

# NORDIC JAGT GRÖNLAND

Polar Research - The Fascination of a Legend

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**NORDIC JAGT  
GRÖNLAND**

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## **Nordic Jagt Grönland**

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**Editing:** Erik Hoops, Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum

**Concept and idea:** Ankerherz Verlag GmbH

**Texts:** Stefan Kruecken

**German-English translations:** Judith Rosenthal

**Title illustration:** Hans Baltzer

**Photos:** Axel Martens, except p. 2: Explora\_2005,  
p. 31: Kai Martin Ulrich

**Historical maps:** from: Die erste deutsche Nordpolar-Expedition  
im Jahre 1868. Described by K. Koldewey. With a foreword by  
A. Petermann. Gotha, 1871

**Design:** Daniela Greven

**Corporate Design:** GfG/Gruppe für Gestaltung

# On the Fascination of a Legend

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The “Nordic Jagt”-type yacht *Grönland* (i.e. Greenland) is a vessel with many stories. On 15 September 1868, it tacked to a latitude of 81°4,5'N – farther north than any other ship has ever managed without an auxiliary engine on board. On that adventurous voyage under the command of Captain Carl Koldewey, the crew experienced heavy storms and narrowly escaped both pack ice and polar bear attacks. The *Grönland's* first journey to the Far North laid the foundation for German maritime research.

But what's really special is: the ship is still in operation today.

Nowadays the *Grönland* is in just as good condition as it was in the days of the pioneers. It is affectionately cared for by a crew of volunteers who also cultivate the seamanship and crafts that were in practice when the ship was new. The Nordic Jagt is a sailing ambassador from a past age. A century and a half after its expedition, it's still travelling the seas – an active ship whose planks are steeped in tradition.

In this brochure, scientists and experts explain what's behind the sto-

ries about the *Grönland*. Reinhard A. Krause shows that sometimes everything depends on the tenacity and staying power of a single individual. In the case of the *Grönland*, that person was the geographer and publicist August Petermann (1822-1878) of Gotha, who sent the expedition on its way against great resistance. In the chapter headed “Interests”, you'll read about why he nevertheless considered the trip a failure, and why he fell out with the expedition's leader, Captain Carl Koldewey.

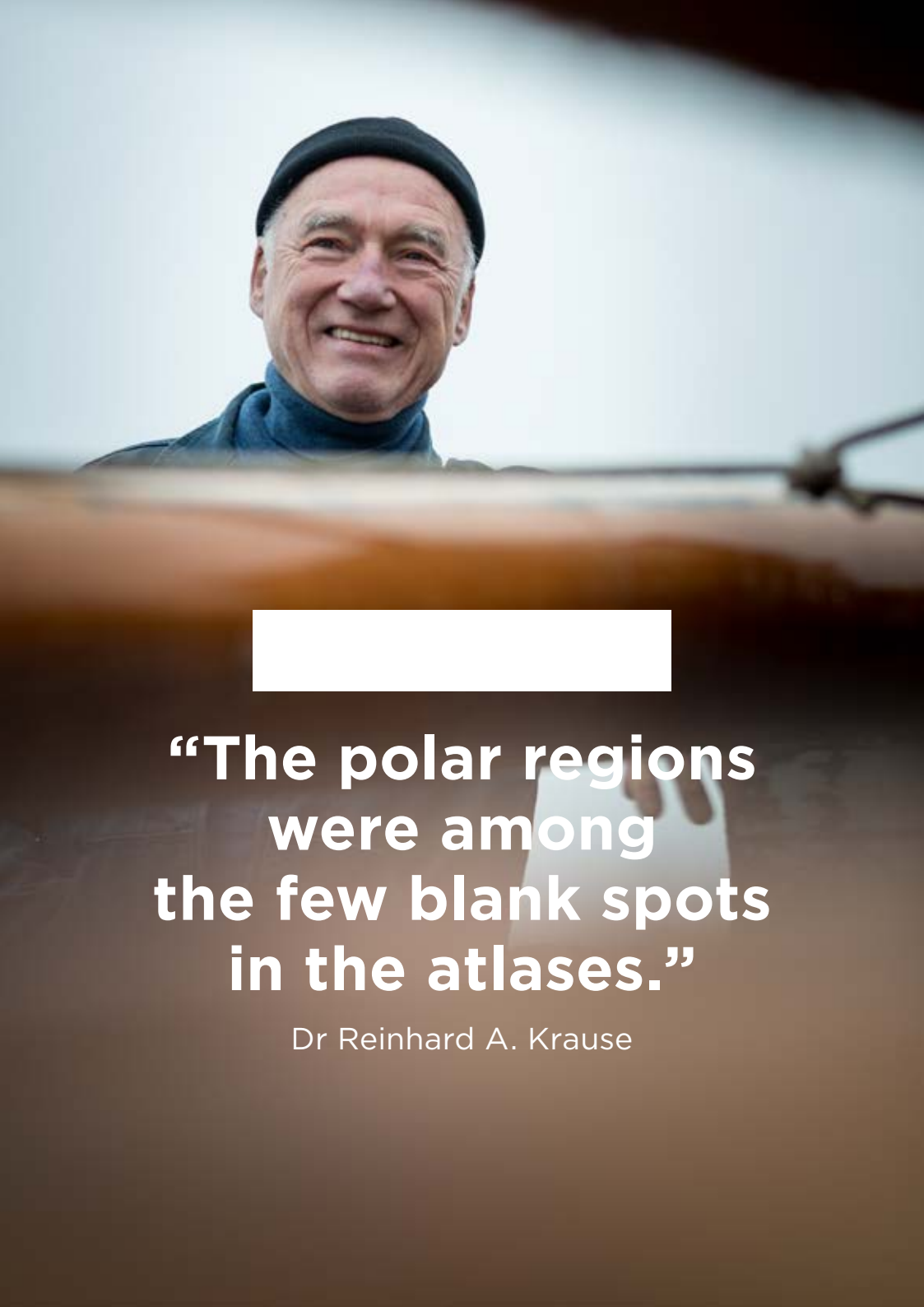
Under the heading “Materiality”, Lars Kröger recounts how the ship's purchase came about and by what circuitous route it ultimately found its way to Bremerhaven. A mere 29.3 metres long, the vessel is still fascinating people today – among them the young scientist Kröger. He associates it not only with scientific insights and adventures, but also with the intense smell of brown tar and oil lamps.

