

CAPE HORN TOUR 2012 ON THE PELAGIC AUSTRALIS

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"It's been a wonderful expedition, meeting and in many instances exceeding all expectations."

"A real taste for sailing in these latitudes has definitely been acquired; the next challenge might be to assemble a crew to sail on Pelagic Australis from Ushuaia to South Georgia Island where the landscape and Antarctic wildlife is outstanding. Any takes?"

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Friday 16 March 2012

Dear Family and Friends

Cape Horn Tour 2012

About three years ago I watched a documentary on the ABC called "Three Dogs". It featured three gentlemen rounding Cape Horn as a sort of life challenge. The details are unnecessary but it inspired me to do some research and this culminated in the charter of Pelagic Australis from Skip Novak's Pelagic Expeditions. Pelagic Australis is a 75' purpose built arctic region expedition sailing vessel which is departing Ushuaia in Tierra Del Fuego on Monday, sailing the Beagle Channel, rounding Cape Horn and returning about 12 days later. Accompanying me are seven other friends, the vessel's skipper and his partner. Many of you are interested and have expressed interest in how the trip is going and while I'm not Paul Theroux or Bill Bryson I'll do my best to send though a diary update from the boat via email every few days.

<http://www.pelagic.co.uk/> Pelagic Web Site

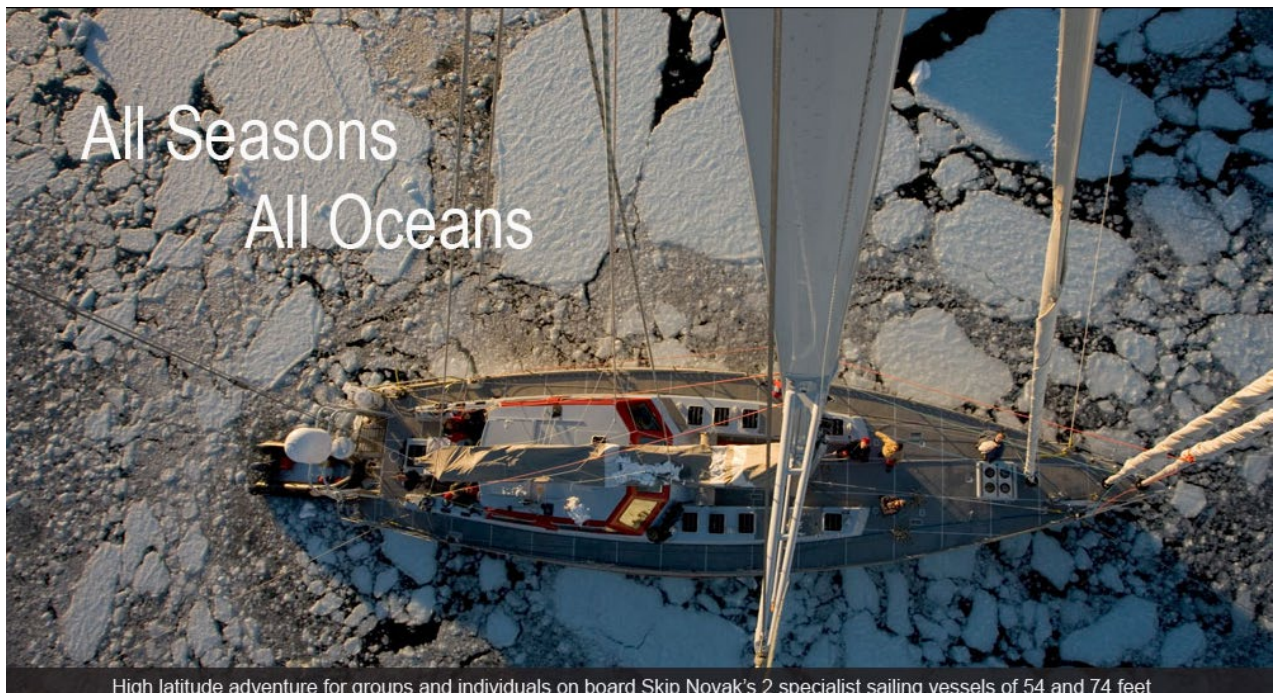
http://www.pelagic.co.uk/mediaplayer_tdf.asp Three Dogs Video

<http://www.pelagic.co.uk/about/tracker.htm> Position tracker

I hope my signals are of interest.

