



DEEP FREEZE

A Flybe employee has braved some of the most extreme conditions known to man to walk across one of the world's largest glaciers in Greenland...

Flybe aircraft technician Peter Herbert and British polar explorer Alan Chambers MBE have completed a polar expedition across Greenland, the world's second-largest ice cap, as part of the Great British Mobility Feet of Green initiative. Sponsored by the Great British Mobility Group and Flybe, this education project focuses on three polar expeditions, with two more planned for 2009 and 2010. The initiative's main aim is to teach children about climate change, polar expeditions, and to inspire them to take up similar challenges.

Alan and Peter completed the 535-kilometre trip in just 25 days in May – almost half the time they estimated it would take. It began with a gruelling two-week climb to reach 10,000 feet, an ascent that was made harder by Peter being ill for the first nine days. But despite these drawbacks, the pair, who have been planning the trip for two years, are very pleased with how things worked out. "It went very well; it went exactly how we planned it," said Alan.

But what they didn't bank on was the strange weather they encountered. Peter said, "We were very surprised to see rain at 9,000 feet on top of the second-largest glacier in the world, and at other times to have temperatures of 80°F/90°F!"

The pair made several video and audio clips, which were posted on www.feetofgreen.com. Back in the UK, Dr Richard Hale, Education and Business Director of Feet of Green, posted daily updates on the website, which brought the thrills and spills of the expedition into thousands of schools across the UK. Some schools also linked up directly with the team via a solar-powered satellite phone. Many schools have introduced Feet of Green into the curriculum in order to bring subjects such as climate change and geography alive.

The only low point came at the end of the trip, when they had to descend the steep side of the ice cap through blizzard conditions with little visibility, making them unable to spot

potential hazards like crevasses and polar bears – or even see where they were going. Luckily, through expert navigation, they were able to reach the point where a boat was to pick them up – only for their hopes to be dashed when the boat couldn't make it because the ice was too thick to sail through.

It meant they had to walk another 33 kilometres to a different spot before finally meeting up with Inuits who welcomed them into the remote village of Isortoq. Here the extreme weather conditions mean the lifestyle is all about survival. Poor weather meant the pair couldn't be flown home for over a week, so Peter and Alan had time to really get to know the Inuit people.

"They looked after us fantastically," Peter says. "They've got so little and yet they would give you everything they had."

The delay also meant the pair were able to do carry out some educational work they hadn't anticipated – teaching Inuit children about the Feet of Green project, and even organising for them to speak to children from the UK on the telephone.

When *Flybe Uncovered* caught up with Peter and Alan on their way home, their feet were sore and they were looking forward to putting them up –

albeit briefly. But the Feet of Green project will not stop although the first trip is over, and Peter and Alan will be visiting UK schools to talk about their experiences over the next few months and inspire them to get out and about. This is something that is crucial to the trip's main sponsor, the Great British Mobility Group. Although it helps the elderly maintain mobility, it wants to encourage a sense of adventure in young people, and to raise awareness about climate change and the effect it will have on future generations.

As far as the next two expeditions are concerned, nothing has been planned, but there is talk of taking schoolchildren on a polar expedition – the ultimate educational experience.

To read about the Feet of Green project see www.feetofgreen.com

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CREDIT: FEET OF GREEN



PETER HERBERT (BELOW RIGHT) WITH FLYBE CHIEF EXECUTIVE JIM FRENCH