

## Sailing Polar Bear to Bergen, Norway. Jonny Moore

**The dates.** I was invited to join *Polar Bear* for some work experience between 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007

**The boat.** *Polar Bear* is a Challenge 72' sailing yacht, designed specifically for racing around the world against the winds and tides. Her hull and superstructure are made out



of ¼ inch steel, and her decks are ¼ inch stainless steel. Her mast is 90' from deck level and is aluminium. Her sail plan is a Bermuda cutter rig. Polar bear can accommodate 19 people however this would be very crowded and the usual number is 12.

*In Royal Quays Marina, North Shields*

**The crew.** There were 6 people on board for this leg from various backgrounds with a variety of sailing experience and 3 crew. I was by far the youngest the next being 23. The crew were split into three watches, with 1 member of crew on each watch. Each watch lasted for three hours and you were either on “on watch”, “standby” or “mother watch”. The three watches ran continuously round the clock, so your sleep pattern became 3 hours sleep, 6 hours awake.

The people who were “on watch” had to sail the boat, make all necessary sail changes, navigate, keep the batteries topped up with the generator and keep the log up to date.

Those on “standby” had no specific jobs and this time was normally used for sleeping, whilst those on “mother watch”

looked after all the domestic duties on board, i.e. cooking, cleaning, making drinks etc...



*Finding time for a quick hot-dog – breakfast*



**The preparations before we left.** When I arrived on Saturday, the boat was being stocked with food and the water tanks were being filled. One of my first jobs was to climb the mast and apply WD40 to the track which the mainsail runs up the mast on. A full rig check and sail check had to be undertaken as did a generator and main engine check.

*At the top of Polar Bear's 90' mast*

**The voyage.** On Saturday night the visibility offshore was down to about 50 meters due to fog so the Skippers Mark and Mike decided to spend the night in the marina. The following morning at 0600hrs, we filled the tanks with diesel and motored out of the harbour. We set sail and headed NNE towards the coast of Norway. Shortly after clearing the breakwater, we put up the "Code 0" (a large asymmetric spinnaker) and made good progress for the next 4 hours. The watch system was initiated so most of us were asleep down below. At 1800 hrs I came up on deck to take over on watch.

Shortly after taking over the helm, it was decided that we were going to turn on the autopilot. As soon as we turned it on, a gust hit, and the "Code 0" powered up and we started to round up into the wind. I turned off the autopilot and fought the boat back onto her course. Just as I came back onto course, there was a ripping noise and the "Code 0" wrapped itself around the top of the mast. Everyone was called up on deck, and it took 2 hours to get



*At the helm on day two*

the sail untangled and stowed back on deck. We then replaced this with the Yankee (the largest foresail except the "Code 0"), and continued on our course. The next morning, the wind had increased up to about force 6 and we were making good progress and had some excellent sailing, even though some people were seasick. During the following night, the



wind died away to almost nothing, and we had to motor for about 3 hours over breakfast before the wind increased sufficiently for us to be able to sail again. Polar Bear weighs 52 tons, and so requires at least 10 knots of wind to make any reasonable progress. On Monday, Mike, my Dad and myself spent 7 hours repairing the “Code 0”, and we managed to get it back onto it’s furling drum before the end of the day.

*Repairing the “Code 0”*

The following morning when we started our watch, Mike decided that we would both spend ½ an hour on the helm and alternate this throughout the watch, so that one of us could be navigating and warming up. Just after we came off watch, Mike was filling in the log when we thought we heard someone trying to raise us on the radio. It turned out to be an American warship, which kept telling us that they wanted to come alongside! After some confused conversation, it was decided that they were not talking to us, and that they were trying to contact a different ship. At about 1300hrs, the lighthouses at the entrance to the fjords were sighted and everyone came up on deck whilst we motored through the fjords up to Havgesund, our first port of call for 3 days.

