

## December 2024 Meeting - Christopher Hamblin "Arctic Dreams"

Our December talk from Christopher Hamblin was a absorbing and exciting description of his voyages to Svalbard in a small sailing boat. This voyage in a small boat is possible from the UK because of beneficial currents in the Gulf Stream.

Svalbard, originally known as Spitsbergen, is a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, within the Arctic Circle. Christopher gave an excellent account of the industrial history, geology, wildlife and flora of this fascinating region. He recalled how his first sailing boat was badly damaged during a storm at night, and the crew had to be rescued by helicopter.

Svalbard is very susceptible to global warming, and it is heating up at a rate six times faster than the global average. Unfortunately, this means that the destruction of its fragile ecosystem is inevitable. Christopher also had depressing photographs of plastic pollution on the shoreline of the island, swept in on ocean currents.

Despite current problems, Christopher would love to return to Svalbard, as it remains a fascinating and unique environment.