Cheers,

Stephen



Tuesday 20 March 5pm Lat 54 deg 56 min, Long 67 deg 37 min

Dear Family and Friends

5pm Tuesday 20 March Lat 54 deg 56 min, Long 67 deg 37 min Puerto Williams, Chile

As I write we are currently sheltering in Puerto Williams where the wind indicator is often reaching 45kts (in the lee of land) and the Chilean Navy, who run this place have closed the port - probably till early tomorrow morning when we will get on our way and head back West to Ushuaia and the glaciers beyond but more of that later.....

We joined Pelagic Australis in Ushuaia, Argentina late morning yesterday after meeting our crew: Miles, Laura and Dave at the Port Commandant's office where we cleared customs and immigration. The Pelagic is a very well maintained and sorted vessel, she weighs close to 60 tonnes and carries a massive rig on a single spar. All driven by manual winches and a 250hp diesel she is more ship than sailing sloop, built of aluminium plate she feels very secure.

My first objective for this expedition: 'to experience some weather' has already been ticked. Manoeuvring Pelagic with her high topsides off the wharf in a honking 45kt Westerly was not straightforward, nevertheless our very competent skipper succeeded and were immediately underway motoring East down the Beagle Channel at 10kts in the following gale. Our pilot escort fell away after a few miles and a very small steadying staysail was raised to dampen down the rolling. The water was grey, full of white caps and solid sheets of spray were being lifted off the wave tops by the wind. The channel is a couple of miles across with rocky shores and snow capped, steep mountains either side. Very different to the weathered old landscape we are used to seeing in Australia.

Not long into the passage we received a reminder that these waters are to be treated with respect. A 55' luxury cruising yacht was aground on the lee, Northern shore of the channel, beam on to the waves and getting a pounding. We sailed closer and the yacht looked abandoned, a quick call to the Argentinean Navy confirmed that they had removed the crew early in the day. Given the ensuing gale overnight I don't hold much hope for the yacht.

Arrived in Puerto Williams, a 30 Nm passage in a little over 3hrs. Puerto Williams is a very pretty isolated settlement run by the Chilean Navy, population around 4000 with plenty of military. The Chileans control Cape Horn and supervise vessel movements; here we have had a very big win. Pelagic has been given permission, rarely provided, to travel back west into the glacier country where we will emerge into the Pacific about 100 Nm NW of Cape Horn and complete a proper rounding. Two of our crew Hunter Southwick and James Johnson are credited with assisting here, they arrived in Puerto a couple of days before Pelagic after a 5 day hike in the mountains and did a great job of schmoozing the local officials.

Last night after dinner on board we met the local cruising fraternity at the 'Micalvi' which is an old naval vessel sunk at the wharf on a list which and converted into a very homely bar. I'm sure dear reader you can imagine how the evening unfolded particularly as we were celebrating James Johnson's birthday.

This morning we woke to find the port still closed and decided to hike up the nearest peak to an elevation of around 600m. We climbed up a very steep wood covered mountain slope before emerging above the tree line to be greeted by an awesome view of the Beagle Channel, 50kt + winds, wild horses and a light snow shower. A very serious, short hike and a good way to blow out the cobwebs.

Very early tomorrow morning We are hoping to clear Puerto Williams and complete a 50Nm passage back to Ushuaia and beyond.

More to come.....

Regards Stephen Weir with help from David Hardy, David Mathlin, Steve Robson, Hunter Southwick, James Riley, James Johnson and Bill Hardy.

Thursday 22nd March

Lat 54 51 Long 68 49

Wednesday 21st March

What do you do if you're in a RIB getting up close and personal with three Humpback Whales in Yendegaia Bay, the whales submerge, the outboard is switched off, the birds following the whales are suddenly wheeling above the rib and all you can see is a brown shadow immediately below? Answer: Mild Panic!