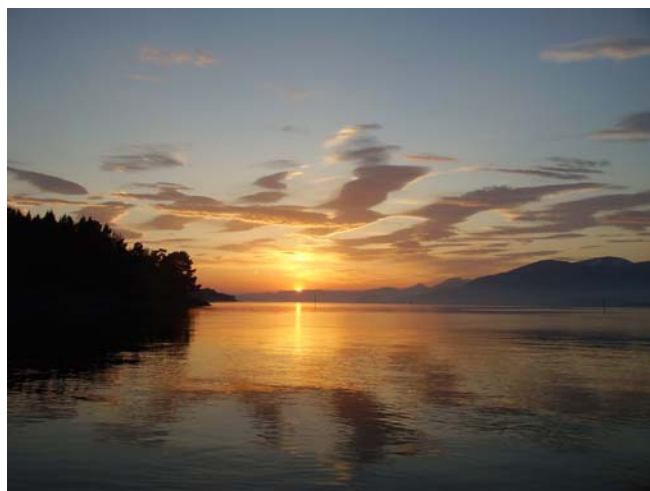
On Wednesday morning, we had a major clean up, before leaving at 1200hrs to sail up



to a beautiful anchorage about halfway between Havgesund and Bergen. As the seabed was clean sand (not the best for anchoring), it was decided that an anchor watch should be kept. After spending an hour inflating the dinghy, a few of us paddled ashore to have a look around and get some pictures. Later on, back on board, I was on anchor watch, at 0230hrs when the sky developed a pink tinge, and

*Moonrise above the Fjord*

the moon rose above the mountains, so I went to wake Ian who had said that he wanted some pictures of the sunrise. When my watch had finished at 0300hrs, we paddled ashore again and took lots of pictures of *Polar Bear* with the moon behind her rigging, before paddling out to a little island east of the anchorage to get some pictures of the sunrise. As the time was now 0445hrs, we paddled back on board to get some sleep before starting off for Bergen. Ben and I spent most of the day cleaning the bilges down below decks, but as we approached Bergen, we went up on deck to sail into harbour. On Friday morning at 0830hrs, Andrew, my Dad and myself got up and left for the airport, arriving back in Newcastle at 1415hrs.



*Sunrise just two hours later*

**The weather.** On the first day out of Newcastle, there was quite a lot of fog, and the visibility was reduced down to about 1 mile, but the wind was ideal for the course we



*Sailing into Bergen in perfect conditions*

wanted to steer, and *Polar Bear* was making a good 10.5kts on average. On the second day, the fog cleared and visibility went back to normal, but it was still overcast and quite chilly, as the wind had also increased to about 20kts and veered further round to the East, which meant that our speed was down to about 6.5-7kts. Throughout the third day, the clouds cleared out, and the wind dropped, but it remained chilly until we closed the land, where the clouds closed in again, nevertheless, the temperature continued to rise. When we woke up on the fourth day, the sun was out and the temperature reached 20°C. Over the

last two days, the temperature rarely dipped below the 17°C mark, and there was not a cloud in the sky. The downside of this stunning weather, however was that there was little wind, so we had to motor a lot of the way through the fjords.



**Experiences I gained.** I learned a lot about sail handling and trimming, and this will be particularly valuable to me as I often find that I struggle with sail trim. I also found out a lot about helming bigger boats, and that they are actually easier to steer on a course and are more forgiving to your mistakes!

Another point that I learned about was the importance of getting as much sleep as you can, whenever you can – you don't know what's going to happen next, so you need to be as rested as possible. To start off with, I tried to follow my normal sleep pattern, but as I was

*Three days on one tack in the North Sea* losing at least three hours of sleep each night, I soon found out that I needed to change my sleep pattern to suit the watch system.

One of the other fundamental skills that I needed on this trip was social skills, as I was working alongside adults that I did not know very well, and at times I was also required to tell them what to do, so being able to communicate well with them made this a lot easier than it might have been.



*Ian, Ben and me - 60° North*

**Further information.** As stated earlier, *Polar Bear* is a Challenge 72' sailing yacht which was part of a one-design fleet, designed specifically for racing around the world. This fleet was owned by Chay Blyth's "Challenge Business". Formerly the British Steel Challenge, the BT Global Challenge took the 72' fleet twice round the world against the prevailing winds and tides. This particular boat was converted for single-handed sailing and renamed *Aviva*. She then completed a third circumnavigation in 2006 in the hands of Dee Caffari. This made Dee the first woman to sail "the wrong way" around the world non-stop, single-handed. The boat was then sold to Mark Richardson and renamed *Polar Bear*, and it is Mark's intention to run commercial expeditions into the Arctic circle. The journey I have just completed is the first leg of *Polar Bear's* first trip into the Northern Polar regions. For further information, see [www.thepolarfront.com](http://www.thepolarfront.com)