

Ledbury Man in Polar Regions

Written by John Eager

Tuesday, 22 September 2009 11:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 19 May 2010 08:27



An email Interview with Dave Fletcher who has lived in Bridge Street, Ledbury for 21 years.

What do you do, Dave?

I am a self employed Polar Consultant, primarily looking after tourists, students, scientists and private expeditions in both the Arctic and Antarctic.

How long have you been doing this?

I have been going to the Polar regions for over 40 years.

How did you get involved?

My interest in cold places started with mountaineering and after university I went to the Antarctic with the Government as a Dog Driver and have basically stayed since then doing a whole variety of jobs.

What's the most incredible thing you've seen?

Antarctica is the most incredible thing I have seen and the ice both there and in the Arctic is the most beautiful thing I have seen.

What's the most dangerous situation you've been in?

You face danger virtually every day but travelling across crevassed glaciers is the most dangerous.

What is the most important part of your job?

Doing what I can to protect and teach people about the Polar Regions.

When you're in the Arctic do you listen to music? What do you listen to?

In both Polar regions I listen to no music, I feel it is an intrusion into the area, both regions play their own music in the sound of the wind, the ice and the wildlife.

What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?

The Inuit food of the High Arctic, but you will eat anything if hungry! The strangest Inuit food is Kiviak which is basically whole small birds, feathers included, which is stuffed in a sealskin bag at the beginning of summer and then left under rocks to cook for several months. In Autumn the bag is opened and you dip your hand into the mush inside. To be fair it is a traditional food for times of starvation and is now really only eaten on ceremonial occasions. Eaten normally is frozen raw walrus which is lovely and the skin of narwhale known as Muktuk. This is very tasty but extremely chewy.

Evolution or Creationism?

I am a firm believer in Evolution.

What's wrong with science?

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It tends to be blinkered in its vision, needs more lateral thinking.

What's right with science?

It brings facts forward so to better understand our world.

Global warming or interglacial period?

Global warming or interglacial phase, frankly I do not know, it is certainly a natural cyclical phase that we have almost certainly enhanced by our mismanagement of the planet. What happens next, no-one really knows.

You must have seen some changes to both polar regions over the last 40 years.

The biggest change in the high Arctic over the last 40 years is the thinning and retreat of the Sea Ice. There are now areas where the ice vanishes completely during the summer months and only reforms for a few months in the winter. A few years ago it was the opposite ice forming for 8 months or so and maybe open water for just a couple of months. Sea temperatures have also risen dramatically whereas a few years ago the average sea temp was 3 to 4 deg it is now 7 or 8, this is a huge change. How the wildlife will cope with all this is still unknown but I feel the next few years will be even more dramatic in their changes.



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You take some great photographs. Any words of advice for budding photographers out there?

Thank you for the comments on photography, I really have nothing to offer, in these high regions I have the greatest light and subjects on earth, taking photographs needs no skill on my part.

Do you have the best job in the world?

Yes.

Tell me about Ledbury.

Coming back to Ledbury is always such a thrill. The green hills and rural splendour of Herefordshire is something all of us have to fight to maintain. We live within a gem.

Many thanks from the Ledbury Community Portal to David Fletcher for this interview and his photographs.