

Gjøa is a yacht 46 tons, 73 feet long, 20 feet wide, and draws 10 feet when loaded. She is not especially built for Arctic ice covered water but has lately been strengthened by oak planks - cross beams & knees, & everything else that can serve to break the ice. She has a petroleum motor of 13 horse powers with which the vessel (craft) in calm weather and smooth water can achieve 3 knots. The motor is therefore not the main source of power. It is only meant to be used in calm weather. Gjøa's motive power is in her sails and like all vessels of this type, she does her "things" excellently. The expedition's goal was to force its way into the region about the earth's magnetic North Pole & there make observations at a fixed station for a long period of time. For this purpose the expedition was mainly supplied by magnetic instruments. Prof. Dr. G. Neumayer, previously managing director of "Deutsche Seewarte", Prof. Schmidt, director of the magnetic observatory in Potsdam, Dr. Edler at the same observatory & meteorologist Aksel S. Steen at the meteorological observatory in Kristiania were the ones who conducted and suggested the supply of equipments outfitting Gjøa expedition's magnetic instruments. The expedition was therefore very well equipped—needless to say. In addition, we brought instrument for meteorology, oceanography and astronomical observations. The provisions were carefully examined by Prof. Torup at Kristiania University. The task of supplying a polar expedition these days is not a piece of art - if one has enough money. One has to take advantage of previous exp. as an example. What is even better is to hear from an experienced adviser. Nobody could be in a better position than me. The one who was behind all of this was Professor Fridtjof Nansen. If Gjøa expedition is successful, it is mainly because of this man. The expedition numbers 7 participants. The next in command is the Premier lieutenant in the Danish navy, Godfred Hansen. The remaining are Norwegians.

During the night between the 16th and 17th of June, 1903, the expedition left Kristiania. Since we were heavily loaded Gjøa took it easy in the water. We set course north of Scotland and aprox 4 weeks later we were under Cape Fawel, Greenland's southern point. It took us a long time to get to Godhavn on Disco Island since we had head wind all the way. In the last days of July we finally arrived there. The purpose in stopping here was to establish a magnetic station and to take more sledge-dogs on board. We brought with us 6 dogs from Kristiania - dogs that had been on the second Fram expedition.—After we ended our work in Godhavn, we left the 31st of July. We now were facing the dreaded "Nelville Bay". On August 8th we passed "Devils Thumb" & started the passage over the bay. The 14th we were in "The North Water", so called by the Scottish whalers. The North Water is for the most part free of ice & allows for an easy sail. At Dalrymple Rock—at Greenland's NW side—we had to stop to take onboard the provisions the Scottish whaleship captains Mine & Adams had deposited there for the expedition. Dalrymple Rock is only a small islet, consisting mainly of mountains. We anchored close to shore to stay as close to the depot as possible and therefore do less transporting. Through a wall of icebergs, we passed on the 17 through into Baffin Bay. Good conditions and nice weather made this sail over this bay a