Finally, in the chapter entitled “Perception”, André Benthien describes the great adventure from the crew's perspective. The *Grönland* has been part of Benthien's life since he was a



little boy, and now he's the head of the volunteer crew. His dream: someday, he'd like to set out on a voyage on the *Grönland* taking the pioneers' route to the Far North.

One thing is certain: the legend of this ship lives on.



**“The polar regions  
were among  
the few blank spots  
in the atlases.”**

Dr Reinhard A. Krause

# Open Sea to the North Pole

## Dr Reinhard A. Krause

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The cartographer August Petermann was the driving force behind the first German polar expedition. Despite many setbacks, he stubbornly pressed ahead with his plans for the adventure. Science historian Reinhard A. Krause sheds light on a man who discovered the North Pole at his desk.

The reasons for the first German polar expedition are as multi-layered as old ice in Greenland. Why did men venture the voyage to the Far North at that particular point in time? Who had a vested interest in such a journey and why? To answer these questions, we must consider the event within the context of an emerging euphoria for the nation in the young country of Germany. And we must regard the history of the *Grönland* as an expression of civic commitment and a tale of two very different personalities.

On the one hand, there was the man who was undoubtedly the most important for the *Grönland's* expedition: the geographer and publicist August Petermann (1822-1878) of Gotha. He was first and foremost a cartographer who loved entering new discoveries in atlases, and his maps were among the finest of their time. *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*, as he called a monthly journal he oversaw as

publisher, was known the world over. Petermann had lived in England for seven years and initially made a name for himself in research on Africa. Then he turned his attention to the polar regions.

It was an era when the technology for expeditions to extreme maritime areas was improving. Steamships were travelling the seas and soon crossed the Atlantic. A national consciousness was emerging in many countries – and expeditions promised prestige. The polar regions were among the few blank spots in the atlases. After 1865, Petermann considered it virtually a national mission for Germany to explore the northern polar regions. He theorized that, behind a belt of drift and pack ice, there was an open sea by way of which one could reach the North Pole. To that end, you had to sail close under the coast of East Greenland or east of Spitsbergen. Petermann was convinced that, once you reached this

“open sea”, you could sail to the pole. From today’s point of view, it might seem quite odd that he found supporters for theories he couldn’t even begin to prove scientifically. Yet owing to the sense of confinement brought about by a Germany that was still made up of myriad small states, there was a market for tales of adventure and reports of expeditions from foreign lands.

Inspired by Petermann’s agitations, a marine officer by the name of Reinhold Werner chartered an expedition steamer as far back as 1865 with the aim of setting off for the pole. On account of engine trouble, however, the vessel didn’t even make it out of the Elbe and into the waters of the North Sea. The mishap certainly wasn’t the best advertisement for the young discipline of polar research.

Then Petermann set about trying to organize a state expedition to be financed by Prussia and Austria. Those efforts ended in a hearing before high-ranking representatives of the Prussian navy. According to the session minutes, Petermann made a pathetic impression on the occasion and the experts flatly rejected his plans. It was a fiasco – but it didn’t stop King Wilhelm I from ordering a polar expedition. Yet like the overall undertaking itself, the joint financing failed because Prussia and Austria went to war. The stubborn cartographer Petermann, however, did not capitulate.

He was a man who never left his beloved Gotha if he didn’t have to. He had no personal experience whatsoever with expeditions or sea travel and would have liked nothing better than to conquer the North Pole sitting at his desk. So how did he intend to realize his ambitious plan? The fact that the newly founded North German Confederation – and particularly the shipping industry – were flourishing worked in his favour. He made contact to Arthur Breusing, the director of the Bremen nautical college, who advised him on organizational matters, and Wilhelm von Freeden, the founder of the North German marine observatory.

This was progress, but it didn’t solve the problem of finances. Petermann recognized an opportunity when the German National Union disbanded. From its efforts to raise funds for a fleet, the union still had capital that was earmarked for a “national duty”. Petermann and his comrade-in-arms Breusing argued that the German polar expedition was just such a duty – and again failed. Not a single thaler would come from that source, and the disappointment must have been great. Then, however, on 24 November 1867, a donation came in: 500 thalers, a handsome sum. From this, Petermann concluded that the public was willing to support an expedition. He was prepared to bear the risk himself and raise further donations. He presumably speculated on being able to refinance the costs with his periodical.





