

## PRESS RELEASE

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### BRITISH DOG MUSER GARY ROLFE COMPLETES JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWN

British dog musher Gary Rolfe, 44, returned to his home in Ittoqqortoormiit, east Greenland on Sunday after a 33-day, 400-mile solo journey with 12 of his dogs, to an area marked unknown or unexplored on the maps of Greenland.

Gary set off on February 10th 2010. Before leaving, he was told stories by Ittoqqortoormiit locals of mysterious encounters with Inuit they call The Little People who still hunted seals deep inside the fjord using harpoons and dressed in furs. Nobody knew where these people came from and nobody in living memory had been as far into the fjord as Gary was planning to go. Nobody could tell him what he might find.

On being asked how he felt before he left Gary said, *"I was excited. Fearful too. Polar bears are always a threat and icebergs bother me with their upending tendency to let's-obliterate-whatever-gets-in-the-way. This part of the Arctic is infamous for its colossal storms. At home windows pop and houses have been known to explode which can make tent life a bit tricky."*

He experienced temperatures of minus 50°C where spit crackled in the air and at times had to wade through snow up to his waist in order to make a trail for his dogs. He said, *"All I could see when I looked behind was twelve pairs of ears"*. On these days he would be lucky to cover 10km in eight hours. On a good day, they could travel over 45km.

Gary encountered several polar bears: *"It was very cold as we moved through the fjord under the shadows of the Nordvestfjord mountains. At night the ice groaned and never ending avalanches made me wince. Cathedral sized icebergs tried to block our way but we worked around them. Yellow against the snow, polar bears followed. I felt like a vertical seal, their favourite grub. The place was immense. The deep snow was cruel. On top of the sea ice, the*

*enormous weight created cracks for water to seep up producing overflow. This stuff freezes feet. There's one funeral-grey gloom of a day I'll never ever forget. At times our pace was torture, I felt the dreaded overflow on my feet and I feared we'd never get out. My legs were on fire with the effort of breaking a trail for my dogs to follow but we made it".*

This journey was a year in the planning. In the short Arctic summer, depots had to be carefully laid containing food for Gary and the dogs, fuel and essential gear. He had no way of knowing when he reached these depots whether polar bears would have got there first.

Gary lives in Greenland because it is the domain of a heavy freight dog breed known simply as the Greenland Dog. The only domestic Arctic animal and by law the only breed allowed above Greenland's Arctic Circle. His dogs have never seen trees.

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