pleasure. We arrived Beechy Island the 22nd & anchored there in order to take a magnetic station. This station would be decisive for the remainder of our journey, since it would be the closest to show us the location of the magnetic pole and thus show us the way we have to take. The observations show the pole to be to the southward, so we sailed that direction after having lifted anchor the 24th—going south towards Peel Sound. Off Prescott Island in Peel Sound our compass refused to render further service & we had to—like our forefathers, be satisfied with the guidance of heavenly bodies. However, when these also fail and hide themselves behind an impenetrable fog, yes, then it is not easy to be a sailor (seaman). Without encountering any particularly difficult passage through the ice, we criss-crossed our way southward close to shore along the west coast of Boothia Felix. On the 2nd of September we were unlucky and ran aground between Matty Island & Boothia Felix. The uneven rocks on the bottom made the situation tense. We tried all possible attempts to get the vessel off—but all in vain. The night of the 3rd we had a violent storm. By setting all the sails & throw out most of our load on deck overboard, we were successful in getting the keel off. On the 9th we arrived in Pettersen Bay, on the southeastern side of King William Land and anchored outside a small protected harbor. Since the wind at this time blew away from the harbor, and the entrance was narrow we had to be satisfied to stay outside and be patient. We took this advantage to measure depth to secure a safe navigation in. Saturday the 12th, the-wind died off and allowed us to sail into—Gjøa harbor. This harbor, which would be our resting place for nearly 2 years is very nicely protected. The approach to it is very narrow - only a few meters wider than our vessel - & facing south. The inner harbor is completely closed. The magnetic observation which were taken the next day showed us that we could not have chosen a better spot for our station. Now a busy time started for us. We had to have all our provisions on shore to protect them against moisture, and to make more room on board. On the 17th we had finished this work, and for us we now started the building of necessary housing. The materials for these houses were our provision boxes. All the boxes were double - an inner tin chest surrounded by wood. These boxes were all the same size and nailed together by copper nails, to prevent them from influencing the magnetic instruments. When we brought the provision on shore, we removed all the outer layers of the boxes and the provision was stored in the inner tin boxes. The wooden boxes were brought to the spot where the building was to stand, filled with sand and used for the outside wall. We attained thus to have a solid and warm house. 2 houses were built from these boxes. One for the magnetic variation instruments. The other to house 2 of the members of the expedition. The 2nd of November the various kinds of observations began.

During the last days of October we had the first visit by the Eskimos. They belong to the Ogluli tribe, which has its hunting ground on the northern coast of the American continent along Simpson Strait. This tribe came in contact with the Schwatka expedition in 1880, but had since then had no contact with white men. We kept company with this tribe and became good friends with them all. However, we later

met the Netchjilli tribe and they became our best friends.—This first year was particularly rich in game, Big herds of reindeer were everywhere & a few of them even came as far as our vessel. We slayed 100 reindeers for food for ourselves and our dogs, and could have killed several times that if we had wished to. We also got a good deal of grouse. The first days of October the harbor froze, and the necessary preparations to withstand the winter were done as soon as the work allowed it. The vessel was covered with sails & snow thrown over it. Double windows were put in, ventilation was arranged, and many other little things were done, which made the stay on board both warm and pleasant. The so often written about polar night could be met without fear. Good harbor, good housing, a good ship and plenty of food. In addition, our location at the low latitude of 68° 37'N, we didn't have any darkness worth speaking of. Christmas and the New Year came up there as it did everywhere else on this earth, with celebrations and feasts. We did what we could to make it a very festive time. Then came spring and with that the preparations for the sledge tours. This spring sledging would be done along the west coast of Boothia Felix, to investigate the magnetic conditions there. 7 of our best sledge dogs had, however, died during the winter, and had left us, therefore, very poorly outfitted as far as that was concerned. However, we managed to do what we needed with the surviving dogs.

March 1st, 1904, 4 of us departed to establish a depot for the main expedition, which was to start in the beginning of April. On this trip we observed our lowest temperature -79°F. It was calm so the cold was not noticed much. Our excellent outfits, given to us by our eskimo friends contributed to this. During our work to bring our provisions out, we came in contact with the Netchjilli Eskimos. One morning as we were working with the sledges and dogs along the east coast of King William Land, suddenly a human being appeared on the pack-ice. He was joined immediately by others, and within short time 30 Eskimos—all men, had gathered in a group approx 100 steps from us. They were obviously uncertain about how they should proceed. We made the first step towards friendship & approached them with the cry "Manik-tu-mi". It was evident that this calmed them down & within short time they all enthusiastically replied to our greeting. Our Ogluli friends had, during the winter, taught us quite a few words of their language, and thus, we made ourselves understood on this occasion. They informed us, that their igloos (snow huts), were on the other side of the pack-ice, not too far away. I decided to accompany them and to become acquainted with their tribe which seemed to be very friendly. It was a noisy procession that made its way across the ice. They thought we were immensely comical & we answered, of course, their cheerful laughter in the same coin. They were on their way to their seal grounds when they met us. Most of them had dogs with them. All the dogs were now harnessed to our two sledges - a sign of hospitality - and with each sledge drawn by 20 dogs, we made good time. The dogs did not get along as well as their masters, and a furious battle broke out now and then. After traveling a couple of hours, we reached their huts. These numbered 16 & stood in the middle of the ice.

