

**GINO WATKINS MEMORIAL FUND AND EDWARD WILSON FUND
PRELIMINARY REPORT FORM**

EXPEDITION LEADER:	EXPEDITION NAME:	EXPEDITION DATES:
Frances Wensley	Sailing to Svalbard	03/04/2015 to 03/10/2015

Please complete your *preliminary* expedition report (approximately 500 words).

Over approximately eight weeks in 2015, we took our 35 foot Hallberg Rassy sailboat across the North Sea to Norway, through the Lofoten Islands and across the Barents Sea to Svalbard. We had raging winds forcing us to reef down the sails and bounce along for days through the unpredictable swell and beautiful sunny days, where all we could do was motor along and enjoy the scenery. We saw stunning landscapes, massive glaciers and ruins from miners, whalers and explorers spanning 300 years. We saw evidence of how the earth has changed over the past million years through desert sands and other geological features plastering the massive arctic landscape. We saw wildlife such as whales, reindeer, walrus and many species of birds. Unfortunately no polar bears though!

While the trip itself was an adventure, it was perhaps the months before we left, spent planning and organising every detail, which really made it successful. We had enough food on board for an army (too much perhaps but we were prepared!); we had all the equipment we needed, except maybe enough wool socks; and we never ran low on water or diesel, although it came close once or twice. We even thought we knew where we were going most of the time, with our seemingly endless array of books and charts and electronics. Being prepared not only made the trip easier, but it gave us the confidence to relax and enjoy the journey.

There were of course many challenges: the cold, despite being prepared, always seemed to get through; finding good spots to anchor amongst the icebergs, katabatic winds coming off the glaciers and often terrible anchor holding in mud or kelp; being on the lookout for polar bears every time we went ashore; and small things such as having the right fuel for the stove (ok maybe not so small!).

Through the great and the not so great, we made it from little Fox's Marina in Ipswich, in the pouring rain, to 80 degrees North, 600 miles from the North Pole, in glorious sunshine. Sun that kept shining for days at a time, circling almost horizontally around our wool-covered heads. The total distance we covered was just over 3,000 nautical miles, giving us an average distance of about 370 miles per week at sea. We were fortunate not to have any big run-ins with icebergs or serious injuries. We are incredibly grateful not only for the experience but for the people we met along the way. While the Lofoten islands were almost devoid of boats, Svalbard was a bustling port in comparison, with visitors from all over Europe with a wealth of experience and stories to share over an evening drink. We learned from them, shared with them and then ventured out on our own again for new experiences.

Signed:  Date: 12/10/15

Please return this form within one month after the completion of your expedition, together with 1/2 photographs, to:

The Secretary
Gino Watkins Memorial Fund Committee
Scott Polar Research Institute
Lensfield Road
Cambridge CB2 1ER

