



BSes EXPEDITIONS
BRITISH SCHOOLS EXPLORING SOCIETY

British Schools Exploring Society – Svalbard Adventure Expedition Report **15 July – 19 August 2010**

The 2010 BSes Arctic Adventure expedition to Svalbard returned to the UK on 19 August. 48 Young Explorers and 22 leaders returned with rucksacks full of smelly, dirty clothes, wearing boots well worn and damaged, and with heads bulging with memories. Memories of walking attached to each other on a 50m rope, negotiating a route between the gaping crevasses that disappeared deep into the ice, always cautious, occasionally falling and arresting, only to return unscathed. Memories of walking on virgin snow to a summit, thence to sit undisturbed, alone, in the cold and magnificence of a view that few have had the privilege of absorbing, to return to the comfort of a tent pitched on hard black rock. Memories of watching the Sveabreen glacier, streaked black with grit, ripped with jagged gashes of turquoise, cold and bleak, noting when ice the size of a warehouse ripped free, and floated into the fjord. Memories of being bombed by Arctic Terns that then wheeled and soared to bomb again, whenever their pathetic nests were threatened. Memories of returning to base camp to sleep, eat and catch-up with friends, to perhaps speed lazily through the drifting ice bergs on a Zodiac, encountering a seal and buzzed by a curious Fulmer.



Deep friendships were forged in the proximity and trust of shared hardships and experiences, led competently by leaders who gave of their time, their experience and their wisdom. The science projects rose seamlessly from the adventure and the YEs encountered investigations that would give them an insight into the nature of the Arctic. They measured streams that flowed, fluctuating, from the glacial snouts. Collected snow, seemingly pristine and virgin, yet contaminated by the actions of those who have never heard of the Arctic. Collected and identified fossils from times past and recorded the movements of the Sveabreen, as it broke and crumbled, sank and drifted past base camp. All were involved with a retake photography project that identified the locations



of a scientist who visited exactly one century ago, who meticulously recorded his visit on film, and left a record for us to see, thence to stand and see the same, but different. For time had changed the location of the glaciers, moved the front of the ice away from the observer, but had scarcely eroded the shape of the land. That remained untouched by the actions of man, just by the force of nature.



The success of all leaders was measured by the expressions of spontaneous thanks from the YEs, by the absence of any minor let alone major injuries, save for beaten feet and aching shoulders; measured by their exhaustion when it was all over, asleep in the daylight that refused to leave. And when everyone had walked back into base camp, the weather turned, unexpectedly. A dead calm descended from the hills, and the clouds emptied inches of snow to remind all that this was the Arctic, that winter was starting, and that it was time to board the little boat, the Langoysen, and return to Longyearbyen. There to sit at table eating meat that needed cutting, to give a scientific presentation to the University staff, to relax at the expedition dinner and to enjoy the last Arctic hours of friends made for life. Five weeks had passed since those previously clean boots had tramped the halls of the departure lounge at Heathrow, and now it was time to return home and unload those memories to those who had cautiously said a farewell, and to attempt to explain the meaning of the word 'expedition'.

Trevor Clark
Chief Leader