To head the expedition, Petermann chose an Austrian naval officer who had to turn down the offer, however, for reasons of health. It was then that Bremen's shipping director Breusing recommended Carl Koldewey, an experienced sailor, thirty years of age. The decision was made to purchase a Nordic Jagt-type vessel in Norway. The adventure took its course.

What happened after the *Grönland's* journey is quite astonishing. To begin with, even though the public longed to read the expedition report, it took

Petermann three years to publish it. Later he spread disparaging assessments of a voyage already his contemporaries considered a major navigational achievement. Koldewey had not only put more than three thousand nautical miles behind him in difficult waters and brought his crew back to Bremerhaven unharmed, but many of their experiences and observations – for example regarding the consistency of the ice off Greenland – provided important information for later expeditions. En route, he had gathered data from which Wilhelm von Freeden



tried to draw general conclusions. Von Freeden submitted a work on flow conditions off the coast of Greenland, drew an isothermal map of the surface temperature of the Norwegian Sea and placed soundings and meteorological observations made on the *Grönland* within the context of the oceanographic knowledge of the time.

Koldewey had moreover succeeded in surveying eastern Spitsbergen and the west coast of Nord-Ost-Land. To this day, a number of geographical names, for example the Hinlopen Strait, serve as reminders of the first German polar expedition. One important insight helped expeditions that would follow: if future journeys were to deliver new scientific findings, they would need a

larger ship, a larger crew and better equipment.

Today no one disputes that, with their courage, Koldewey and his crew laid the foundation for German marine research.

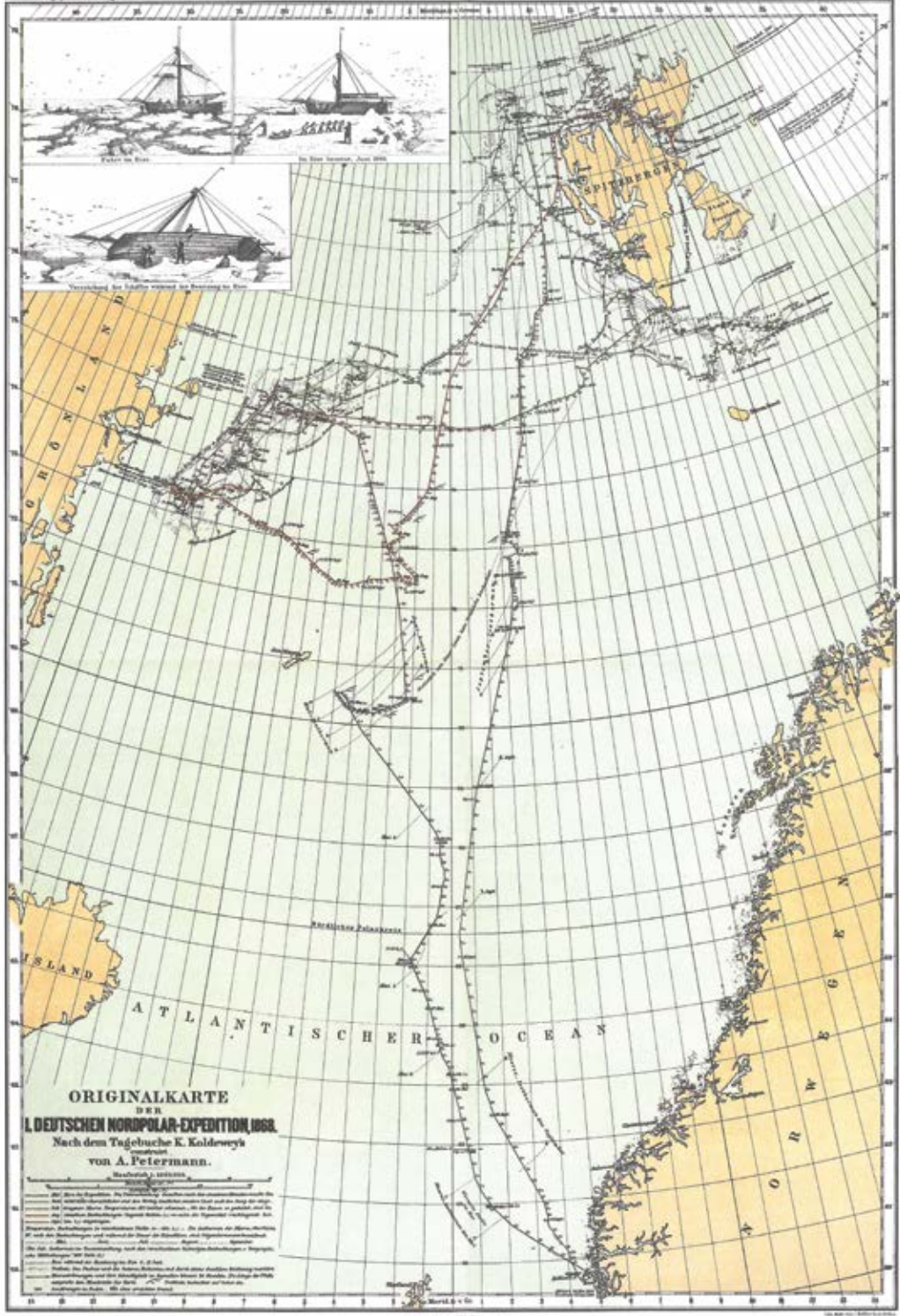
The Senate of Bremen hosted festivities to celebrate the adventurers' happy return, and it was then and there that the plans for the second expedition were forged.

