

Adventurer Gary at one with the Arctic

THE JOURNAL, Friday, May 7th, 2004

Gary Rolfe is beginning to establish the reputation as one of the few men in history to consistently and successfully make solo expeditions on the Arctic Ocean with huskies.

He used to raise funds for his adventures by working a 56-hour overtime week as a Humby Hall farm labourer.

At night he would run into Grantham to wash dishes at the King's Hotel.

Gary spent most of his teenage years living in Little Humby. His father Mel – the former Journal columnist – and step-mother, Jessie, still live in the village but Gary has moved on to a life few can imagine.

Why huskies?

Gary said: "Huskies love the cold and remain fantastic company. As Panzer tanks of the dog world they never give in.

"Rearing them from puppies I see them develop almost human characteristics. Some are boisterous, shy or naughty. They all have a trait some people lack but wish they had, that unrelenting drive with the will to keep going despite overwhelming odds.

"Together with their immense physical qualities they've a gentle, lovable and

sincere side, too, qualities we like to recognise in loved ones, our friends and in ourselves."

Understanding the huskies may be easier than understanding what drives a man to push himself to the limit.

'Don't ever let anyone tell you your dream is too big. Just plan and get your shoes on'

Gary said: "Essentially it's to share experiences from journeys I do to regions very few, if any, humans have ever been.

"My gear has a tough life and I'm able to bring back valuable data and innovations. These eventually go into high street products like adventure clothing. Recently I was on the frozen Mackenzie River, alone with eight dogs, where temperatures fell to minus 51C.

"I had gear such as rugged laptops that had never been tested under such extreme cold."

Gary is obviously extremely fit but his life is an inspiration to those who suffer from asthma.

"As a five-year-old kid I was diagnosed as asthmatic. I can still remember how frightened I was when I couldn't breathe.

"But once prescribed with an inhaler my condition stabilised. I try to do what I can to raise awareness for Asthma UK by helping others with asthma recognise their own potential.

"You shouldn't be afraid to go out there and live the life you want. Don't ever let anyone tell you your dream is too big. Just plan and get your shoes on."

Gary is based in London and is now working with a publisher compiling a book purely from his photography before heading back to the Canadian Arctic this summer.

But a sedentary lifestyle won't do and he has to keep fit.

"My training is ongoing which includes running 100 miles a week.

"Some days travelling on the Arctic Ocean means a 12-hour slog over ice taller than a double-decker bus just to gain 400m. In the Canadian Arctic I share the sea with 15,000 polar bears in temperatures cold enough to turn spit into ice cubes, so the training gives me that disciplined edge."

'The Arctic can be savage. There alone in 2000 I almost paid the ultimate price with my life.'

Gary Rolfe's consistent and proven track record sees him now at the highest level as an exponent of a skill few have mastered, the craft of handling huskies in polar regions. It's a specialist area that makes huge demands on people, dogs, critical gear and skills alike.

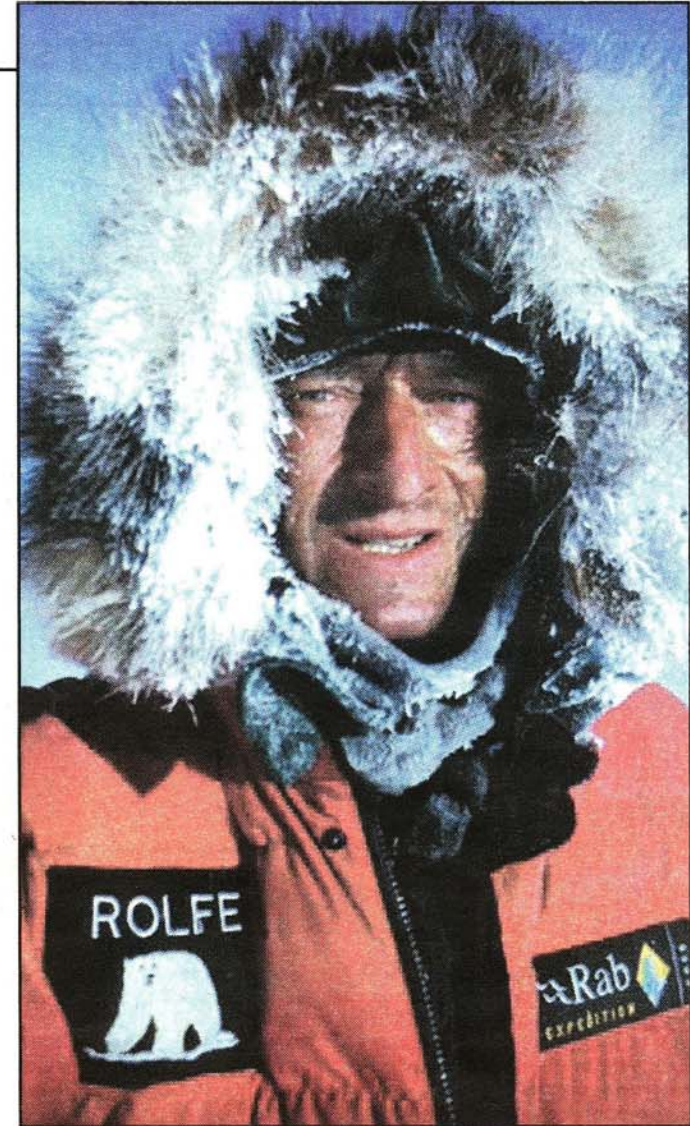
"The fact he travels alone is testimony to his ability combined with the magical bond between him and his huskies.

"I respect that handling huskies is a skill that takes time, determination and patience to develop but ultimately, to be any good, it demands talent.

"Gary has over the past seven years cut his teeth alongside the world's most skilled of polar travellers. A craft learned from strong personalities – both men and women who suffer no fools.

"Every now and then someone very different from each generation appears who is capable of pulling off the unexpected. I believe Gary is one such person."

– Sir Ranulph Fiennes



Gary Rolfe ... solo expeditions to the Arctic with huskies.

For more about Gary's exploits visit www.garyrolfe.com
For details about Asthma UK, visit www.asthma.org.uk