What a great finish to a spectacular day. The Chilean Navy finally relented after some serious badgering from our trusty skipper Miles and Puerto Williams opened around 10am this morning, the Pelagic Australis raised anchor, we set a main with three reefs in, turned to Port in the Beagle Channel and punched our way into a 'fresh' Westerly. The passage was 50nm, back past Ushuaia in 25 to 40 knots (sailing in Tierra del Fuego requires recalibration of Sydney Harbour wind strength definitions), Pelagic was motor sailing and we were achieving around 6kts. The crew were spending 30mins each on the helm and ski goggles and balaclavas were the order of the day. It is cold, to give you an idea we have two lamb carcasses lashed to the stern superstructure enjoying the wind chill and curing beautifully in the salty spray, air temp was around 5 deg. The surrounding landscape was spectacular; steep mountains either side covered in fresh snow dumped the previous night, sea birds everywhere and several Sei Whale sightings and a delicious crusty bread and leek and potato soup lunch kept us going through the seven hour passage. It was like sailing up a 20Nm alleyway into the teeth of a gale with snow covered peaks all the way and either side. Fantastic.

We pulled in to Yendegia Bay, a spectacular completely calm anchorage out of the wind about 1630 hrs. Green (as opposed to deep blue or grey) glacial fed water greeted us. We anchored the yacht about 200m off the pebble beach took a deep breath and sucked up the pre dusk nature show on display. Humpback whales times three, seabirds by the thousands and South American seal lions and shoals of fish all before us. The crew deployed the Rib off Pelagic and we had two shifts at whale watching. Very close and great photos resulted. Dave set the crab trap and we settled down to a beautiful roast chicken meal prepared by Laura, too much red and much argument ensued. All in good spirits of course – the crew is getting on well. Important when 11 are living in close confines.

Thursday 22nd March

Today is land based activity day. Its 1715 hours, Miles soup was devoured at late lunch an hour or so ago and we are getting ready to untie one of the lambs from the rigging and start spit roasting for dinner this evening on the beach.

Let me explain a little more. We are moored off an estancia or cattle ranch that is owned, apparently by the proprietor of North Face, the mountain clothing brand. The estancia is about 40,000 hectares and badly overgrazed. The owner's mission is to return it to its original state and remove the cattle and wild ponies. Helping him do this is Jose, a gaucho (Chilean cowboy) and his Belgian partner Anemie. They live in very modest farm huts on the beach and took most of us horse riding and trout fishing out through the etsancia. We rode the horses for about an hour and half through paddocks and shoaly, pebbly rivers fed by glaciers to the fishing spot. The surrounding snow covered peaks are the Darwin ranges, essentially the bottom end of the Chilean Andes. Unfortunately beavers were introduced into South America for their pelts and food and these industrious animals make a mess of things however they do dam rivers, making them a perfect habitat for trout. Steve Robson our resident fly fisherman gave us all a lesson and within an hour he had caught half a dozen brook trout in the beaver dam. The three good sized keepers are smoking right now for entree tonight.

The return horse ride was eventful. Robbo and Weiry proved that middle aged men can gallop and Dave Mathlin had a fall when his horse shied. Luckily no injuries and only Dave's pride was hurt.

James' Riley and Johnson (most people on the Pelagic Australis are called Dave, Steve or James) went whale watching again. They are braver than most and manoeuvred their canoe to within

paddle touching distance of a sounding humpback. Miles' eyebrows were a little raised at their endeavour but what a great experience.

In case it's not obvious we are really enjoying ourselves and will be back in touch in a couple of days. I hope you're enjoying sharing in our adventure.

Cheers,

Weiry, Robbo, Dave M, Dave H, James J, James R, Bill and Hunter

Saturday 24th March

Lat 54 55 South Long 69 30

Dear Friends and Family

Wildlife and Glaciers!

Friday 23rd March

The Pelagic Australis pulled out of Yendegia Bay leaving our new friends and guests at an impromptu barbecue party from the night before at the estancia behind. We ended up sharing the Bay with two other yachts and a small Chilean naval vessel. It can be disappointing sharing this landscape with others, on the other hand it's interesting meeting fellow sailors, both of the other yachts were French. You have to admire that nation's ocean sailing culture, they seem to be going everywhere down here including the Antarctic whether correctly permitted and equipped or not. One thing is for sure, it's quite obvious that Pelagic Australis is the grand daddy of the charter boats operating on TDF and we are doing very well on the relative comfort scale.

