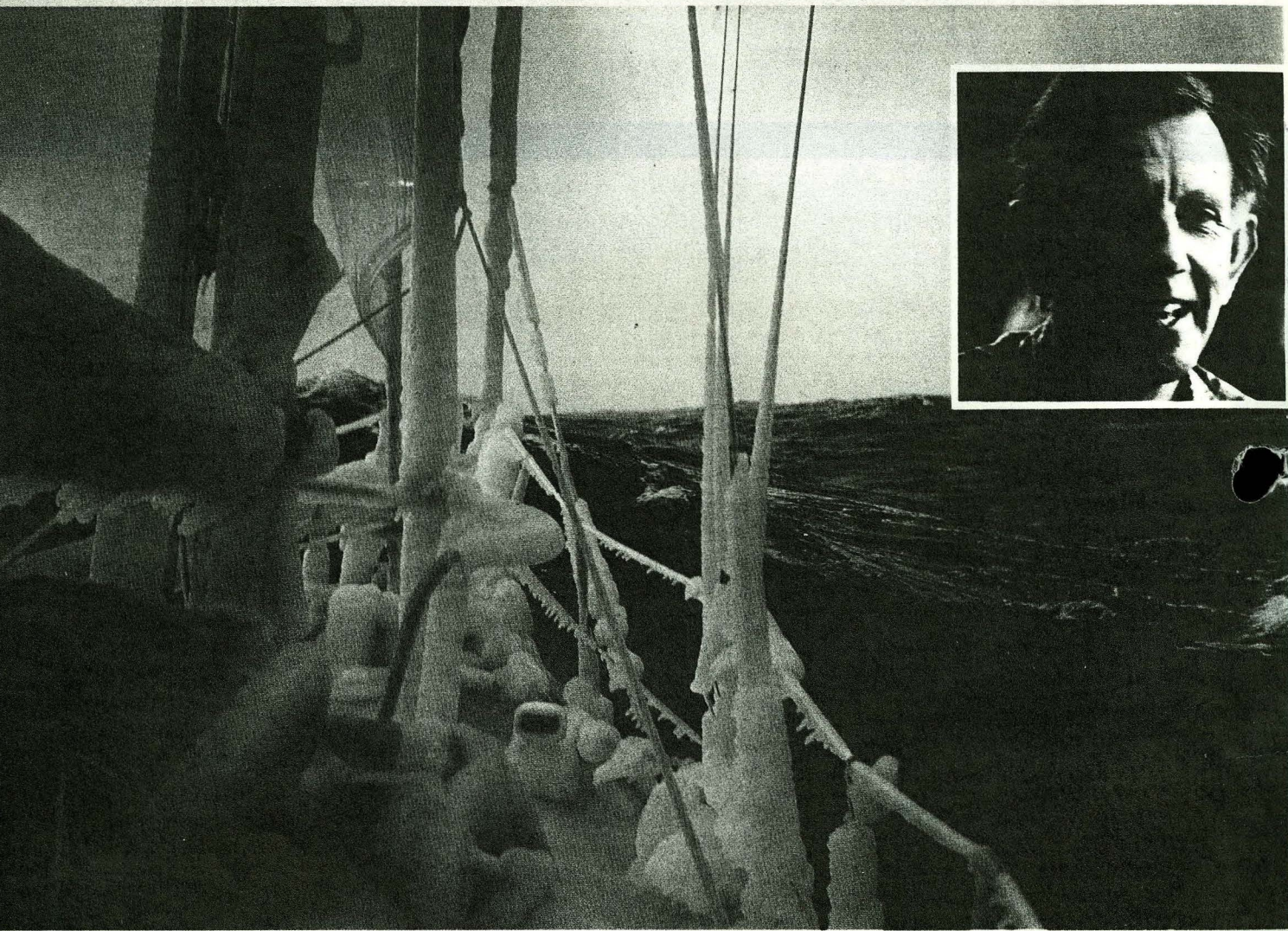


# TOTORORE EXPE



**I**N 1985 Gerry Clark stopped over in Cape Town to replenish ship during his peregrinations through the Southern Ocean on a voyage whose primary motive was the study of birds. Back home in New Zealand he received several awards for his ornithological work and was awarded an MBE. On the sailing side he received the Tilman Medal from the Royal Cruising Club of Great Britain and the Blue Water Medal of the Cruising Club of America.