The dispute between Petermann, the organizer and financier, and Koldewey, his expedition head, soon became permanent. To this day, we can only speculate about the reasons. Presumably Petermann, the desk discoverer, could

not accept the fact that his hypotheses did not jibe with reality. Koldewey, for his part, went on to direct the second Greenland expedition, which put out to sea on 15 June 1869 on the *Germania* and the *Hansa*.

The two vessels lost sight of each other at the edge of the pack ice at position 74°4' northern latitude. Their attempts to get through it failed. The *Hansa* was beset by ice and drifted south with the current, was ultimately crushed and sank on 22 October. The crew survived and spent the following two hundred days on the ice. On 7 May 1870 – having meanwhile covered two thousand kilometres – they finally saw open water and decided to make for a mission station of the Moravian Church in Narsarmijit, at the southern tip of Greenland, with their three intact ship's boats, the *Hoffnung*, *König Wilhelm* and *Bismarck*. They reached the village on 13 July 1870. Three weeks later, they returned to Germany by way of Copenhagen – without having lost a single man.

**Dr Reinhard A. Krause**, born in 1945, is a well-known science historian. He completed studies in physics at the University of Hamburg and holds the nautical patent A6. He has worked for the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research in Bremerhaven since 1984.



**ORIGINALKARTE**  
 DER  
**I. DEUTSCHEN NORDPOLAR-EXPEDITION 1868.**  
 Nach dem Tagebuche K. Koldewey's  
 von A. Petermann.

Maßstab 1 : 100000  
 Die Expedition wurde von dem Kaiserlichen Kommando in Berlin am 1. August 1868 auf dem Eisbrecher 'Arctik' unter dem Kommando des Kapitäns K. Koldewey nach Spitzbergen abgegangen. Die Expedition bestand aus 20 Mann, darunter 12 Offiziere und 8 Mannschaften. Die Expedition erreichte am 14. August Spitzbergen und verweilte dort bis zum 1. September. Die Expedition wurde am 1. September von dem Kaiserlichen Kommando in Berlin beauftragt, die Küste von Spitzbergen zu untersuchen und die Ergebnisse der Expedition zu veröffentlichen. Die Expedition wurde am 1. September von dem Kaiserlichen Kommando in Berlin beauftragt, die Küste von Spitzbergen zu untersuchen und die Ergebnisse der Expedition zu veröffentlichen. Die Expedition wurde am 1. September von dem Kaiserlichen Kommando in Berlin beauftragt, die Küste von Spitzbergen zu untersuchen und die Ergebnisse der Expedition zu veröffentlichen.







**“To this day,  
the ship’s original name  
has remained  
a mystery.”**

Dr Lars Kröger

# A Delicate Beauty, but One You Can Work with

## Dr Lars Kröger

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The *Grönland* was built as a “floating workhorse” for seal hunting off the coast of Norway. It later served as a cargo sailing ship and a sporting boat. As German Maritime Museum research associate Lars Kröger reports, many twists of fate brought the legendary Nordic Jagt back to Bremerhaven. Kröger’s favourite place in the world: under full sail in front of the steering stand.

The first thing I associate with the *Grönland* is the smell under deck – a harsh, penetrating odour of brown tar and oil lamps. An odour that, once you’ve had it in your nose, you never forget again; not an unpleasant one, but very intense. After just a short time on board, your clothing smells like a long night in front of the fireplace.

It makes me happy to work on the Nordic Jagt – that’s the name of the ship type. To work with the crew of volunteers who lovingly care for the *Grönland*. To sand the deck, for example. There’s always something to do on a ship, especially an old one. The *Grönland* holds a fascination for us all – because of its history, its adventurous voyages, its tradition and its significance for marine research as a whole.

And that is all the more remarkable when we consider that, in its own day, the *Grönland* was a relatively small and rather commonplace sailing ship constructed for the Norwegian coastal waters. The Nordic Jagt ship type was produced in large numbers – in the hundreds – until the year 1900. Our *Grönland* was built at the Toleff Toleffsen shipyard in Skanevik in 1867 to serve as a sealer. It is 29.3 metres long, 6.1 metres wide and has a draught of 2.2 metres. In a nutshell: a workhorse under sail, very robust and stable, easily manoeuvrable even in the rough waters of the Norwegian Sea, with a sail area of nearly 300 square metres.

To this day, the *Grönland*’s original name has remained a mystery. The head of the North Polar expedition Carl Koldewey, an experienced seafarer, discovered the ship the very

first day after his arrival in Bergen in search of a suitable vessel. He praised it in his expedition report as follows: "Outwardly she appealed to me greatly on account of her beautiful and graceful design, and on closer inspection we found that all her wood was healthy and the ship was well and strongly built", he wrote. He described the equipment, on the other hand, as "primitive" and the mast did not appear to him to be durable enough. However, because he had sufficient funds at his disposal to have a new mast installed and the hull reinforced to protect it from ice floes, and in general to provide for the expedition as he saw fit, he purchased the vessel for 2,500 speciesdalers. In addition to the structural improvements carried out at his behest, Koldewey had the rigging overhauled, the caulking renewed and the ship equipped with technology that was modern for the time, including two chronometers, a reflecting prism circle, a sextant, and even a deep-sea thermometer.

