

THE POLAR OCEAN CHALLENGE

The Story of a Teenager's Epic Voyage Around the North Pole

Ben Edwards

Ben Edwards was fourteen when he embarked upon what many would consider to be their "adventure of a lifetime" on the Polar Ocean Challenge expedition, and he went on to play a vital role in the expedition's success.

Sir David Hempleman-Adams

Ben Edwards was fourteen when he embarked upon the yacht *Northabout* for what many would consider to be their 'adventure of a lifetime': to be the first to sail a small vessel around the North Pole in a single season. But what became known as the Polar Ocean Challenge had a serious purpose beyond adventure. The transit being previously only possible over at least two seasons due to the annual encroachment of the ice, the voyage brought to the world's attention the dramatic melting of the sea ice that threatens to change forever this vast but fragile region. To further raise awareness Ben became ambassador for Wicked Weather Watch, a charity aimed at schools to help increase students' awareness of changes to our rapidly warming world. Through its website and that of the Polar Ocean Challenge it was possible for those of us left at home to follow the expedition every step of its way, to watch video and to read daily blogs by Ben and the crew.

This book celebrates the remarkable achievement of the crew of *Northabout* and the part Ben played in her epic voyage. While other crew members took part in one or other of the four legs of the voyage, he alone completed the whole circumnavigation thus being not only the first but also the youngest ever to do so. Set against his telling of the story, hundreds of photographs and specially commissioned artwork relate the wider story of Arctic life and exploration over the centuries

"If I survive this, it will be a great experience!"

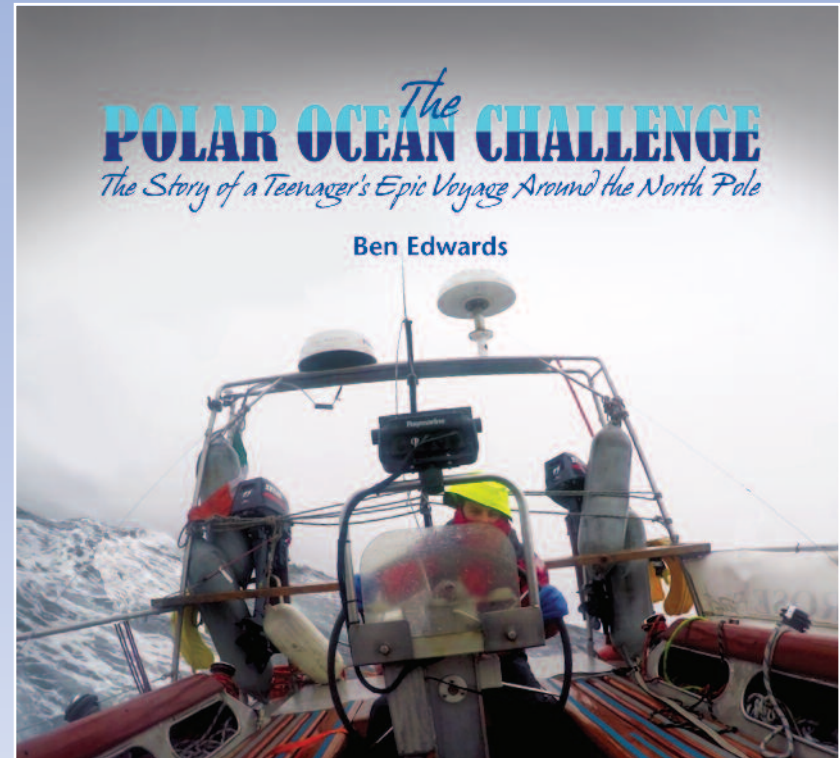


This remark sums up the attitude of the author who with great fortitude and no little humour undertook, while aged fourteen, one of the world's most arduous voyages. Aboard the small yacht *Northabout*, he alone remained to complete all four legs of the journey, making him the youngest ever to complete the Arctic circumnavigation. Here he recounts his personal memories of the voyage, his original aims and aspirations in taking it on, and his reflections on its successful completion.

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Left: The somewhat cramped quarters below deck.



Above: A humpback whale breaching.



Left: Ben in reflective mood composing his daily blog.

Ben is an inspiration, not only to his own generation but to older generations. He has the drive, the determination, and an enormous lust for life that can make just about anything happen.

Andy McNab



Example of a double-page spread.



The crew who took Northabout through the North West Passage pose aboard while in Upernavik. From left: Ben Edwards, Steve Edwards, Johan Petersen, Constance Difede, Barbara Fitzpatrick, David Hempleman-Adams and Nikolai Litau.