Dear All

Well what a day. It started with snow, and then whales and lastly a polar plunge. It has been phenomenal.

Off for a drink!

Dear all

It is to be officially noted that today has been one of the best days of my life!

It is 10.15pm and we will be woken at 6am for a 6.40 zodiac expedition but it is not yet dark, The sun has only just set with the most beautiful blessed sunset. The humpback whales are still accompanying us as we travel on to Wilmanilia? bay for our early trip tomorrow.

What a day. It snowed as we went out walking in a gentoo penguin colony on a small island in Milestone bay this morning. The moulting penguins looked so cold and miserable.

This afternoon we went out in the zodiacs in another location and were instantly met with whale sightings. The three minkee whales stayed with us for an hour or more curious and playful. They checked us all out on 12 x 10 zodiacs individually. They were as close as a metre from my hand at one point. Just incredible. We both got a whale blessing as one blew - and we got covered in a shower of water from its spout. It was that close and then we met 3 humpbacked whales too! Not so close but they showed us their tails umpteen times.

We eventually had to go back to the ship, and were then told that today was the day and here was the place that we could do a polar plunge if we so wished. Jump into the minus freezing Antarctic sea with nothing on but our swim suits. Who could be that daft? I did it! Peter did not. It was cold but lovely and clear and over so quickly and the hype was up as so many others did it too. It did give me a buzz and Sarah said I should do it so I did!

Hot shower. g and t. duck for dinner. sunset. humpbacks still with us. It is sooo amazing.

**And one from Peter about the day :**

**Stop press - reset the headlines**

Dear all,

**What a fantastic day we have had.**

This afternoon we did a zodiac cruise amongst Minke Whales which just wanted to play with us. Three of them just gracefully moved around our 12 zodiacs floating amongst the drifting ice and visiting each boat and quietly saying HELLO! This went on for 15+ minutes. We could touch them. One surfaced inches from our zodiac and blew - we got covered in his spray. Another just raised his head out of the water to look around - such big animals yet so gentle. We did not feel threatened by them being so close. Later in the cruise we saw a number of Humpback whales.

**Dany, our Minke Whale scientific expert from Quebec who had been studying them for 25 years, said afterwards this was his best encounter with Minkes in all his years! How priviledged are we ....**

Just now, during and after dinner as the sun was setting, a large number of Humpback Whales swam around in the bay. We had been moving south and the ship had been stopped and as the sun set they kept moving around near the surface. The visibility was fantastic for a change - we could see miles, the sun shone on the ice, the sky was clear and the sun was going down. Almost all the people on board were on deck to see and photograph this.

**What a way to go to bed ;-)**

Our day had started with snow falling and it fell all the morning making visibility poor. We went ashore at 9am for 60 or so minutes. It was a tiny island in the middle of a sheltered bay. The snow covered up the penguin poo and made things look smart again. We got some atmospheric photos of whale bones, a broken boat and penguins. It was good to walk on shore but also great to get back on ship to warm up and dry out.

We then had an interesting talk from Justine (the Oxford history graduate 1sthons) about a Belgian nut case (de Gerlech) who came down here to do science and mapping in 1904 but then spent a harsh winter down here stuck in the ice. <We are currently in the straights named after him.> Amundson happened to be on the trip and he clearly learnt a lot from the bad experiences of 1904/5 that helped him get to the South Pole before Scott!

Over lunch we moved a further 15 miles south. Along the way we saw several whales - best were a group of humpbacks as we arrived at our afternoon anchor spot. And then, as we went out in the zodiacs, the fun really began.

Tonight and on Friday morning we continue to head south. We have an early morning zodiac trip before breakfast to see some more penguins and bergs. Then on to Port Lockroy for lunch followed by a shore visit.

It is yet another UK place and we shall be sending some more postcards. It appears that Antarctic stamped post cards are valuable - so if you are lucky enough to get one then remember that it will be worth something in the future ……

Good night ….. roll on 6am tomorrow!

We woke at 6am to clear skies, 0C and glassy sea. We were anchored in Wihelimina Bay - a large mostly enclosed bay surrounded by high white mountains and an ice-cliffed edge.

Glorious sun lit views from our cabin window of a mostly white world. The sea had a fresh, thin layer of ice that had formed overnight due to the stillness and cold. Great conditions for our zodiac trip round the bay - and also for the kayakers to get afloat. We saw no penguins because the sea was full of Humpback whales. Got lots of photos and sevral videos of the whales at close quarters. A great trip - and all before breakfast.

BTW - as we left the bay we saw another ship - the first ship we'd seen since or first day on S Georgia. There is not a lot of traffic down here ;-)

We are having a BBQ tonight - out on deck!

**Wilhelmina Bay & Port Lockroy**

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing." - Helen Keller

0600 Wake-up call

0640 We hope to explore **Wilhelmina Bay**

Wilhelmina Bay lies between Reclus Peninsula and Cape Anna, along the west coast of Graham Land. It was discovered by Adrian de Gerlache during the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897-99, and named for Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, who was 18 years of age at the time and reigned until 1948. It is a large 24-kilometre (15-mile) wide, glaciated bay containing many islands and often frequented by whales.

**1st Disembarkation: Amundsen & Scott**

**2nd Disembarkation: Shackleton & Wild**

0830 - 0930 **Breakfast** is served in the Dining Room (Deck 3)

1100 Presentation: **'Whales in Depth'** will be presented by our marine biologist **Dany**

1230 - 1330 **Lunch** is served in the Dining Room (Deck 3)

TBA - A special guest from **Port Lockroy** is invited to come aboard to deliver a presentation in the Main Lounge (Deck 5)

Afterward, we plan to land at **Port Lockroy (Goudier Island** & **Jougla Point)**

**Goudier Island** lies on the western side of Wiencke Island in the Palmer Archipelago, and is home to the restored British Antarctic Survey (BAS) hut, museum and gift shop. The gentoo penguin colony at this site is part of a long-term study monitoring the impact of tourist activities on penguins. The gift shop accepts most major credit cards, USD and British pounds.

**Jougla Point,** Wienke Island, is a rocky peninsula indented with small coves and a raised beach. Gentoo penguins, kelp gulls, Antarctic cormorants and skuas breed on the island among rounded boulders and rocks. Due to the guidelines for these landing sites, our afternoon excursion will be as follows: **Disembarkation Sequence:**

**Shackleton & Wild** come to shore

while **Scott & Amundsen** enjoy the Documentary Film, '**Penguin Post Office'**, in the Main Lounge (Deck 5). **Amundsen & Scott** come to shore while **Wild & Shackleton** enjoy the documentary in the Main Lounge (Deck 5).

1830 Join us on the outer deck (Deck 6) for an **Antarctic BBQ!**

Remember to bring your most unique and outrageous hat creation!

After Dinner Join **Ben & the Expedition Team** in the Club for an **Antarctic Quiz!**