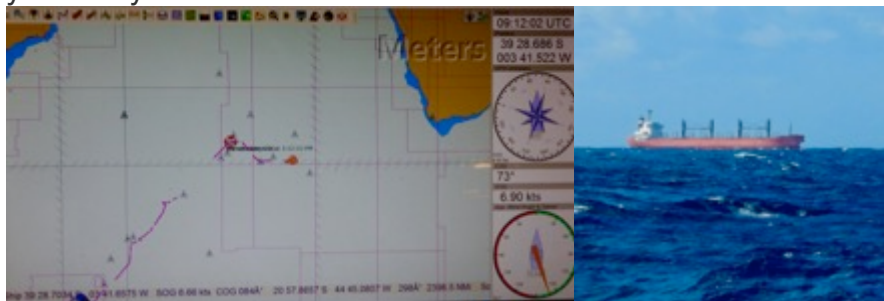
In the evening the crew organised an auction of various objects with all the money going to the rat eradication programme in South Georgia. It raised \$1375. We went to bed looking forward to a second day on the island.

Sunday 19th March

05.00 engines started, swell much increased so no landing and now we sail on to our final destination of Capetown where the ship is booked into the dry dock on 1st April. 1500 miles as the crow flies, but sailing South to find the right wind will add another 350 miles to the trip.

Monday 20th to Wednesday 22nd March

Today our journey continues. Last night we had a good wind and speeds of 11 knots were reached with big swells. This morning the wind has moderated and we are currently recording 6.5-7knots. We are entering an area of high pressure which means lack of wind but we hope for better wind by the weekend. ETA is still 31st March. A seamount is a mountain rising from the ocean seafloor that does not reach to the water's surface (sea level), and thus is not an island. Seamounts are typically formed from extinct volcanoes that rise abruptly and are usually found rising from the seafloor to 1,000–4,000 metres (3,300–13,100 ft) in height. They are defined by oceanographers as independent features that rise to at least 1,000 metres (3,281 ft) above the seafloor. We are crossing over the R.S.A. Seamount. Today also is the first day after the spring equinox which happened yesterday at 06:28 GMT.



This morning whilst I was on the helm we spotted the first ship that we had seen since leaving Ushuaia, a bright orange cargo ship looking as though it was heading for `South America. We are still over 1000 miles from Capetown

Thursday 23rd March to Sunday 26th March

Thursday was quiet and calm with no wind. This started to change on Friday and on Saturday we were doing 11.5 knots in a 35-knot wind (Force 7). A fairly constant 35 degree heel makes life on board very angular.

We are now nearing the end of our journey. For nearly two months all forty of us voyage crew have been locked up together. Quite a long time and we have all bonded quite well. The crew have been at pains to ensure that we are not bored and are always occupied. To this end we have had daily lectures on subjects as varied as whaling, oceanography, astronomy, navigation, Darwin, Shackleton etc in addition to courses on sail handling knots and meteorology. Tonight a singsong was organised in the deckhouse which was attended by all of us.

We are now roughly 500 miles from our destination in a high pressure area with failing winds have yesterday been pushed 240 miles by the last of a low pressure area. Despite this Eric our captain estimates that we shall arrive at Capetown a day ahead of schedule.

Monday 27th March

The wind has eased a little from last night and we are now running before a 15knot wind giving us 4-5 knots. Three studding sails have been set which helps in the light wind but makes steering more difficult since if you wander off course the studding sail start flapping. Today we sailed 125nautical miles which leaves us with 247 miles to Capetown, A noon sight was taken with the sextant which gave us a position of 36deg 43.5' South worked out as:

```
Height observed (sextant) .....+50°19.0'  
Index error .....-00°03.0'  
Dip correction .....-00°04.0'  
Solar Diameter.....+00°15.5'  
-----  
Height corrected.....+50°27.5'  
  
Calculation of the latitude:  
  
Latitude = Height corrected -90.00° +  
Sun's Declination  
  
Latitude = +50°27.5' -90.00° +02°27.5'  
  
Latitude = -36°43.5'  
  
GPS Latitude = -36°41.9'  
  
Error in measurement (difference between  
observed latitude and measured latitude  
by GPS) = 1.602' = 2.97 miles.
```



Tuesday 28th March

The new day brings more light winds giving us an average of 4 knots. Unexpectedly the wind veers to the South and increases to 10-20 knots pushing our speed up to 6-7 knots. At times the wind increases to over 20 knots and we are bowling along at 10 knots. We are now approaching the continental shelf when the ocean depth shallows from 5000 metres to 400 metres.

