

EXPEDITION REPORT

2014 BREOGFJELL Antarctic Peninsula Expedition
aboard S/Y Icebird



November 25 - December 20, 2014

Icebird in sea ice at Argentine Islands

© Bjorn Riis-Johannessen

Introduction

The 2014 BREOGFJELL Antarctic Peninsula Expedition completed a three-day ski tour in the area south-west of Mount William at the southern end of Anvers Island. The team also made multiple single-day ski tours in the Paradise Harbour and Neumeyer Channel areas.

Summary Itinerary

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY
November 22-24	Ushuaia	Preparations
November 25	Beagle Channel	Sailing
November 26-29	Drake Passage	Sailing
November 30	Melchior Islands to Paradise Harbour	Sailing
December 1	Mount Banck	Ski
December 2	Mount Hoegh	Ski
December 3	Paradise Harbour to Pt. Lockroy. Explore Access to Jabet Peak	Sail Ski
December 4	Jabet Peak	Ski
December 5	Doumer Hill	Ski
December 6	Pt Lockroy-Lemair Channel-AccessPoint (Anvers Island)	Sailing
December 6	AccessPoint to Mt Hindson Camp	Ski
December 7	Mount Hindson	Ski
December 8	Transfer to Mount Williams Camp	Ski
December 9	Descent to Access Point	Ski
December 10	Pt Lockroy to Vernadsky Base, Argentine islands	Sailing
December 11-12	Argentine Islands	Kayaking, ski
December 13	Argentine Islands to Melchior Islands	Sailing
December 14-17	Drake Passage	Sailing
December 18-19	Porto Williams	Rest
December 20	Porto Williams to Ushuaia	Sail

Expedition Objectives

The expedition proposed to:

- Undertake multi-day ski ascents in either of the areas near Deloncle Bay, Collins bay or Biscoe bay, subject to how ice conditions would allow access.
- Single day ski ascents in the area between Argentine Islands and Brabant islands.

Members

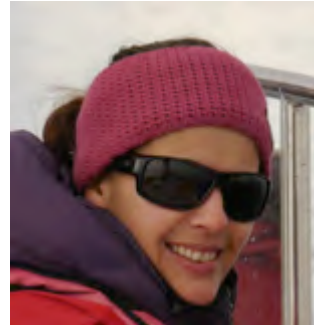
The expedition consisted five ski mountaineers with extensive experience, and two support crew aboard the yacht *Icebird*:



Gjert Grødal (UIAGM Guide), 38
NATIONALITY: Norwegian



Bjorn Riis-Johannessen, 64
(Organizer and Assistant Leader)
NATIONALITY: Norwegian



Ingunn Viste, 34
(Skier)
NATIONALITY: Norwegian



Tore F. Lie, 35
(Skier)
NATIONALITY: Norwegian



S/V ICEBIRD
NATIONALITY: British



Bruno Beurret, 58
(Skier)
NATIONALITY: Swiss



Cath Hew
(Skipper)
NATIONALITY: Australian



Steve Dalle-Nogary
(First Mate)
NATIONALITY: Australian

Sailing to the Antarctic Peninsula

Icebird is a 9-10 berth 61ft ice strengthened aluminium hulled yacht that was built by Trintella in the Netherlands. She has 6 watertight compartments, including a watertight engine room, has her own water-making plant, and is insulated throughout with central heating, making her ideal for expedition sailing in Antarctica and South Georgia. Her enclosed pilot house with 360



Icebird Entering the Drake Passage

degree vision provides shelter from the elements while on watch, and her hydraulically operated lifting keel can reduce her draft to a mere 1.9 metres and allow access to safe shallow anchorages out of the path of drifting ice, while the 3.3m keel down position means that her highly efficient 10tonne foil with 5 tonnes of lead bulb ensure excellent sea keeping characteristics and the ability to beat off a lee shore in an

emergency. *Icebird* is a member of IAATO (the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators).

The expedition left Ushuaia on November 25, stayed on night at anchor at Lennox Island and from there headed into the Drake Passage. The crossing was uneventful, with mostly pleasant weather and 15-20 knots wind. First port of call in the Antarctic, Melchior Islands. From Melchior Islands, we continued to Paradise Harbour, the area of several of our initial ski objectives.