Below Clark gives his impressions of the voyage from South Georgia to Cape Town. At that time he was 58 years old. This month Century Hutchinson are publishing *The Totorore Voyage*, which gives a full account of the trip. . . .

"WELCOME to the Royal Yacht Club!" said Bobby Cattermole. He and another club member had appeared from nowhere to take *Totorore's* lines as we thankfully pushed our way into a marina berth in front of the club house just on dark. It was October 25, 1985, and we were experiencing our first "Cape Doctor", which shrieked through the rigging of the huge assemblage of yachts at the club, and set up a loud tattoo of halyards clanking on alloy masts.

*Totorore* is a New Zealand yacht or, strictly speaking, a sailing research vessel, then already two years, eight months on a conservation oriented ornithological research expedition in the southern oceans. She is made of wood, 10.3 metres long, is cutter rigged, and has a clipper bow and bowsprit. I designed and built her myself specifically for that expedition.

My crew consisted of Chris Sale, 28, from New Zealand and Julia von Meyer, 38, from Chile. We were all glad to be in Cape Town after a voyage from South Georgia via South Sandwich Islands and Bouvetoya, which had been, except for the idyllic past two weeks,

rugged to say the least.

When we had left a small cove on the extreme south coast of South Georgia on September 12, a moderate gale was blowing and the ice-studded sea was rough. Snow showers frequently obscured visibility, forcing us to reduce sail and speed to minimise damage should we hit big ice. Only ten days before we had prepared to sail, then were caught in a gale and broke our bowsprit on ice, and were forced to return to effect repairs. We had spent the whole winter in South Georgia, counting the chicks of king penguins and wandering albatrosses, and now we were in a hurry to see if there were any king penguins on the South Sandwich Islands, before the pack ice prevented our reaching them. September is usually the month of greatest extent of the pack ice, and in some years it extends far north of even South Georgia, but for our two winters there we had been lucky.

Icebergs and "berg bits", as the smaller pieces are called, and the smaller still "growlers" which are hardest to see, littered our route. Generally we could see the bergs and tried to pass to leeward of them, as they often left a

thick trail of broken floating ice to windward. We were all rather tense, never knowing when we would meet the pack, and with sea and temperatures sub zero our two hour ice watch in the cockpit were a great strain, especially at night. Down below, even in our sleeping bags with all our clothes on, we still felt cold, and the wooden hull amplified the noise made by collisions with lumps of ice, which then scraped along the sides of the boat. It was exciting, but rather frightening. We pressed on.

Most of the icebergs, which were all shapes and sizes, and a variety of colours, had penguins on them, mainly chinstrap penguins. When we came close to Zavodovski, and later other islands of the group, we saw many grounded bergs with the penguins on them awaiting their cues to go ashore to their habitual breeding places, in November. These bergs had drifted up from the Weddell Sea, and as these penguins return to the same breeding place each year, we wondered how they knew which berg would bring them safely home to it.

The South Sandwich Islands are volcanic, mostly showing some activity, and are uninhabited and inhospitable. Covered with ice and snow, and edged with intricate tracery of frozen

Main pictures above shows *Totorore* beginning to ice up. The author says that by the time it was really bad he was too busy chopping ice to reduce the dangerous 15 degree list to take photographs.