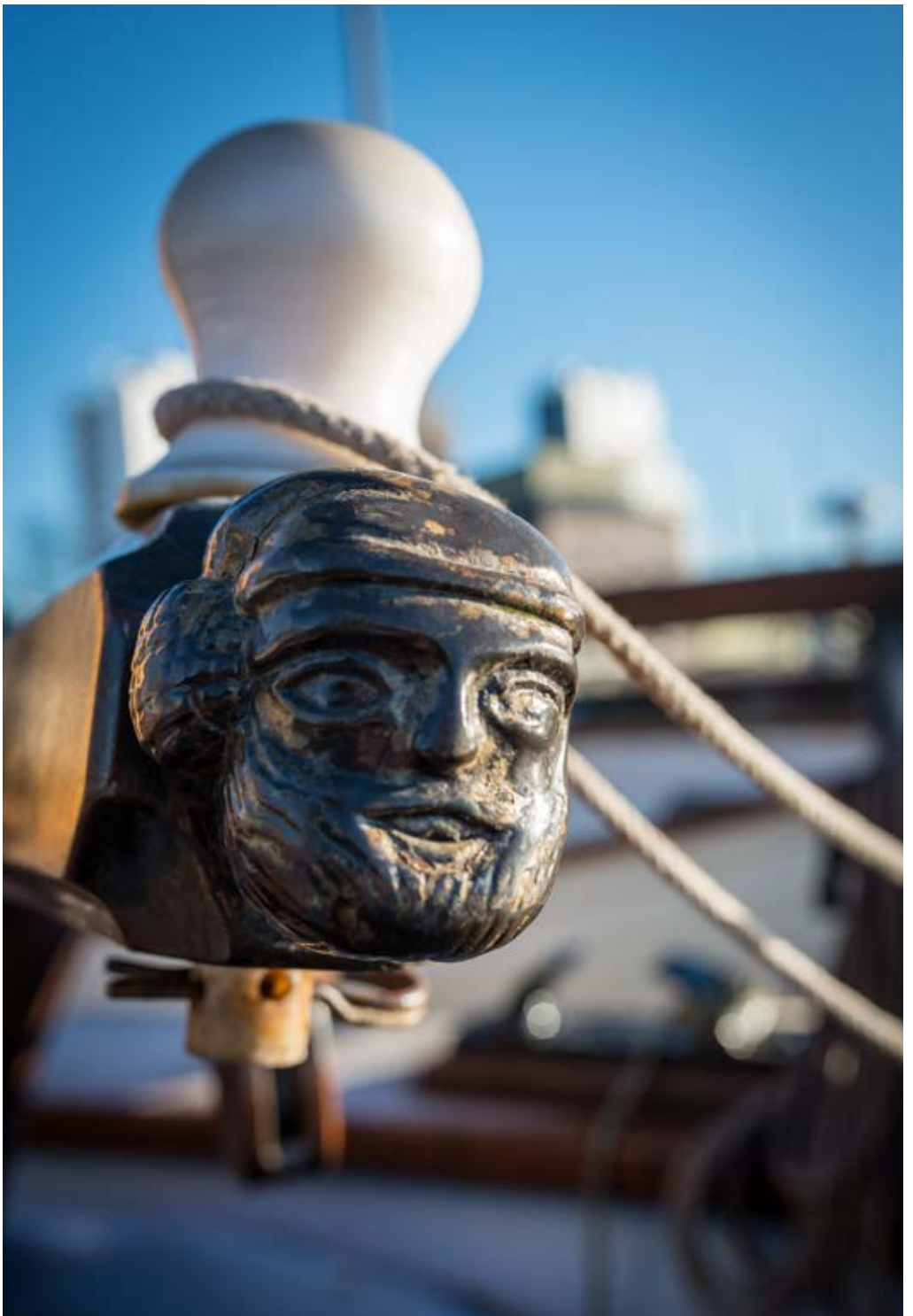
Nor did the experienced mariner leave anything to chance as regarded the provisions. "In particular, I did what I could to obtain everything of the best quality and not stock too much salted meat", he wrote in his expedition report. In Hamburg he ordered 240 tins of preserved meat, an abundance of cabbage, cratesloads of tinned vegetables and two barrels of dried apples and plums. "On the other hand, not much in the way of wine or spirituous

beverages was taken along" (only about 100 bottles of beer, two dozen bottles of wine and two bottles of brandy), but all the more in the way of tea and coffee. "On a polar voyage of this kind, after a watch of three to four hours in the crow's nest (up in the mast) when it's snowing and the temperatures are below zero, there can't be anything more pleasant than sitting behind the warm oven in the cabin, drinking a cup of hot coffee and smoking a pipe. And incidentally, a glass of hot grog is also nothing to sneeze at", Koldewey wrote.

The fact that the crew had every confidence in their ship was evident right at the start of the voyage. A storm blew up, the sea ran high, but Koldewey merely noted: "A storm on the open sea poses no danger of any kind if you're on a good, seaworthy ship; you just reef the sails way down, lay by the lee and make yourself as cosy and comfortable as the circumstances allow. We had a jolly fire burning in our cabin, smoked our pipes, read or talked; outside it could rage and bluster as much as it liked. The duty officer was out on deck with the watch-keeping crew, of course, but even they were relatively well protected by the so-called weather cloth he had tied to the weather side, and could smoke their pipes undisturbed."