After an unhurried breakfast of scrambled eggs we despatched the RIB to haul up the crab pot set a couple of hundred metres away in about 30m of water to find about five Sentoya Crabs within, of which three were 'keepers'. These crabs make beautiful eating and are quite unlike their cousins in Australia. A red orange colour, the largest in our catch was about 400cm in span. The pincers are very small, almost ineffectual and there is no meat in the body section. The legs however are fat, covered in spikes and full of delicious sweet meat. The catch went straight into boiling water to be cooked for lunch.

On the way out of the bay we headed over to the Southern shore to check out the resident Sea Lion colony. About 20 plump happy sea lions were basking in the sun on a rock, occasionally a couple would snap at each other resulting in a very 'lion like' growl. Further on we motored past a sky full of wheeling sea birds and then, on the surface a little flock of Steamer Ducks, these rather cute birds are the oddest animals and warrant a fuller description. Unable to fly they propel themselves along the surface of the water by rotating their wings, not unlike a paddle steamer thereby creating a huge amount of flurry and splashing in the process. Our flock liked to move in short quick busts creating the illusion from a distance of water balls rolling across the sea.

Leaving the Bay we were farewelled by a solitary seal leaping out of the sea then we turned to starboard and motored for 20 Nm, West up the Beagle Channel. Motoring into a mild headwind between the mountains either side we reached Caleta Olla a very protected small anchorage about three hours after departure just on lunchtime. The anchorage is protected by a tiny wooded spit that emerges at a right angle from the Northern Shore of the Channel and curves around forming a small bay a few hundred metres across having a well-protected beach in its lee. As we turned into the bay and prepared to moor the Pelagic we were greeted by the imposing site of our first Beagle Channel glacier, the Ventisquero (Glacier) Hol anda and a rare Andean Fox cheerfully running along the beach towards us. Apparently cruising yachts regularly barbecue at this spot and clearly this fox was anticipating some scraps from us.

After a delicious crab and salad lunch helped down by a cheeky Argentinean Sauvignon Blanc we donned hiking boots and gaiters, motored in the RIB to shore and walked up the nearby slopes for an hour or so to gain a better view of the face of the glacier, the first of many we are going to see over the next few days. Their colour, a beautiful ice blue and overwhelming but immobile power are probably their most striking feature. Turning away from the glacier our vantage point gave us a wonderful view of a Humpback Whale surfacing rhythmically as it gently cruised down the down

the Beagle Channel, the mountains and an advancing storm. At this point it occurred to me that Sydney Harbour was probably once as full of wildlife as we are seeing in the Beagle Channel and how spectacular that must have been.

Saturday 24th March

Another unrushed start to the day. At the tail end of breakfast Miles checked in to the 5 day weather forecast for Cape Horn. It's looking interesting, Force 9 from the West so Miles is trying to time our arrival so that we are rounding at the back end of that weather system allowing an easier passage down the coast once we've exited the Beagle channel and giving us a chance of landing at Cape Horn (not a straightforward exercise using the RIB to land on a steep beach in a swell). I sensed a little apprehension from the crew as this discussion ensued.

We headed back into the Channel for another three hour passage into a cold wet 25kt Westerly. Once again goggles and balaclavas were the order of the day on the helm as the temperature approached freezing and occasionally the rain turned to sleet. The crew has started to settle into a very relaxed mode and Pelagic's comprehensive nautical and Cape Horn historical library is getting worked over with dry warm reading spots in the pilot house at a premium.

Motoring up the Channel we passed several more glaciers; namely Ventisquero Italia, Francia and Alemania before setting down at our anchorage, Caleta Morning. The weather this morning was grubby, low cloud and rain which affected glacier photo opportunities. Nevertheless the scenery was spectacular; crystal blue glaciers with surfaces crushed and twisted by the thousands of tonnes of force above either terminating at sea level throwing pack ice into the water – in fact we saw one small face collapse depositing a couple of truck loads of ice into the channel. Alternatively some of the glaciers terminated at altitude before forming multi course waterfalls to the sea.

Mooring the 65t Pelagic Australis into one of these anchorages is not simple but something we are becoming more proficient at. Essentially it involves using the substantial windlass to drop the anchor while paying out 60-80 m of chain, the Rib is also lowered into the water and takes out stern lines to the shore around 100m away which are then tensioned up on the primary winches and tied off. All of this involves getting into the Pelagic's black wet weather gear in the sleet and rain, getting in and out of the Rib to haul heavy lines, in some instances climbing rock faces to find suitable tie off points and communicating via two way radios. All very 'special forces' and appealing to the action men amongst the crew.