After the 8 o'clock briefing the winners of the second photo competition are announced. Following this the crew have a surprise for us all in the shape of a movie filmed on board the square rigger "Pamir", with the title "The Last Sailing Ships", released in 1930 under the direction of Heinrich Hauser. The movie was projected from the poop deck onto the Desmond sail under a starry sky.



The Pamir was a German four-masted steel barque and one of the Flying P-Liners, the famous sailing ships of the German shipping company F. Laeisz. She was the last commercial sailing ship to round Cape Horn, in 1949. Pamir was lost at sea during a storm off the Azores Islands on 21 September 1957. She was caught in Hurricane Carrie and sank off the Azores, with only six survivors rescued after an extensive search. Pamir was launched 29 July 1905 at the Blohm & Voess shipyard, Hamburg. She began her maiden voyage on Christmas Eve 1911 toward Cape Horn and the nitrate ports of Chile.

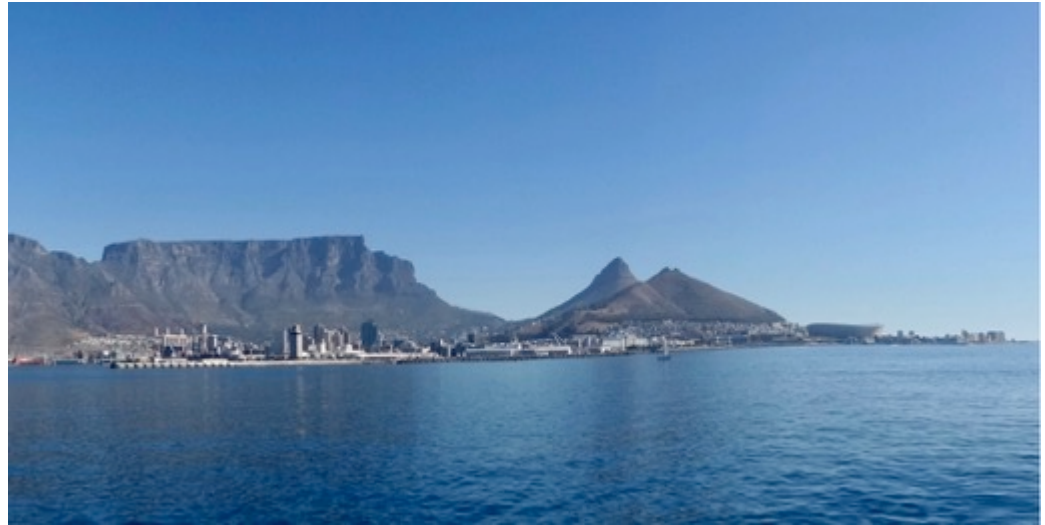
Class and type: four-masted steel barque used as nitrate carrier
Displacement: 6.180 t
Tonnage: 4.700 t
Length: 115 m (length overall), 97 m (length on deck)
Beam: 14.4 m
Height: 54 m (waterline to masthead truck)
Draft: 7.3 m
Depth: 8.5 m (depth moulded)
Depth of hold: 8.1 m
Decks: 2 continuous steel decks, poop, forecabin, and midship decks
Installed power: originally no auxiliary propulsion;
Since 1951: built-in sub diesel (~900 HP)
Sail plan: 34 sails: 18 square sails, 9 staysails, 4 foresails, 3 spanker sails
sail area: 4,600 m²
later on: 4,000 m²
Speed: 18 knots (33.34 km/h) under sail (6.4 kn with the engine installed after World War II)

Wednesday 29th March

The day dawned to the amazingly beautiful sight of the sun rising behind the Cape of Good Hope and a little later we had our first view of Table Mountain in the distance. From here you can almost smell Capetown.