Approaching Melchior Islands

Day Ski Ascent - Mount Banck

▫

Summary Mount Banck Ascent

Summit: 675m

Date: December 1

Skiers: Gjert Grødal, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen, Ingunn Viste, Tore F. Lie, Bruno Beurret

From the landing point just west of Sturm Cove in Ferguson Channel we headed up on 25° ground towards the rocky outcrop left of the large crevassed area. A first attempt to reach the summit via the east ridge was abandoned as unsafe. After a 200 m descent, we continued up towards the north-west shoulder above the main crevassed area. With a ski depot under the summit, the last 100m or so was completed on foot.



Preparation of emergency sled

During the descent of Mt Banck, one skier took a bad fall resulting in the loss of one ski and a fractured ankle. A textbook design sled was prepared and with the leg protected in an aluminium splint, the skier was brought safely down to the boat by the team

Day Ski Ascent - Mount Hoegh

▫ Summary Mount Hoegh Ascent

Summit: 890m

Date: December 2

Skiers: Gjert Grødal, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen, Tore F. Lie, Bruno Beurret



From the landing point at Duthiers Point, we ascended through the Gentoo penguin colony onto the glacier extending down from Mount Hoegh. Traversing the lower part of the glacier, we then started the ascent west towards an area of large seracs and crevasses. On gradually steeper ground,

we passed below the serac field up towards the saddle and the summit. One short section by the top of the serac field was mounted on foot. The top 200-300 m was completed in complete whiteout, following GPS waypoints set on Google Earth satellite images.

Day Ski Ascent - Jabed Peak

▣ Summary Jabed Peak Ascent

Summit: 545m

Date: December 4

Skiers: Gjert Grødal, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen, Tore F. Lie, Bruno Beurret



Approaching Jabed Peak pre-summit

From the landing from the sea ice at the south-east end of Prt Lockroy anchorage, we traversed Harbour Glacier to the shoulder extending down from the seracs. We then traversed the bowl, ascending to the saddle. At a small rock outcrop just above the saddle, we deposited the skis and continued on crampons, first traversing out to our

right and then continuing straight up on 45° incline. The final ascent up to the pre summit follows a couloir for about 50 m, reaching 50° at the steepest.

Day Ski Ascent - Doumer Hill

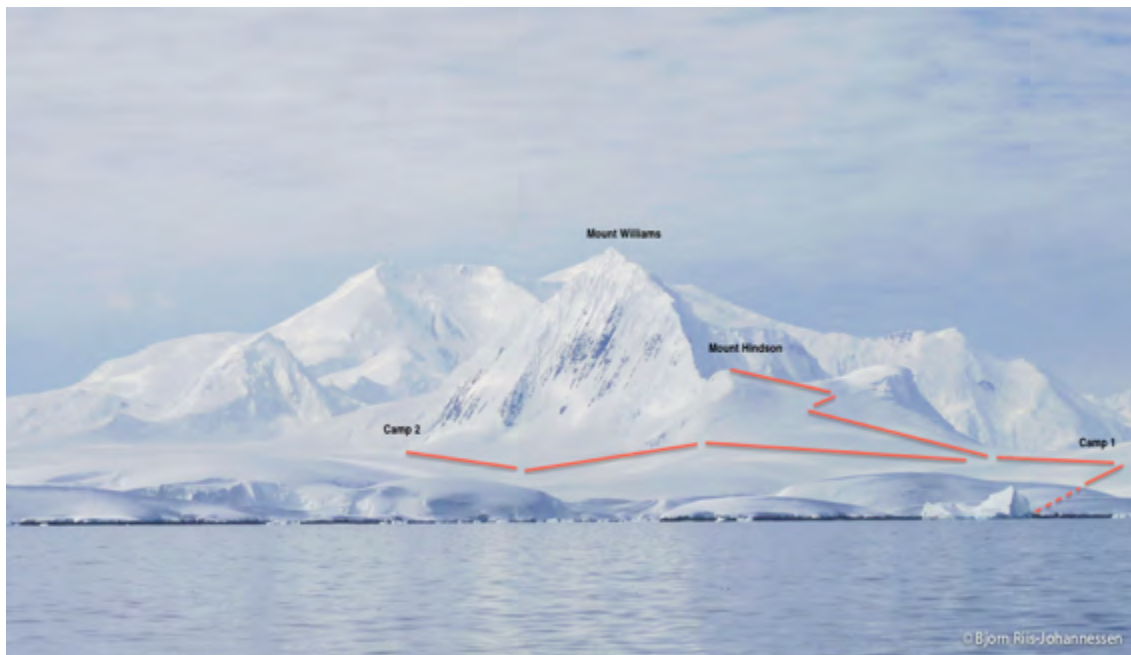
- **Summary Doumer Hill Ascent**
Summit: 500m approx.
Date: December 5
Skiers: Gjert Grødal, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen, Tore F. Lie, Bruno Beurret