This afternoon half the crew are braving the weather the rest are relaxing on board. Dave and Bill Hardy are walking, Robbo is fly fishing (unsuccessfully this time judging by the radio updates) and JJ has carried the canoe over the hill to paddle on the nearby lake.

Next report in a few days.

Cheers,

Weiry, Robbo, Dave M, Dave H, James J, James R, Bill and Hunter

Tuesday 27th March

Lat 54 46 Long 69 40

Dear Friends and Family

Seno Pia Ford

Hi all, its 5pm on the Pelagic Australis and we have settled down for the afternoon after spending some memorable days in the Beagle's fjords amongst Tierra del Fuego's giant and most spectacular glaciers. Since I last wrote on Saturday we haven't travelled too far as Miles has been positioning us to get in behind the front that is travelling overhead right now and avoid the worst of that system's weather. So far the plan seems to be working and a following 25 – 35kt breeze is forecast tomorrow, good for our run to the Horn before it calms the following day hopefully allowing us to land. We have anchored the boat in a small anchorage off the West Arm of the Seno Pia Fjord and rigged a long hose running into a waterfall streaming down a steep mountain to refill the water tanks and are planning on barbecuing steaks for dinner. The crew is getting on, conversation remains stimulating and life is pretty good.

Sunday 25th March

We left Caleta Morning and motored down the Channel past the Venisquero Romanche Glacier to the Seno Pia Fjord. The entrance to this Fjord is notorious and deceptive, Pelagic Australis draws around 3m and at one point we were seeing 4m on the depth gauge. Pelagic is well designed to cope with shallow water, she has a swing keel and while we are cruising in protected waters the pins locking the keel down are removed to allow it to swing in the event of a bottom 'touch'.

The glacier in the east arm of the Fjord is spectacular and as we were cruising past it to our anchorage we were greeted by a pod of Peales dolphins who continued to play around the Pelagic and the RIB as the boys ran the mooring lines to shore. These dolphins have distinctive dark grey and white markings and looked to be enjoying our presence. After another leisurely lunch we took to the Pelagic's kayaks and paddled up the fjord, amongst pack ice to the ice wall at the foot of the glacier. On the way there Hunter and Robbo also spotted the rare and shy Chilean dolphin, a little dolphin only a meter long with a small black fin. We beached the kayaks and walked around the beach and fast flowing stream at the foot of the glacier for a few hours admiring the scenery.

Readers will be very pleased to know that all of this is being captured by camera and 'Gopro' and hundreds of still photos and video footage are being compiled into a short movie in real time by Robbo on his Macbook. Early versions of Robbo's efforts are looking extremely encouraging and you won't be disappointed!

Monday 26th March

We woke to glass like conditions on the Fjord and the glacier leading to the mountain above was reflected in the water in front of the boat. I went below to fetch a camera and unfortunately missed the photo as the wind got up and roughened the water's surface.

Thickly wooded steep, snow capped mountains surrounded the Pelagic and Miles convinced us that a good 'yomp' (that's a funny English word for hike) was in order. So yomp we did, all of us except Riley and Dave our crew who both decided that there were better things to do on board for the day. The climb was steep and difficult with dense, wet vegetation, large boulders to traverse around and trees to climb through. After about two hours we broke out above the tree line and into steep gorse and moss covered rocky terrain. After another hour or so of climbing at an altitude of around 500m the party split. The summit was too attractive a challenge for Laura, Robbo, Bill and James Johnson and they headed up to the snow line and beyond to make the peak, returning to Pelagic about 5pm. The rest of us reached the boat a couple of hours earlier and were greeted by Dave and James' smiling face, barbecued hamburgers and beers. Very well deserved we all thought.

That night we were exhausted and slept very well. In fact we have all settled in to the rhythm of a day on Pelagic, the routine chores are shared and everyone seems to be enjoying the time out away from emails, blackberrys and mobiles and is de-stressing very effectively.

Tuesday 27th March

The anchorage at Seno Pia East Fjord was cleared about 10am, the Rib was sent out to retrieve the crab pot, disappointingly we haven't been able to repeat our initial success which is a shame because they do make delicious eating. We motored for about an hour and half to the West arm of the Fjord and hung around the face of the Glacier for a couple of hours watching it calve. The glacier's face is about 30m high and stands vertically above the water below, it is very active and regularly shears off chunks of ice into the water (called calving) making loud rumbling noises like distant artillery in the process.