The story of how the ship found its way to Bremerhaven after the successful expedition is an eventful one. The first





time the *Grönland* sailed into the harbour of Bremerhaven after the great adventure was on 10 October 1868. For the second arctic exhibition taking place a year later, however, it was deemed “too small” – and by 1871 it had been sold and returned to Norway. A certain Captain Andersen had purchased it for 1,250 thalers in gold. It first turns up in the Norske Veritas Register (Norwegian ship register) in 1873 with two owners from Oslo. In the years that followed, it changed hands several times more, moored in Haugesund, then went to Tromsø and finally to Trondheim and was used for fishing and sealing.

In 1917, a new owner had an engine installed, which meant that a smoke-

stack was added to its deck. A pilot house was also built – and the ship was assigned a new purpose. As a cargo ship, it now delivered goods up the Norwegian coast. For half a century – from 1920 to 1970 – the *Grönland* belonged to the Lyngstads, a family of shipowners and captains in Steinkjer. Then a ship broker bought the vessel to sail it as a sporting boat in his free time.

In November 1970, thanks to an Oslo businessman by the name of Egil Björn-Hansen, things started moving again in the history of the Nordic Jagt *Grönland*. A member of an old captains’ family, Björn-Hansen wanted to turn the vessel of the first German



polar expedition into a kind of floating museum. He planned to put it on display at Stord, an island on the west coast of Norway not far from where it had been built. To that end, he had the chimney removed and the *Grönland* returned to its condition as a sailing ship.

However, Björn-Hansen's plan came to nought. In 1972, the famous *Gjøa* was rediscovered in San Francisco – the first ship to travel the Northwest Passage. After a voyage of three years, Roald Amundsen had managed that feat in 1906 with a crew of six. The *Gjøa* was a legend, it had been sailed by a Norwegian and it was brought to Oslo with a freighter to be placed on exhibition there. (It is still on display in the Fram Museum in Oslo today.) Structurally speaking, it was almost identical to the *Grönland*. “So what sense would a *Grönland* museum ship have; who'd want to see it?”, Hansen wondered. He scrapped his plan.

The *Grönland* would probably have fallen into oblivion if it hadn't been mentioned at an event taking place in Bremerhaven's Morgenstern Museum – a celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the second North Polar expedition. The later director of the German Maritime Museum (DSM) Gert Schlechtriem learned of the *Grönland's* existence from a model builder, started looking into the matter, and informed Hans Jürgen Hansen, a maritime historian and director of the Olympics exhibition in Kiel. Hansen the

historian contacted Hansen the owner and negotiated a charter contract. The ship was towed to Kiel, underwent provisional restoration in the Howaldt Works (the historical rigging was renewed), and was festively presented within the framework of the Olympic Games exhibition “Man and the Sea”.

The idea of bringing the *Grönland* back to Bremerhaven had now been born. Schlechtriem, who had just taken office as director of the DSM, had the hull carefully inspected and the ship newly measured, established the identity and provenance of the Nordic Jagt with the aid of Norwegian museums – and started negotiating with the owner. On 26 January 1973, the *Grönland* entered the possession of the DSM for 120,000 deutschmarks. From the very start, the plan was to have it enter service as an active museum ship after its restoration at a shipyard in Heiligenhafen.

In early September, a crew of volunteer yachtsmen took the ship to Emsfleth on the Weser under the command of Gustav Wulf, an experienced mariner, in the tow of the rescue cruiser *Theodor Heuss*. Captain Wulf had supervised the work on the ship over the previous months. Finally, on 14 September 1973, Bremerhaven celebrated the vessel's arrival with a ship convoy and a festive programme. Since that day, the Alter Hafen – the city's oldest harbour basin – has been our *Grönland's* home.



I never tire of sailing out to the Weser with the crew of volunteers, who do splendid work. My favourite place on board is the second “little house” in front of the steering stand. It’s just wonderful to sit there and gaze up at the wind-filled sails. Today the *Grönland’s* job is no longer to transport goods but to spark public interest in maritime history. It’s in operation as a “floating ambassador” – not for the museum but for the sea-port town of Bremerhaven. The president and the chancellor of Germany have already been on board as guests, and in the early 1980s, when the ship sailed up the Rhine to Bonn (then the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany), it amazed and delighted tens of thousands of visitors. It has been to Berlin, to Norway several times, and once even to France. We cast off for harbour birthdays and festivals. Another popular destination is the island of Heligoland.

The *Grönland’s* story has many chapters – and it’s far from over.

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**Dr Lars Kröger**, was born in Reinbek in 1983. After studying archaeology in Bamberg, he joined the staff of the German Maritime Museum in 2015. He earned his doctorate in 2017. Kröger is married, the father of two children, and lives with his family near Bremerhaven.





[Redacted]

**“The work  
on the ship fills me  
with pride.”**

André Benthien

# A True Adventure

## André Benthien

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André Benthien is the head of the *Grönland's* volunteer crew. "Respect" is the first word that comes to his mind when he thinks of the ship's onetime arctic expedition. And it is in this tradition that, today, a crew of volunteers devote themselves to the Nordic Jagt's preservation – and cultivate life on board.

The Nordic Jagt *Grönland* has been a part of my life since I was a little boy. I was five years old the first time I went on board. My father Rüdiger, a trained carpenter, belonged to one of the first volunteer crews that cared for the Nordic Jagt. So you could almost say I inherited my passion for the ship. Today I'm the "Obmann" (head) of the crew of volunteers, and in a sense its organizer.