The fair sex was, in the beginning, somewhat timid, however, guided by an older beauty, they all walked in a line, guided by the previously mentioned lady. They passed all of us & uttered a brief grunt, which apparently was meant as a welcome. After this parade, they all disappeared to their respective huts to recuperate from this exertions. Only 3 of the tribe's oldest members had seen "white men" or Kabluna before, at a place they called "Eivili", which I later learned was in the vicinity of Repulse Bay. Repulse Bay is a small bay in the Northwestern part of Hudson Bay. It was this tribe - the Netchjilli Eskimos - that became our very dear friends and with sorrow saw us depart from King William Land. They were all nicely dressed in new, fine clothes made of reindeer skins. They all wear the original costume with long tail-pieces on their coats - much like a full-dress coat. The next day we continued on and were accompanied by an Eskimo. On our return trip we again met with the same colony, and most of them decided to accompany us to view the wonder none of them had seen before - a ship. It was a jolly trip back in company with these nordical happy inhabitants. They became a huge surprise & pleasure for our comrades on board to see this colony arrive. It livens up the somewhat monotonous existence to see new faces. Soon after their arrival, they started to erect their snow dwellings & within short time "Gjøa" was surrounded by an Eskimo village. Frequent visits by both sides followed. They wanted to see everything we possessed and we were taken by their beautiful & warm clothes and were anxious to attain some of those. That was not difficult to do. In exchange for wood and iron we could have whatever we wanted. One item which for us was utterly without worth, was empty food tin cans. These were very desired. And if they were shiny and had a handle, the worth increased. At this occasion I gave a man among them - who had showed me particular hospitality during my stay on the ice, a rifle with some ammunition. His joy was indescribable when he received this unexpected gift, however, what followed was that everybody wanted a rifle. The transition from empty cans to rifles and ammunition seemed to me a bit huge, and I tried to make them understand that. However, it took several days before I could convince them that we were not gun-laden. The 3rd of April I went, together with Peder Ristvedt—the expedition's meteorologist, engineer, watch-maker, blacksmith, tin-man etc, etc, etc—out to set up several magnetic stations along the west coast of Boothia Felix. We had supplies for 3 months, however had to return after 2 months when our depot was robbed by an Eskimo tribe living further north: Itchjuachtorvik lived on the east coast of Boothia Felix.

In August Lieutenant Hansen & Helmer Hansen started out in a boat to examine the conditions in Simpson Strait, and particularly in the waters around Eta Island, the narrowest passage on the water westward. The plan of the expedition—submitted by the "Norwegian Geographical Society" in Kristiania, was that the expedition, after the conclusion of the magnetic work had been done, should turn westward & not back East. The reason for this was that the ice conditions along the west coast of Boothia Felix were regarded as the most difficult. After what I now have seen, I have come to the

conclusion that one cannot point to one particular spot which is more difficult to pass than another. One year is so different from another. In 1903 the ice conditions along Boothia Felix did not cause any difficulties. In 1904 I have doubts that this was the case, since the ice - according to the Eskimos - had been covering the waters towards Matty Island the entire summer and autumn & thus most likely had blocked up the narrow passage. Lieutenant Hansen succeeded in examining Simpson Strait & placing a depot on Cape Crozier ~ on the southwest point of King William Land. The depot was to be used on the next sledge expedition which had been decided to start the spring of 1905 to the east coast of Victoria Land. On his investigation of the Simpson Strait, Lieutenant Hansen found that the Northern Sound, which separates Eta Island from King William Land, was impassable. The southern port was covered with ice.