We settled into our anchorage underneath a large waterfall and proceeded to enjoy another of Laura's delicious lunches - quiche, salad, cold meat, cheese, salad (washed down by Argentinian wine). The water tanks are filling from a hose run to the nearby waterfall, loose gear round the boat has been stowed and the barbecue has been lit. Watches have been organised from tomorrow morning and in 24 hrs or so from tomorrow's departure we'll be off the Horn.

More to come.....

Cheers,

Weiry, Robbo, Dave M, Dave H, James J, James R, Bill and Hunter

Tuesday 29th March 1800hrs

Lat 55 49 Long 67 17

Dear Friends and Family

Around Cape Horn

We slept well on Tuesday night after celebrating Hunter and James J's 51st birthdays with Laura's surprise birthday cake. Hunter loves home baked cakes. Despite much talk and bullshit the night before of early morning swims amongst the mini ice bergs floating around Pelagic, in the cold dim light of Wednesday morning common sense prevailed, Speedos stayed in their drawers and instead the RIB was despatched to collect the crab trap. Success at last – lunch went straight to a boiling pot in the galley.

More friendly dolphins farewelled Pelagic from Seno Pia Fjord yesterday morning. The forecast was holding and Miles was happy to be leaving the Beagle Channel for the Horn. However we were motor sailing with two reefs in our main into bloody awful weather: 5-7degC, drenching rain, 25kt headwind, low grey cloud and poor visibility. The mountain scenery and odd glacier were by now becoming uninteresting and repetitive during the wet six hour passage to the Beagle's westerly ocean exit. To make matters worse the wind dropped out to 10kts, not enough to make the Pelagic move without motor assistance. There were glum faces all round as we settled into our 4 crew X 3 hour shift routine and all thought a soft passage was ahead and couldn't understand why Skipper Miles and crew Dave weren't shaking out more sail, after all we'd paid our money and were looking for some real Cape Horn weather action.....

Dave M, Hunt, Weiry and Dave settled into their shift and at 1600hrs, an hour or so after leaving the Channel the wind started building – big time. By the end of the shift we had average wind strengths of 40 kts on the beam and were bearing due South. Pelagic had set three reefs in the main and had reduced to a Staysail (the smallest of its three permanently rigged furling headsails: Genoa, Yankee and Staysail) driving us along (with the motor off at last!) at around 8-10 kts. Although not fast by ocean racing standards it was probably the most exhilarating sailing of my life. We were seeing very grey conditions, a big building, breaking sea, dolphins loving the elements playing beside us, contrasting white spray driven off the wave tops, soaked foul weather gear, pouring rain, a ragged mountainous lee shoreline and a safe warm boat surging towards Cape Horn. Everything we wanted to experience!

There were some casualties though. The crew were now succumbing badly to Mal de Mere with James Riley first to lose his wicket in most undignified circumstances thereby setting off a queasy chain reaction. Your author is pleased to report he was able to hold it all together throughout, without the aid of pharmaceutical assistance.

Things started to get interesting through the next shifts. Our altered, more easterly course meant that the wind was on our quarter and the 1800hrs shift with Miles, Dave H and James R started to see regular wind speeds of 50 kts true with the Pelagic surfing and touching 15kts. Hardy claimed the record with a reading above 15kts. At around 2130hrs Skipper Miles asked Laura, Robbo, James J and Bill to reduce the main to four reefs during the next shift. We were going too fast and had to slow the Pelagic Australis down so that we could be assured of rounding the Horn after day break! Not surprising as the maximum wind speed recorded during the passage was 55.7kts – a Force 10 Storm.

We were now carrying the equivalent of two handkerchiefs as main and headsail, the boat was sailing comfortably under control at around 7 kts and at 2200 hours it was decided to deploy the secret weapon....George! George is Pelagic's state of the art self steering gear and quite frankly he's the best helmsman on board. The boat rolls less under George's direction allowing the on watch to shelter in the pilot house while the off watch gets a better chance at sleeping. A very civilised way to do 50kts!