Inset: Gerry Clark

# DITION

# VOYAGE FOR THE BIRDS BY GERRY CLARK

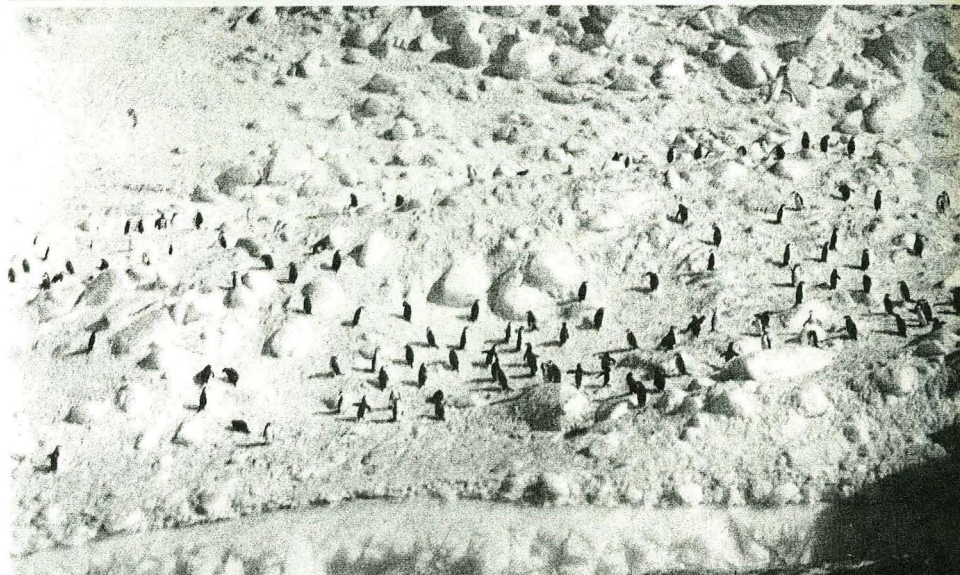
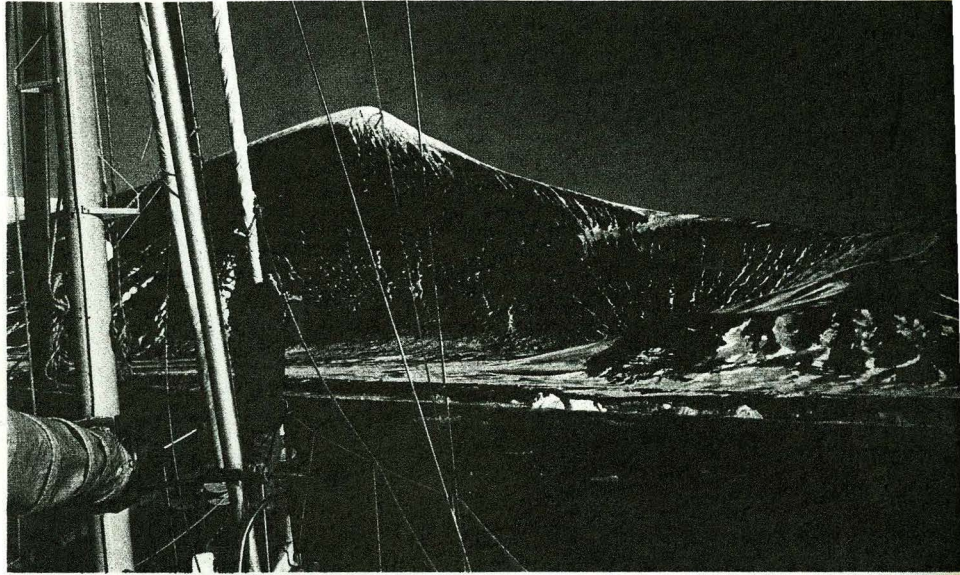
spray from the heavy swells breaking on the jagged lava cliffs, they are not easy to land on. We closely examined Zavodovski, with its great crater belching steam, and spent a night at anchor in its precarious lee.

The next day we sailed to Visokoi Island and looked for a sheltered cove on the eastern side. As we approached, the wind rose abruptly and furious force 10 squalls held us off. I asked Chris to furl the jib, and Julia to start the engine. To our horror we found that the furling drum on our luff spar was broken, probably from hitting ice, and the only way we could clear the line was to unfurl the sail to its full size first, and then disentangle it. The sail flogged unmercifully as Chris valiantly worked out there on the bowsprit, and the breaking seas soaked him. We tried to hold *Tororore* up to the wind, using the engine, but with the full sail up we could not do it and she heeled far over. The sheet track broke away from the gunwale, and the flogging sheet hammered the heavy lead block and its traveller against the cabin coaming, threatening to stave it in, and the two ports there too. I shouted to Julia at the helm to try to keep the sail just full, so that I could secure the block, but as it was on the lee side with too much sail, the block was under water. I wrestled with it, leaning out through the lifelines, and green water broke right over my head, knocking my hood back and tearing away my woolly hat. The shock of the freezing water was painful, especially on my head. Meanwhile we were heading for the rocks, so we had to bear away to just clear them, narrowly missing an iceberg just outside. What a nightmare situation it was!

Eventually, after a terrible struggle, we got the sail off and down below, and tried to motor back up to the cove. It was no good, the wind would not let us cross that last ¼ mile of wild water to reach comparative shelter. After battling for five hours, we gave up. We were all soaked and freezing, exhausted and dispirited. We hoove to, and drifted rapidly away from Visokoi.