The summer had been raw and cold & the fall came early. The reindeer, which the year before had been plentiful, seemed this fall to shun the land. We succeeded therefore this fall to only kill 30 reindeers. The Eskimos had better luck while hunting on the coast of North America, and brought us much meat during the winter months. We also received a considerable amount of fish from the Eskimos. Salmon, trout, cod and "whitefish" were brought to us in quantities. We therefore had plenty of fresh food also the second winter. In October, the Eskimos - who had been scattered about their different hunting grounds - began to reappear near the ship, and livened up our existence. However, this time we were honored by their presence longer than we were comfortable with. Not until February 1905 did they show signs of breaking up. By then their stock of provision was used up and they had to seek new hunting grounds. Once more a Christmas passed by & a New Year & the light days began slowly to prevail. With these came the busy time - the preparations for the impending sledge expedition. This started April 2nd. It was headed by Lieutenant Hansen and accompanied by Peder Ristvedt. The object of this trip was to chart the unknown east coast of Victoria Land. Including the depot at Cape Crozier they were provisioned for 70 days.

During their absence we had a busy time on board. Everything was to be made ready for our departure and the vessel had to be overhauled. The houses which were erected on shore were the first to go. They were taken down during the last part of May and the beginning of June. The boxes were carried down to the house with the provisions & the remaining provision were again packed into the wooden boxes & taken onboard. All the instruments had to be taken down, polished and put away, and several other tasks that kept us moving all this time.

In the beginning of June several groups of Eskimos returned from their seal hunting grounds, and raised their tents in our close proximity. They knew that we would be leaving in a short time and that many objects of great value to them would be left behind. We observed many amusing scenes during that

time. 50 empty petroleum barrels, a large number of empty wooden boxes, several planks and much more, we collected and placed on the shore line, divided into 12 equal piles to give to those who deserved it the most. To describe the joy & delight in which these 12 individuals displayed on this occasion would be difficult. They were now all rich people. I doubt that a multi-millionaire ever felt as wealthy as did these Eskimos when they received these gifts. The funniest scene was, however, when the fair sex received their gifts. I had previously gathered together all the empty tin cans we had - probably several hundred - in a big pile. All the ladies were summoned at a certain hour - when the sun stood in the west, which generally meant that the day's work was ended. At the appointed time, all the ladies appeared, and I led them to the spot where the great event was to take place. I arranged them in a tight ring surrounding the pile of cans & told them that when I gave them a certain sign they were allowed to take as many cans as they could be able to. No sooner was the sign given before they all - young and old alike - threw themselves headlong into the pile. An ocean of arms and legs, yells and screams, mixed with a rain of tin cans were all one could see. After the hardest battle was over, the participants gathered their booty & laughingly and with great gaiety they all went back to their own tents.

On the 24th of June Lieutenant Hansen and Sergeant Ristvedt returned from their sledge trip. Lieutenant Hansen had been successful in charting the east coast of Victoria Land as far north as latitude 72° 10' & in the ocean between King William Land, Victoria Land and the American coast they had found a large number of unknown islands. These were entered on the map. The depot at Cape Crozier had been destroyed by bears, but they had been fortunate to run across game the entire way: reindeer, bears, seals and hares. At Lind Island, off the southeastern point of Victoria Land—they met several Kiilnermiun Eskimos from the Coppermine River, These showed themselves as friendly as the rest of the tribes.

The ice on Gjøa Harbor was gone as early as July, however, the ice in Simpson Strait remained unbroken long afterward. The ice between Todd Island & Point Richardson on the American coast was particularly tough. Finally, on August 12th, it looked like the ice would begin to move. We then made the final preparations & that night the same day everything was ready for departure.—On August 13th at 3 a.m. Gjøa lifted anchor and left Gjøa Harbor. Our dear Eskimo friends stood on the shore for a long time and waved the last farewells to us.