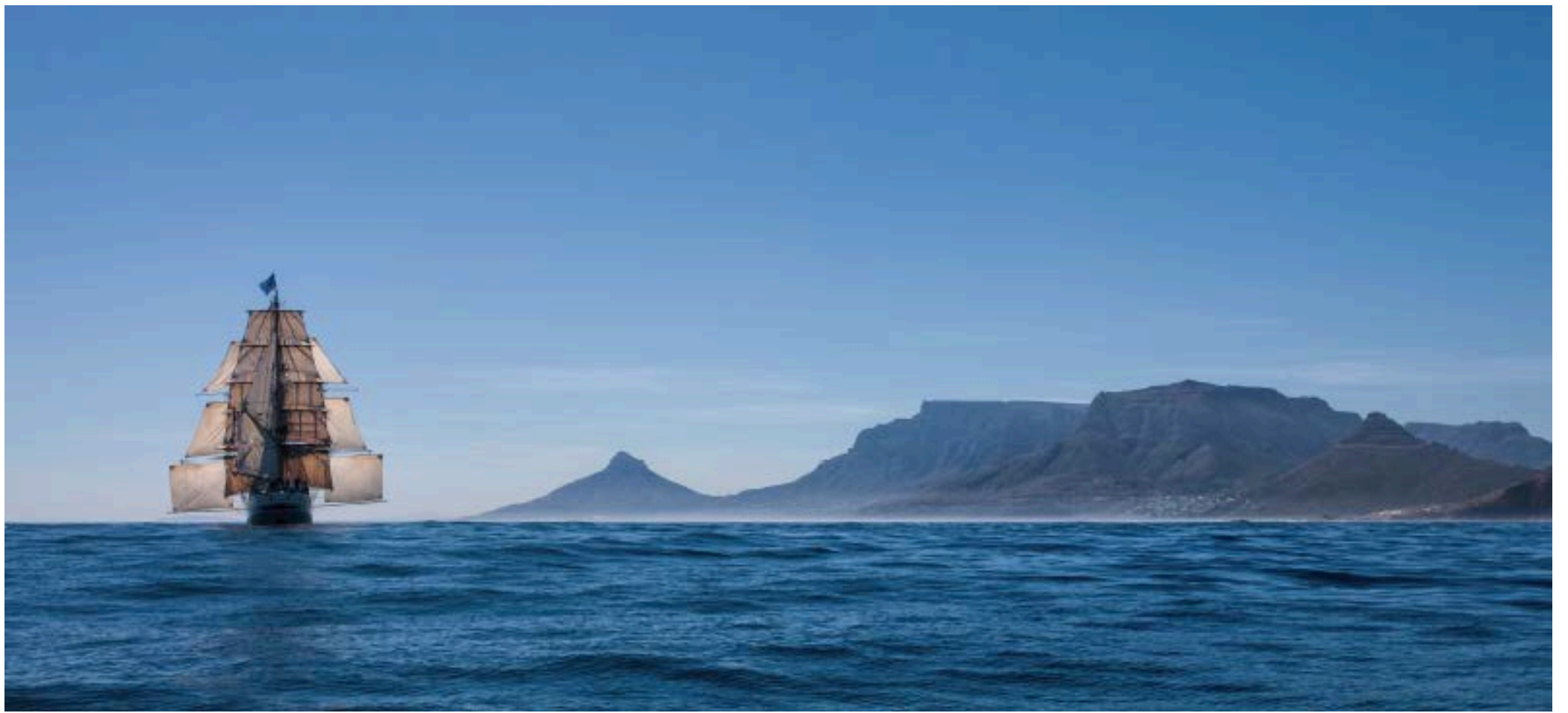
Cape of Good Hope at dawn



Capetown with Table Mountain rising above it.

As we made our way up the coast with the Benguela current the wind dropped and we glided along at 2-3 knots. This gave us all the opportunity to hitch a ride in Sloopy, the lifeboat, so that we could all come home with pictures of Europa under sail. This morning we were able to see gannets diving for fish as well as some visitors from Seal island who came out to investigate.

After finishing the photo-cruise around the ship all sails come down and many of us help pulling ropes and furling sails. Engines are turned on after a few days of progress under sail, and we approach the city and the jetty where we first do our moorings. We arrived there and tie the ship alongside around 17:00h under sunny skies and hot weather. Port formalities, paperwork and signing-in took a while. Once we had all queued to have our passport stamped the ship was able to re-locate to a berth on the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront where in the evening a farewell barbecue was organized. After the barbecue a live show was put on by us the voyage crew to say thank you to the permanent crew.



A few more photos.....