Farther south, we made exciting landings on Vindication and Candlemas Islands, climbed to a steaming volcano crater, and studied nesting fulmars, cape pigeons and snow petrels. Adélie penguins were coming ashore to start breeding, and we saw thousands of them on Saunders Island.

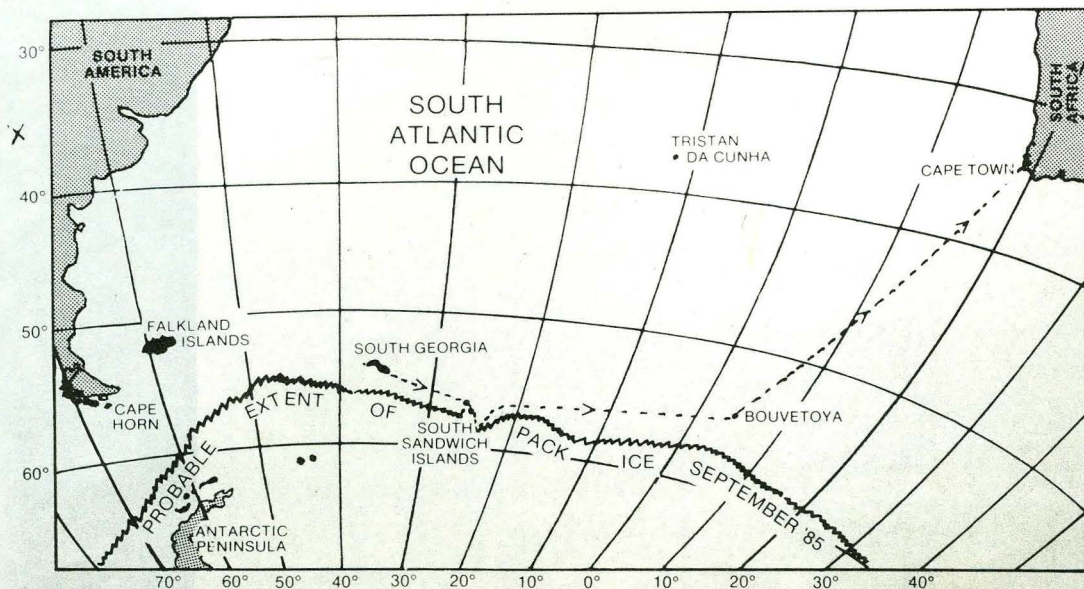
When still 12 miles from Montagu Island and in 58° 8½'S, 26° 27'W we met the pack ice, advancing rapidly and closing around the islands in a big pincer movement. It was an awe inspiring experience. Ice in all shapes and sizes jostling together in a close press from horizon to horizon, and stretching ahead for a thousand



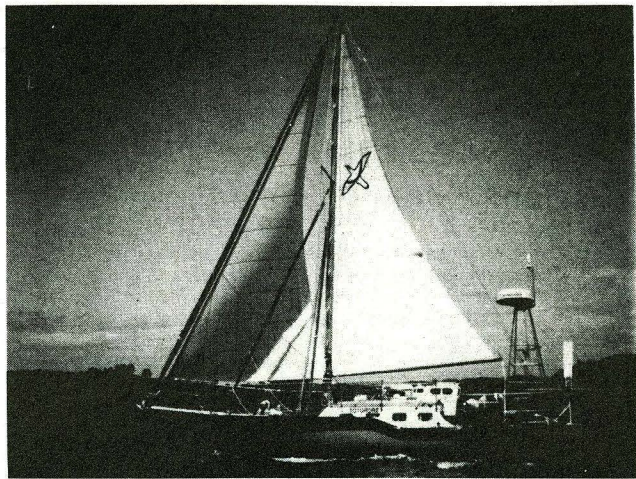
Top above: Saunders Island, South Sandwich Islands. Thermal warmth from an active volcano kept this hill of cinders clear of ice.

Above: Chinstrap and Adélie penguins on iceberg. The penguins migrate hundreds of miles like this by hitching rides on drifting ice.

Below: Chart of the course as described in this article.