At around 700hrs on Thursday morning Cape Horn's grim silhouette came into view through the grey morning rain. It was blowing hard, around 40kts and Laura's shift had to gybe to bring us under the Cape. Not executed well I'm afraid, the running backstay got caught around the steaming light cage and brave Laura, showing far more courage than the alpha males collected around her, climbed the mast to clear it. The off watch were nearly thrown out of our bunks during

this manoeuvre and if that wasn't enough Laura's delightfully proper, rather blue expletive laden description of what her crew should have been doing to retrieve the situation certainly woke us all up in time get our foulies on again and see the Horn in all its cranky, snarling glory.

After winding in the headsail completely and gybing back towards the West the plan was to complete our rounding of the Horn and then motor through the 300m gap between islands, into the teeth of the gale and drop the anchor and shelter close to the shore at the Caleta Martial anchorage. Unfortunately our so far, very reliable engine cut out at this point leaving us with a rapidly approaching, snarly lee shore and not much steerage. Unable to tack we gybed and headed back out to sea. Our super seaman Miles dived for the engine and cleared the airlock in the cooling system, the source of the problem. Happily, thoughts of cutting our trip short and having to sail back early to Ushuaia were put aside and we headed back into this very bleak uninviting anchorage.

We completed lashing sails and secured the Pelagic around 1200 hours and a quiet little celebration followed. We now are all sporting gold earrings in our left ear, the traditional symbol of sailors that have rounded the Horn, courtesy of James Riley. Robbo broke out his bottle of special Angostura Rum and much toasting followed. Dave cooked his special fry up and we all sat down to a well deserved lunch after a busy 24hrs. Miles has cut down what is left of the lamb carcass curing above our stern and curry is on the menu for dinner.

The plan is to stay at this anchorage overnight, let the wind abate and move to the lee of Cape Horn tomorrow morning and weather permitting make a landing on the Horn itself before heading back to Puerto Williams and Ushuaia over the next few days. We are now very much on the homeward leg of the expedition.

More to come.....

Cheers,

Weiry, Robbo, Dave M, Dave H, James J, James R, Bill and Hunter

Sunday 1st April 1000hrs

Lat 55 04 Long 67 04

Dear Friends and Family

Cape Horn Postscript

As I write this we are just departing Puerto Toro, a small fishing settlement of 14 families that is reputed to be the Southernmost non-government community in the world. Pt Toro is a very pretty little village nestled into hills providing a safe anchorage for the fishing fleet moored here, abundant sea birds and a family of sea otters that we saw playing in the water next to Pelagic Australis last night and this morning.

On Friday, following our rounding we landed on Cape Horn itself and met the Chilean Armada (Navy) officer stationed there manning the light house with his wife and two children. The officer was very generous and invited us all in to his home overlooking the Southern Ocean below for coffee. Through halting Spanglish we heard that the morning of our rounding the weather station at Cape Horn registered 110kts of wind speed at one point. We were also there to see two Volvo Round the World Racing Yachts, Group Armour and Puma go round the Horn and heard that a third, Telefonica suffered gear damaged during the same blow and had to divert to Ushuaia for repairs.

We are on our last leg West up the Beagle Channel to Puerto Williams where we will overnight before catching a ferry to Ushuaia, a flight to Buenos Aires and then home to Australia. It's been a wonderful expedition, meeting and in many instances exceeding all expectations, I hope you've enjoyed the emails.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Skipper Miles and crew Laura and Dave for looking after us all so well. After several years with Pelagic Expeditions Miles and Laura will be returning to Yorkshire to farm after sailing Pelagic Australis back to Cape Town for its annual refit. Dave has been promoted and will take over command of the 'little' Pelagic next season. The other person I'd

like to mention is Craig Ryan at Helle Hansen. Craig helped kit me out with Helle clothing for this trip; it performed really well and worked a treat. I had underestimated how cold and wet it gets down here and am very thankful for his recommendations, help and the quality of the gear. Finally I'd like to thank my family and colleagues, as would all the crew, for supporting us during this expedition. We'll be back with the photos very soon!

A real taste for sailing in these latitudes has definitely been acquired; the next challenge might be to assemble a crew to sail on Pelagic Australis from Ushuaia to South Georgia Island where the landscape and Antarctic wildlife is outstanding. Any takers?

Cheers,

Weiry, Robbo, Dave M, Dave H, James J, James R, Bill and Hunter