Doctor Jan van de Kuinder

Jelte Hibma, 2nd mate



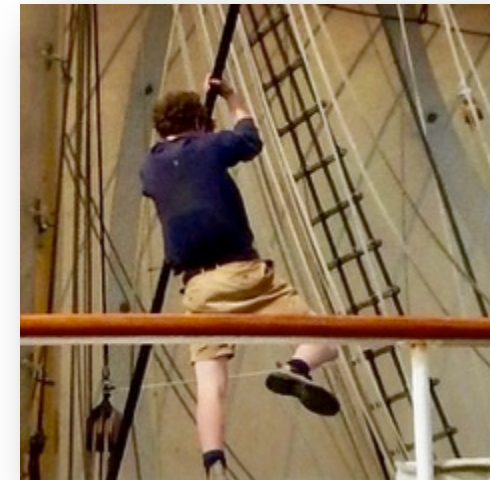
Elskarín Klarenbeek, 1st mate

Guides Jordi, Eduardo & Annukka



Captain Eric Kesteloo

Matt Morris, Bosun



Some faces from the voyage crew.....



Annette

Scott & Tsarzis



Kath & Arnut

Sue

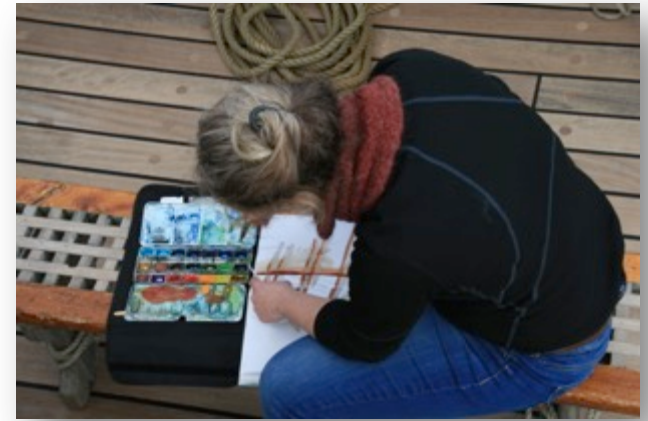


Stephan

Lewis

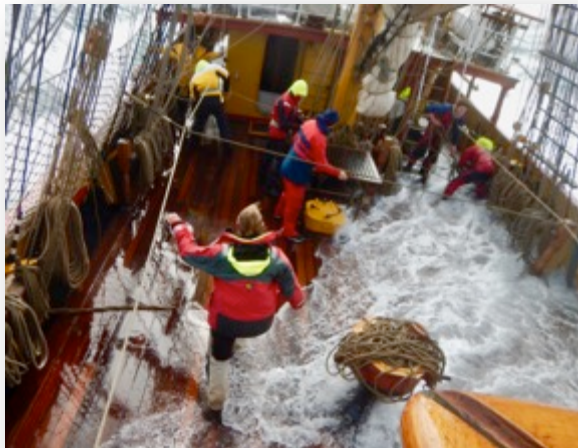


Sailing on a calm day





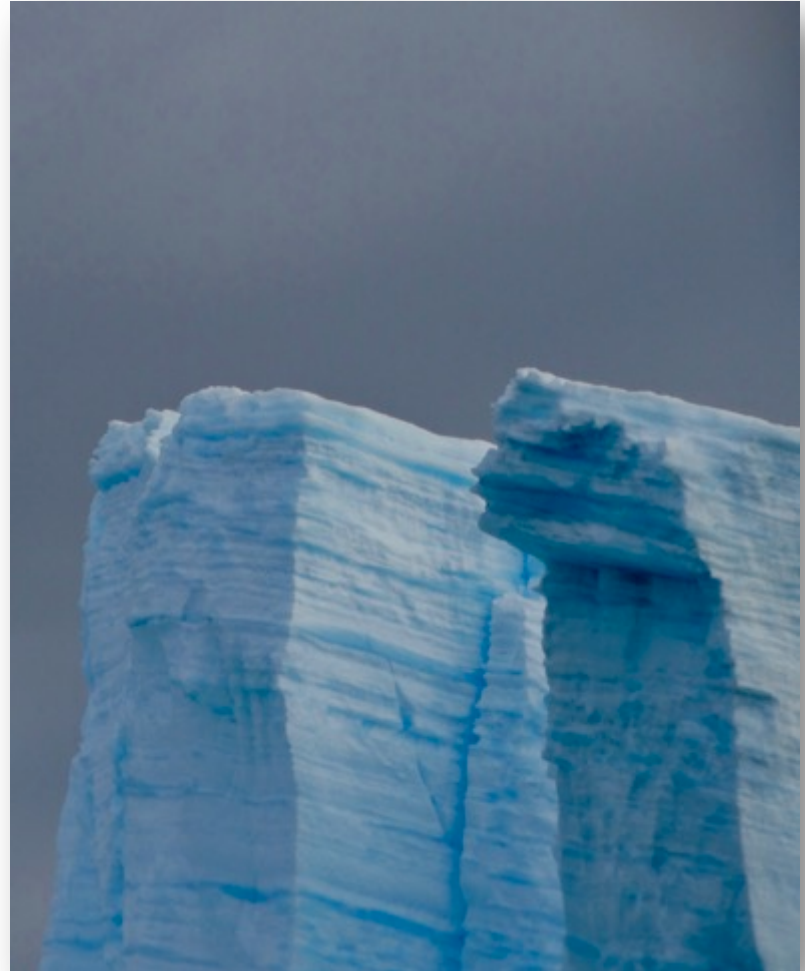
Sailing on a stormy day.....