# Southern Ocean Expedition For The Birds



miles or so to Antarctica. Trapped icebergs hosted penguins, and seals played on the floes, while Antarctic and snow petrels wheeled overhead. We had no option but to escape to the north-east as quickly as it was safe to do so.

The next two weeks were difficult. We hit more ice, and damaged our bow, breaking the bob stay, but our worst problem was icing-up on board, caused by freezing spray. Sailing was impossible as the running rigging became thick and hard. The winches disappeared under ice, and even the tiller was in solid ice built up above the aft hatch. During daylight hours we desperately chopped ice, but it was too dangerous at night to continue, so by the morning the extra weight on deck was frightening. *Totorore* lost her initial stability, and lolled over to about 15° to one side. When an exceptionally big sea pushed her, she flopped to the other side and stayed there. Usually, after we had freed the tiller and the staysail, we were able to sail a little, but it was a great relief to all of us when temperatures rose and we could make real progress again.

Until a day after we left Bouvetoya there was almost always at least one iceberg in sight, but icing on board became less of a problem. It was a stormy passage, and *Totorore* was knocked down more times than we could count.

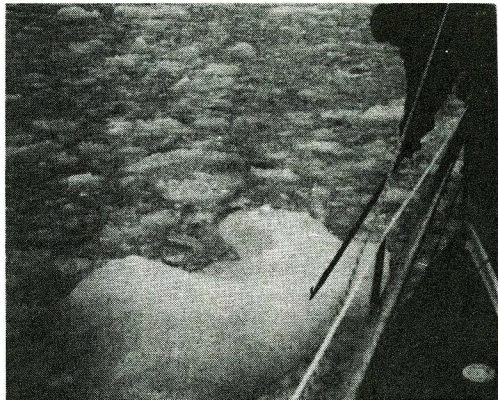
At Bouvetoya it was blowing force 9 when we arrived and we searched in vain for a sheltered anchorage. The island is almost round, about five miles across, reaches 2 650 feet high, and is mostly covered with ice. It is Norwegian but uninhabited, and is the most isolated piece of land on the earth's surface. Occasionally South African scientists visit it in the summer. We stayed for four days in five different precarious anchorages, and managed one circumnavigation, but no landings. The weather and sea conditions were terrible, and raising the anchor was an exhausting task. On our last day we were trying to shift to another anchorage, but were blown away instead, so carried on towards Cape Town.

Sailing across the Roaring Forties was like a holiday, and as the temperature rose about 1° Celsius every day we gradually shed our many layers of clothing. Bird watching was fantastic, and watches were again fun rather than an ordeal. At last we sighted the magnificent Table Mountain, and marvelled at the beauty of the great city spread out below it.

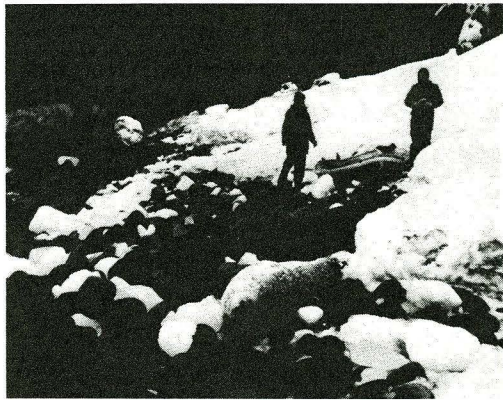
In Cape Town we had much to do to prepare for the next leg of our expedition, and we were kept busy, but it was a pleasant time for all of us, made especially so by the friendliness and helpfulness of so many people whom we met at the Royal Cape Yacht Club. Stan Gorge introduced himself as Port Captain for the Slocum Society, and his generous assistance was invaluable to us. Many others also offered their services in one way or another, and we thank them all for their kindness, especially Brian Bradfield, Eric Hertzberg, Bill Crook, and Brian Stephens of the Inflatable Boat Centre.

The day after we arrived at the Royal Cape Yacht Club there was to be a race to Hout Bay for breakfast the next morning. It was blowing a gale, gusting 60 knots, and yet nearly thirty boats started off for the race. We were most impressed. Great sailors these South Africans!

**Totorore just before she left New Zealand.**



**Fending off the loose pack-ice, South Georgia.**



**Ashore at Vindication Island, South Sandwich Islands. Clark reports that few people had set foot on the island before the Totorore Expedition landed.**



**A fur seal keeps an eye on the landing party.**

**Photographs: Gerry Clark**