The work on the ship fills me with pride. It's wonderful to look back on the *Grönland's* tradition. A ship made of wood, not steel. A ship with good sailing characteristics. Carl Koldewey, an experienced captain with a massive beard, led the expedition in the year 1868. His euphoria is already palpable on one of the first pages of his expedition report: "It gave me exceptional pleasure to see how easily and swiftly the ship worked. She flew across the sea like a seagull, and even if she rolled mightily in the high swell and we made over 7 knots, we didn't get a single drop of water on deck."

When I think of the crew that set out on that expedition on the *Grönland*, the first thing that enters my mind is the word "respect" – huge respect for what those men achieved. A chap who risked an adventure like that in those days couldn't say for certain whether he'd ever come home again. Anyone who set out on such a voyage was entrusting the captain with his life.

There were twelve men on board the *Grönland* when it left the harbour in Bergen on 24 May 1868: the captain and head of the expedition Carl Koldewey, the first mate Richard Hildebrandt from Magdeburg, the second mate Georg Heinrich Sengstacke from Altona, the carpenter Johann Werdemann from "Föhr" (Neu-Fähr near Vegesack), the sailors Hans Peter Iversen from Hadersleben, Camp Wagener (Worden), D. Heinrich Büttner (Bremen), Gerhard J. de Wall (Delfzijl, Netherlands), Paul Tilly (Minden), Albert Konrad Olsen and Nils Peter Erikson Lian (both Tromsø) and the ship's cook Friedrich Rössing from Minden.

It was a scientific voyage without a scientist on board, but a crew of experienced seafarers instead – “weathered and schooled”, as Koldewey phrased it. Sailors who were actually accustomed to performing their duties on much larger vessels. “As a result of the rapid and short movements of our little vehicle, [they got] a bit seasick”, Koldewey noted in his report, adding somewhat scornfully: “It was hilarious to see those broad, strong fellows – men who were used to the sea – with what unhappy expressions they accompanied every one of the ship’s strong movements.”

Many seafarers value everyday life on board a ship and the ritual-like work. Koldewey describes a routine that began at 6.00 a.m. with the duty officer (who had been on deck since 4.00 a.m. to oversee the helmsman and observe the weather) summoning the men: Wash the deck! Clean the ship! An hour later, he made his round on deck to see whether the work had been carried out properly – and whether the sails stood at an angle and the ropes were rolled up and stowed in their right places, etc. Then the watch was wakened and breakfast was served. Now the captain came on deck for his “stroll with morning cigar” (Koldewey) to survey the wind and weather and check the course. The helmsman or boatswain assigned the sailors their duties for the day: mend the sails, splice the ropes, grease the blocks. The watch was always the

same – steering, keeping the lookout, furling and setting the sails, logging and sounding – “so that it’s impossible to conceive of idleness, as people inland presumably often think”, Koldewey wrote.

Noon was the hour to measure the meridian altitude of the sun and determine the position so the captain could plot the course. In the afternoon, the work of the morning was repeated while one watch rested; supper was at 6.30. After the meal, the ship was pumped out (if it had taken on water), and the night watch came on duty at 8.00. “So one day passes just like the other”, without the slightest variation, Koldewey noted. There was one exception: on Sundays, the only work carried out was the watch. As Koldewey remarked, “everyone who doesn’t happen to be on duty can occupy himself in keeping with his religious needs. The one man reads, the other mends his things, a third sits on the capstan barrel [the outermost end of the windlass], quietly enjoying his pipe and humming a little song”. In any case, a pleasant atmosphere seems to have prevailed on board.

The captain also took every measure necessary to comply with the journey’s “scientific purpose”. Every two hours, he had a barometer reading and measurements of the water and air temperature taken and entered in the journal, where all observations of the wind, weather, colour and appearance of



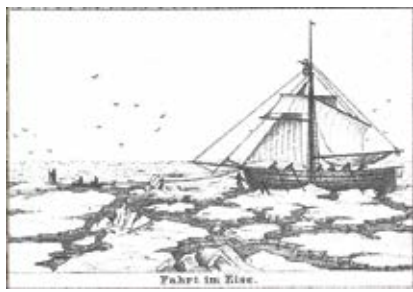


the sea, water depth and astronomical localizations were also recorded. "In short, everything that was at all worth observing was observed and noted."

The *Grönland* sailed ever farther north, latitude after latitude, reaching top speeds of ten knots. Koldewey's expedition report reads much like an adventure story. The storms, the passage through ice, the moments when ice surrounded the vessel. How great must the tensions on board have been in the knowledge that help was impossible to get? Two pages in the report convey the drama with particular intensity: "On 8 June the same stormy weather with heavy snow showers.

The ice set in increasingly from the west, and we were compelled to flee from one water basin to the other and work our way from one floe to the next as well as possible. [...] Navigation in ice under such storm and snow conditions is of the very most difficult kind and it takes [...] above all calmness and presence of mind on the part of the commander to steer the ship. All of the ice is in fierce motion."

Just one page later, the *Grönland* is surrounded by ice (having reached the ice boundary at 74°45'N, 7°W) – and polar bears are approaching the ship. "The entire crew now had nothing more urgent to do than to lunge after



Fahrt im Eise.



Im Eise besetzt, Juni 1860.



Verstärkung des Schiffes während der Besetzung im Eise.

Scenes of the expedition  
after drawings by R. Hilde-  
brandt from the expedition  
report

the bear. [...] The men triumphantly dragged the body back across the ice floes and skinned it.”