.....can get very wet indeed

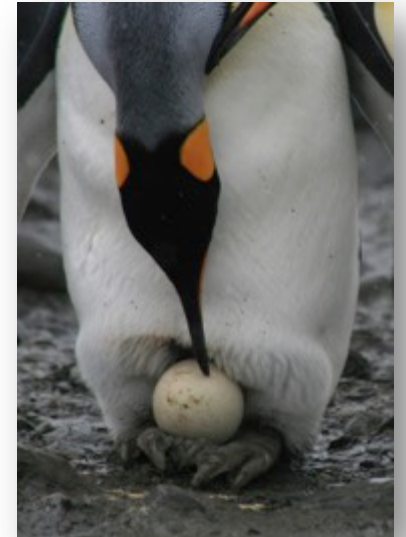


A few more icebergs

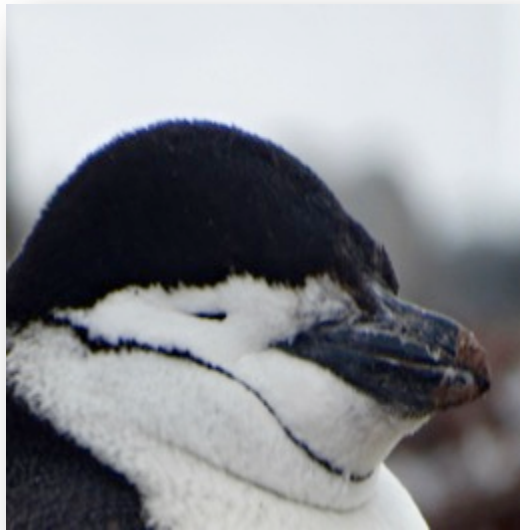




Penguins, seals and albatross.....



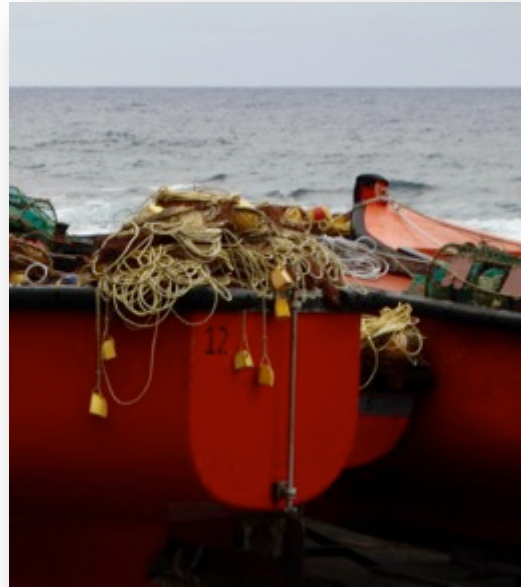








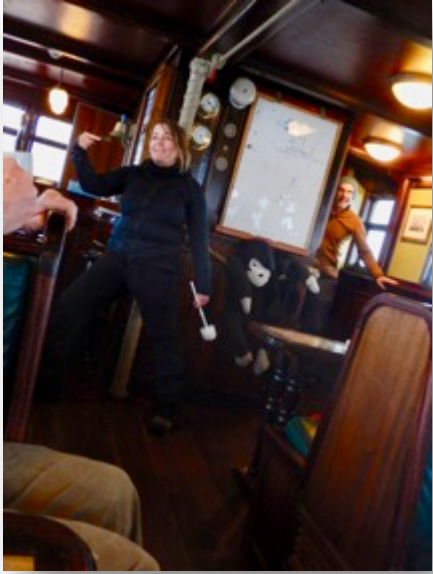
Tristan da Cunha, the most remote island on the planet.....





Life on board.....







Thank you Europa for carrying us safely for 5,479 miles. An unforgettable experience