Through thick fog and snow-storms we sounded our way to Booth Strait along King William Land, where we had to drop anchor sheltered by a small rock. In the afternoon, it cleared up, and once again we could continue on. The passage between the Todd Islands and the ice-pack was not very wide - only so wide, in fact, that we could slip through. On the other side of this narrow channel we found a large sheet of open water. At 5 a.m., on the 14th, we dropped anchor off "Kamiglu" a few miles to the

east of Eta Island. Several of our Eskimo friends had settled down here for their summer hunt. After they had supplied us with meat, and we had taken a young Eskimo boy onboard, who wished to go with us, we left the spot at 10 a.m. Since the northern Eta Sound had proved itself impassable, there was nothing else we could do but to try the southern passage. This is % mile wide and rather filled with shoals. We slipped through & came out on the other side. The next doubtful passage was between the islands discovered by Lieutenant Hansen in the spring. The ice, which lay solid between the islands & the American coast, forced us to seek a way right through these. The water there was full of rocks and shoals & less than comfortable. We found the Victoria Channel full of ice, however, enough room for us. Further westward we found the water for the most part free of ice. The passage to Dolphin & Union Strait, was not so easy to find, because dangerous shoals were scattered between Lambert Island—Douglas Island & America. After searching for a while, we found our way out. It looked favorable to the west. The 25th of August we caught sight of the first sail on this side. It was the whaling schooner "Charles Hansson" of San Francisco, Captain McKenna. From him we received the first news of the civilization. What was of particular interest to us was the news about the conflict between Norway & Sweden. It was this in particular that made me decide to take a trip to the nearest telegraph station in order to get the facts. We didn't stay long onboard the "Charles Hansson". After having had dinner with the charming captain & received a particularly welcome gift of onions & fresh potatoes, we returned to our ship & continued our course. At Cape Bathurst we met our first difficulties with the ice. The ice was packed against the land & prevented all getting through. For 2 days we had to stay here. A southeastern wind pushed the ice from land & opened the passage for us. On our way westward we saw several whalers. We were hailed by "Alexander" & "Bowhead", Captains Tilton & Cook & were offered assistance if we wished. This was a little west of Hooper Island. The 2nd of September we tied up to a ground ice off Cape Sabine. The wind was against us and the trail along the shore was very narrow, so we could get nowhere. The next day we continued, however, had to stop at King Point because of dense ice. Again we tied up to the ground ice. It was no longer as lonely. On the shore of King Point was the shipwrecked whaling schooner—"Bonanza" of San Francisco. 2 of her crew and some Eskimos lived ashore to keep an eye on the provisions left behind.—Not too many days passed before we had to admit that we were shut in (up) for a third winter. We started the preparations for this last winter. Wood, which we previously had lacked, we now had huge amounts of on shore. From Mackenzie River, every year, driftwood is carried down and forced on shore by sea and ice. From the driftwood we erected a splendid cabin, in which 5 of us are now living. In addition, the house contains a kitchen & diningroom for all the members of the expedition. 2 men remained on board to look after and guard the ship. The various observatories were set up without delay & within a short time, everything was in the old ruts. During the

last days of September I went to Herschel Island to visit the whalers who were stuck (ice bound) in the ice there. I was cordially received and spent several very pleasant days there.—

On the 24th of October, the expedition which was to carry mail for the ice bound vessels, started. By the obligingness of the whalers, I was allowed to accompany this expedition & bring Gjøa expedition's mail forward. We took the shortest way across the mountains and reached Fort Yukon on the 20th of November. I had hoped to find a telegraph station here—but no, I had to walk 250 miles (European miles) further to the south to Eagle City, to find the first telegraph. The 5th of December I arrived there, after altogether having traveled a distance of aprox. 700 miles (European miles).—

Eagle City, Alaska

29th of December, 1905

Roald Amundsen