

# IN THE WAKE OF ROALD AMUNDSEN

In June 1903, Roald Amundsen set out on his famous expedition through the Northwest Passage. A hundred years later, Knut Espen Solberg and his partner Camilla Grønneberg are sailing in the great discoverer's wake with the sailing ship Jotun Arctic.



Photo © Knut Espen Solberg



## Travelogue

29 September 2003

Since the departure from Norway we have worked our way northward and westward. Equipment, vessel and crew have all functioned well so far. The expedition has taken us past Shetland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

On Greenland we went to the early settlement of Herjolfsnes. In Norse times this was the chieftain's residence and, in the conditions of the time, a rich farm. Using sketches from the book "Land under the Pole Star" by Helge Ingstad, we found the ruins of several houses and a church. The houses were built of stone, with walls up to 1.5 metres thick. The entrances were narrow and long, to ensure minimal loss of heat.

We were sailing into a headwind up the west coast of Greenland, but the weather was excellent.

Our boat, the Jotun Arctic, is shaped like a walnut shell under the waterline. This type of construction is used a lot in vessels intended for sailing in ice-filled waters.

In other respects, the ice turned out to be a bigger problem than we had

anticipated. The plan was that we would spend the winter in Gjøahavn in Canada, just as Amundsen did. But heavy ice put paid to that. 300 nautical miles short of our goal we were forced to turn back. We have now found the place where we shall be spending the winter. The town is called Qeqertarsuaq and is situated off North Greenland. This is a small rural town where people still earn their living mainly from hunting and fishing.

One week after we decided to turn round, two vessels attempted to sail on. They're now ice-bound. There is a danger that they will be crushed by the tremendous ice forces and the crew will presumably have to be evacuated.

We followed the Norwegian rule of thumb for outdoor winter pursuits: There is no shame in turning back. That obviously applies up here as well, and includes the sea too!

*Best regards, Knut Espen Solberg on the Jotun Arctic*

A number of famous companies and research institutions are backing and supporting the expedition. The idea behind the expedition is to repeat all the research projects and investigations carried out by Amundsen on his trip, in order to form a picture of the changes that have taken place over the hundred years.

Much of the scientific activity is environmentally-based. Participants will collect the same type of organic materials as the Amundsen expedition collected. Comparison of the tests will give information about the development and distribution of heavy metals.

The expedition will also be collecting ice/snow and sediment samples, in order to support the analyses of the organic materials. Their planned return home is in summer 2005.