Doumer Hill is an easy ski tour a short dinghy ride from Port Lockroy out to Doumer Island Doumer hill offers splendid views of surrounding mountains on Wiencke Island and Anvers Island and a pleasant descent

Multiday Ski Tour Anvers Island Biscoe Bay Area

- **Access Point to Camp 1, Mount Hindson, Camp 2**
Summit: Mount Hindson 700m approx.
Date: December 6 - 9
Skiers: Gjert Grødal, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen, Tore F. Lie, Bruno Beurret



The team landed on a small promontory south east of Access Point. After an initial steep rise up on to the glacier, we continued up on easy ground towards the hill south of Mount Hindson. About half way up we established Camp 1, with the intention of moving north, further up the glacier the next day.

Day 2 arrived with strong wind, snow and very poor visibility, so it was decided to stay put and hope for better conditions. Late afternoon it cleared up and the team made an evening ascent of Mount Hindson.

Day 3. Overcast and very poor visibility, but decided to continue up the glacier in hope of an improvement, following pre-established GPS waypoints. We continued for about 6 km in very limited visibility and established Camp 2 at one of the waypoints, hoping it might clear up for an attempt at Mount Moberly the next day.

Day 4. No improvement in visibility and after staying put until noon, we decided to go back down, none of us keen on attempting an unknown mountain without any idea of what was above us.

Rendezvous was arranged with *Icebird* and we met up at the landing point around 16:00 pm. The pickup was not without problems, with the area covered in brash ice at the limit of what the dinghy could get through, as well as a significant ocean swell.

Lay-up Days and Tourism



Due to ice conditions, we missed a couple of ski days, but were able to spend enjoyable time kayaking instead. We visited Port Lockroy base/museum and spent two days at Vernadsky, the Ukrainian base at the Argentine Islands. Always welcoming to yacht groups, the Ukrainians treated us to lunch and a downhill ski competition. Gold, Silver and Bronze to Norway. We also visited Woody Hut, near Vernadsky, the original base there.

Safety Plan

Our safety plan consisted:

- Experience & Fitness. The group were all ski mountaineers with previous expedition experience. All were reasonably fit and had completed a medical questionnaire and signed medical advisors opinion.
- Group Size. Our group size of five, later four, combined with the members' experience, allowed us to safely operate as two groups in the event of an emergency.
- Medical. We carried a very comprehensive medical kit on the yacht, plus two small field medical packs within the ski party. Two members of the team had wilderness first aid qualifications. The medical kit included splints and a survival bivvy bag.
- Communications. On the multiday trip, we carried one satellite phone and one VHF radio. The yacht was contacted by voice every evening with details of location, condition of party and intentions, and was replied to with the latest weather forecast. On single day trips we carried two VHF radios.
- Contingency. On the multi-day trip, each person carried four-five days of food with extra fuel. In addition, 30 man days of emergency rations and fuel was stored at the landing point in case adverse ice conditions or weather should prohibit pickup.
- Personal & Group Equipment. We compiled an equipment list while planning the expedition for both personal equipment and group equipment, and ensured that every member stuck to this. Our tents were 4-season expedition tents with snow valances. The team had sufficient equipment for glacier safety, crevasse rescue and avalanche safety. Each member dragged a lightweight sled and equipment was split between this and their rucksack.