The first attempt to cross the East Greenland Current had accordingly failed. The crew repaired the damaged hull and the captain managed to work the vessel out of the ice. He moreover succeeded in making contact to other ships, for example the *Diana* from Hull in England, by way of which news of the expedition reached Gotha.

What Koldewey learned from the other captains was unfavourable: the ice conditions were impeding progress throughout the region. For several days, he waited in vain for the ice current to loosen. Finally, in order to get farther west, he ordered a north-east-erly course. Within less than a week, the *Grönland* sailed to Spitsbergen.

There further disappointments awaited the expedition participants; again they were blocked by the ice. “According to the whalers, this year was a totally abnormal one in every respect, an ice year the likes of which they hadn’t seen for ages”, a frustrated Koldewey noted in his report. Nor was he any more successful with his attempt to sail eastward, south of the island group, with the aim of then heading north for the “Gillis Land” (presumably Kvitøya) mentioned in the instructions. At least he managed to reach Belsund on Spitsbergen, where the ship took on water and ballast.

After a hunting trip, the northward journey continued – as far as 80°30’N, 6°35’E, where fog and light winds once again made progress difficult. The *Grönland* encountered the whaler *Jan Mayen*, whose home port was Peterhead; it had laid to on account of poor visibility. Taking the mail with him, Koldewey ferried over on the ship’s boat to talk to the whaler’s captain, from whom he received new and encouraging information. The ice conditions were reportedly favourable south of 74°. No sooner had he come back on board the *Grönland* than he gave the order to sail southward. Under swift sail, the ship reached the desired destination, ending up so far west that the coast of Greenland was within eyesight.

However, the happy anticipation quickly evaporated. What had been taken for open water turned out to be a single sheet of solid ice. The *Grönland* tacked for days in search of a way to the coast – but to no avail. The ice offered no opportunity for passage. “Now our hope of reaching the coast was completely destroyed. In the previous days it had become clear to us that, with the means at our disposal, there was no longer any way of doing so this year. [...] If with the greatest reluctance, I had to take the decision to turn my back on the coast.”

A heavy storm that raged for days further aggravated the situation. The crew, however, knew how to deal with



it, as Koldewey commented in his report: “As the storm persisted with unabating violence, the sea reached such a height that, for a moment, in a wave trough, we didn’t feel any wind at all, and the most terrible breakers seemed to break over us.” Nevertheless, no damages were suffered and, after the weather had calmed, the ship rounded the North Cape of Spitsbergen on 18 August. No ice in sight!

Another Nordic Jagt appeared on the scene with walrus hunters on board. After a conversation with its captain, Koldewey decided to sail to the southern Hinlopen Strait. In the days that followed, he discovered several islands that hadn’t been charted yet and thus supplemented the surveys of that region. On 15 September, the *Grönland* tacked to a latitude of 81°4,5’N – the northernmost point an engineless sailing ship has ever provenly reached to date.

Then it pointed its bow southward. After a brief stay in Bergen, it reached the mouth of the Weser. The weather was bad, the winds were high, but to the ship company’s delight the steam tug *Diana* came out to meet the *Grönland* and pulled it in to Bremerhaven within a few hours. “We were received in such a grand manner as we never would have dreamed”, Koldewey exclaimed in his expedition report.

I can understand why people were so enthusiastic, even if the expedition

didn’t reach the intended destination (the “open polar sea” Petermann had postulated). The crew had covered 3,500 nautical miles of little-known territory under severe weather conditions with ice drift. We see ourselves today in the tradition of those awesome sailors. Our entire crew is made up of volunteers who come from nearly all branches of the professions, from tradespersons to academics. The core crew consists of twelve men and women, and another fourteen make up the auxiliary crew. We did not found an association; we didn’t need to. Passion, team spirit and reliability suffice to keep us together. We have experienced navigators among us who know how to sail a ship like the *Grönland*. We devote ourselves to the vessel’s preservation, and because we sail it, we keep the knowledge of how to sail a Nordic Jagt like the *Grönland* alive. We want to pass the tradition on to the next generation. Every voyage is like a little test. Some trips just take us out on the Weser for a few hours; others go all the way to Bergen.

In 2004, we had the Bültjer shipyard in Ditzum on the Lower Ems thoroughly refurbish the *Grönland*, a project that likewise went smoothly on account of the good cooperation between the shipyard and our crew. Our aim is to preserve the ship’s original structure and design. If a structural element wears out, we replace it. The *Grönland* is not undergoing gradual modernization.

I dream of someday setting out with a crew on the *Grönland* on a voyage to the Far North. By the pioneers' route. Will we ever manage that? I don't know, but it would be my wish.

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**André Benthien**, born in 1982, is the head of the crew of volunteers that has devoted itself to taking care of the *Grönland* ever since the DSM purchased it. Benthien works in waterway engineering for the Waterways and Shipping Office and lives in the Langen district of Geestland.



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## VOLUME 02 /

# NORDIC JAGT GRÖNLAND

## Polar Research – The Fascination of a Legend



In a state of change: the German Maritime Museum – Leibniz Institute for Maritime History – is presently redesigning its exhibition in close correspondence with the research and exhibition programme “Man & The Sea”. A number of important objects play a key role here and are also featured in a series of booklets.

In each booklet, experts take a look at the respective object from three research perspectives – “Interests – Materiality – Perception” –, ask it questions and shed light on its fascination.

### German Maritime Museum

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