

Explorer Gary walks on top of the world

ADVENTURER Gary Rolfe is on top of the world – literally.

With two huskies for company, the man brought up in Little Humby, is in the Canadian Arctic.

He is making his way from the Horton River in the Western Arctic, following the coast 400 miles east to Nunavut and the Central Arctic community of Kugluktuk (Coppermine).

Setting off last month using the only maps available, those drawn up from aerial photographs taken 43 years ago, he will set foot on terrain not seen since the ancient nomadic Inuit followed the migratory pattern of the caribou.

The caribou was the Inuits' main means of survival. It provided meat to eat and hides for clothing or skins for tents.

Gary's journey is similar in comparison to the way the ancient Inuit travelled in the Arctic summer.

His own pack has his supplies and his two dogs (Pingo and Hansel) carry their own food. The dogs provide a vital deterrent to predatory grizzly bears. The Inuit fear the grizzly more than the polar bear. Their ferocity is legendary.

He set off on Friday, August 13, flown in by float plane south-east of the Horton River in the western Arctic.

He said: "I felt violently sick on the flight."

The Arctic tundra, where there isn't a single tree, is home to some of the most amazing migratory wildlife, which exists there during the brief Arctic summer.

On Monday, he caught lake trout which he ate. The following day was clear blue

skies.

He said: "I walked round camp with no shirt on. Not exactly a bear deterrent. Found grizzly bear's old musk ox kill. A grim looking find."

Yet on Wednesday he was navigating in thick fog all day. Once it cleared, he saw a couple of grizzlies, tundra swans in the evening and hunting fox.

That night, there was the first confrontation with a grizzly bear, which came into his camp.

The bear charged. Pingo, one of the huskies, bayed, relentlessly and stood his ground. The bear cleared off.

Gary hopes to finish his trek in early October.

He is the son of former Journal columnist Mel Rolfe, and is working for a London publisher, compiling a book of photographs from his adventure.



Gary Rolfe with one of his huskies.