Our safety plan was adequate and successful. We were able to bring one team member down from Mount Banck with a fractured leg after a bad fall. The leg was supported with aluminium splints and the person was brought down on an emergency sled constructed from a pair of skis, a rucksack, shovel, ski sticks, etc. with a minimum of discomfort.

Environmental Plan

Our environmental plan was adequate and performed well and resulted in minimum impact to the environment of the Antarctic. All expedition members had been instructed to make sure clothing and equipment were free from biological. Human waste was deposited only on glaciers in snow-pits deeper

than 1m, and covered after departure from each camp. All other waste was packed out to the yacht for disposal in Ushuaia. All yacht waste was transported back to Ushuaia for disposal, except for grey and black water, which were be disposed in open sea.

Since all camping and the majority of travel was conducted on snow we had minimal impact to vegetation or of disturbance to wildlife.

Weather & Conditions

We experienced typical weather for the season, ranging from a few degrees below zero to about 10 above. Ice conditions were considered to be abnormal, with serious sea ice in the area south of Wauwermans Islands, at times packed to level 10/10. Ice conditions made our planned landing in Deloncle Bay impossible and the same applied for anywhere further south. We also had to fight off a lot of drifting glacier ice, particularly at Paradise Harbour.

Clothing and Equipment

The climate of the Antarctic Peninsula in summer is similar to that in South Norway in winter. Frequent storms bring high winds, snow, sleet and rain. Temperature generally ranges from -5°C to +5°C at sea level. Clothing was

selected that was suited to these damp, cool conditions.



We used two sturdy Fjellheimen X-treme mountain tents that were kindly loaned by Helsport, pegged with bamboo lengths and 50 cm aluminium snow pegs. These tents have snow valances, which we felt gave

extra peace of mind when leaving the tents during the day, and would have been beneficial in a blizzard.

The high temperatures mean that snow is usually deep and wet low down, and crusty or powder high up, so skis were essential for almost all glacial travel. Due to the heavy crevassing and soft snow conditions, virtually all

glacier travel was carried out roped up unless descending on ski. All members used alpine touring skis with either Dynafit TLT bindings.

When transporting food/ fuel/tents to camps we distributed out loads between rucksacks and smooth sided waterproof haul-bags, which we used as sleds. We towed the haul-bag sleds from the base of our rucksacks by means of a cord passed through a length of tough



plastic pipe, which provided enough stiffness to stop the haul-bag sled fouling our skis during descent. A swivel joint between the haul-bag and the cord allowed the haul-bag to rotate, and avoid twists and tangles. This system worked very well and was sufficiently durable for this trip.

Food & Cooking

Cooking was undertaken using propane-butane gas, which is of reliable quality and is readily available in Ushuaia, and efficiency maximised by using heat-exchanger pans and minimising boiling.

All food consumed on the yacht was purchased in Ushuaia. A quantity of freeze-dried mountain meals was brought from Europe since these are not available in Ushuaia. Additional mountain food, such as some quick pasta meals, muesli/chocolate bars, breakfasts, drinks and soups was purchased in Ushuaia.



Our emergency barrel with 10 days' food and gas. Photo: Oly Metherell

We made up a plastic barrel containing 10 days food and gas for the whole team, and this was depoed every time we went ashore in case we were trapped by ice or weather, which is a real possibility, particularly on longer trips away from the shore. All water was obtained by melting snow. This consisted of an Ortlieb Water Sack filled with snow, and this system proved to be very efficient indeed.

Communications

In addition to the SSB radio, VHF radios and satellite phone on the yacht, the climbing expedition had two VHF radios and one satellite phone. We arranged a primary satellite phone schedule between the climbing team and the yacht every day at 21:00hrs on VHF Channel 13, and a secondary schedule one hour later by satellite phone in case communications couldn't be established during the primary schedule. In addition, the yacht stood by at all times on Channels 16 and 13, and their satellite phone was always turned on. During radio schedules the climbing team summarised their current situation, including latitude and longitude if the camp was moved and intentions for the next day.

Communications were generally excellent and we were able to speak at all times by satellite phone.

We would like to thank the following for their help and support:

The Icebird Team

Skipper, Cath Hew and First Mate, Steve Dalle-Nogary



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