

### Arctic 2014 – Greenland and Baffin Big Walls Expedition

This was another Tilman-type expedition, sailing and climbing from my Westerly 33ft sailing boat *Dodo's Delight*. It comprised two distinct phases joined by a sea passage across Davis Strait/Baffin Bay in between. It was a tough expedition because of the remote unforgiving nature of the terrain, and the conditions and weather encountered.

The 'Wild Bunch', my expert climbers, Nico and Oli Favresse, Sean Villaneuva and Ben Ditto, joined the boat in Aasiaat, west Greenland, in early July. We made our way north round to the Uummannaq region, the first area to be explored. It was known that there was a tendency for the rock to be loose in this area but a total of five extreme new routes were climbed here ranging from E3 to E6. The latter was particularly noteworthy for loose rock but a successful ascent was made all the same.

Good areas for bouldering were exploited and will also be recorded

A number of unrecorded anchorages were found which will be forwarded to the appropriate editors, and the Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation in general.

The ice was sticking tenaciously to the coast of Baffin round Clyde River and we had to wait. At last it seemed to be moving and we made the three day passage across to Baffin. We were surprised on the last day to encounter fields of pack ice 70 miles offshore. Obviously it was the fields of pack ice that had been hugging the shore moving out at last. We were able to weave through the floes and made our way to Clyde River to check in to Canada.

We were soon motoring on a calm day round to Sam Ford Fjord. This was hostile remote country with difficult anchorages and a lot of bad weather hindering the climbing, but four new extreme routes were made on the big walls of the area from E3 to E6, two of the routes being particularly noteworthy. All the routes here and in Gibbs Fjord were free ascents, onsight and using no aid, in an area where nearly all the previous routes had been made using aid.

It did not help that by now a drive shaft in our electric anchor winch had sheared. Because of the steep shores of the fjords we had to anchor in deeper depths than we were used to; it is not easy to pull up 40 metres of chain from depths of 10-15 metres by hand.

Next we went round to Gibbs Fjord, another area of magnificent rock sculpture, but it looked as if much of the rock was loose. However another classic free new route was made, *Walking the Plank*, in spite of sections being covered by snow in the cold conditions, and on excellent rock! We found better anchorages in this area.

The passage back to Sisimiut was not without incident, scooping up bits of ice which had broken off an iceberg when our fresh water supply ran out, and finishing in the rock strewn approach to Sisimiut in winds of 40-44 knots. The plan is to winter the boat at Sisimiut.

A tough but successful expedition.