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Humanities Students' Association



# INSIGHT INTO INGER



— Emma Devlin



There's a new face on Level 4 of the Arch building. It's a face which seems to be perennially cheerful, a face from which an infectious chuckle emanates on a regular basis, and a face which can't help but take some of the scary out of the executive neighbourhood of the Humanities & Social Sciences building.

It belongs to one Inger Vandyke who, as Bond's new Marketing Coordinator, is in the driver's seat when it comes to presenting our university to the world. But there's much more to this self-confessed adrenalin-addicted workaholic than her involvement with Bond might have you think.

Growing up on a boat on the Great Barrier Reef is merely the tip of Inger's extraordinary iceberg. Since 2004, she has worked as a professional wildlife photographer and writer, capturing snaps in 42 countries across the globe, coming face-to-face with rare creatures, and experiencing adventures that seem miles away from an office on Level 4. She juggles her new position with lecturing, working with five volunteer groups, running her own and her partner's businesses and instigating a photography project for underprivileged indigenous children in the Kimberleys. As if that isn't enough, Inger is keeping the shots coming with a different photography venture for each month of the rest of this year. Dangling the carrot of those delicious adventures around the world in front of our readers' faces during the drudgery that defines Weeks 11 and 12 might seem cruel, but hasn't three hours in front of a blank Word document earned you the right to a little escapism? What follows does come with a warning: ten minutes of transportation in to Inger's remarkable life threatens to provide substantial procrastination-worthy daydream fodder. Read on if you dare...

## ANIMAL CRACKERS

If you've ever considered a jaunt over to Antarctica, Inger is your go-to woman for the tips and tricks of what she calls her favourite place on earth. Such is her affection for the continent that she recently had her will changed to ensure that her ashes are scattered there. She is particularly intrigued by the locals.

"The penguins in Antarctica are like clowns," she recalls. "The first time I went there, I felt like I was in an oversized scene from 'Happy Feet'."

Coming face-to-face with some of Mother Nature's finest creations seems to be a knack of Inger's, having also spent three weeks in Tonga, documenting humpback whales and their calves. Her first encounter with one of the sea's largest inhabitants is something she will never forget.

"The first time you are looked in the eye by a whale is incredible," she describes. "But no matter how many encounters you have with them, you never tire of it."

## TAKING THE HIGH SEAS

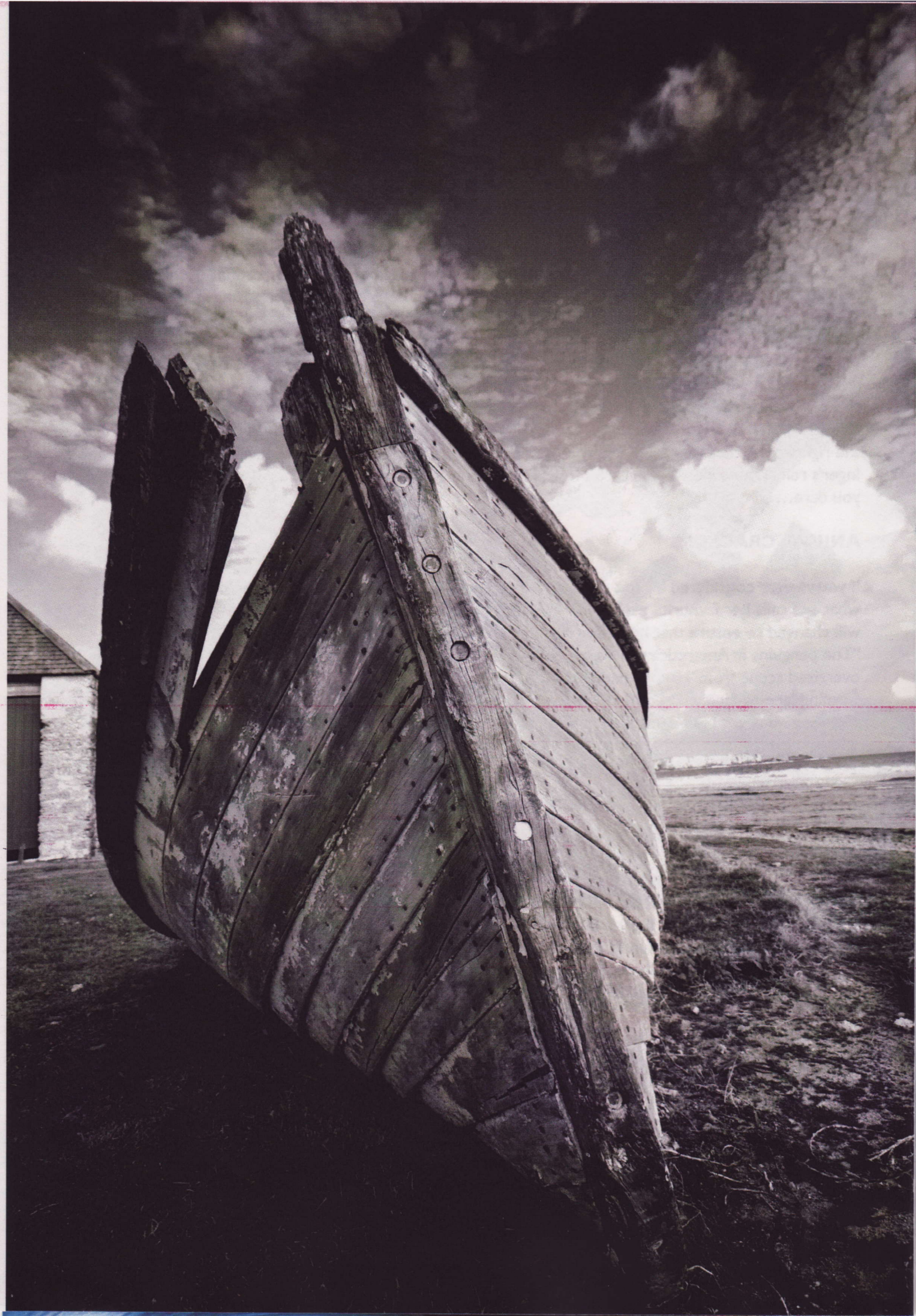
Not one to rest on her laurels, there is plenty more in the pipeline for Inger. Six weeks leading a sailing expedition will round out a year which makes juggling four subjects with a social life and sufficient sleep seem like the lazy way out. Inger's 8000-kilometre voyage from Mauritius to Fremantle will be waged against the roughest oceans in the world in order to undertake what she says is the most challenging marine and fauna surveying exercise in Australian history. In order to fulfil the wildlife conservation objectives of the expedition, Inger's team will collect and collate data on Heard and McDonald Islands, and plot the recession of glacial edges.

"Heard Island is a critical indicator of climate change," she says. "There's a lot of geothermal activity there because it's home to Australia's only active volcano, but there is also a lot of recession from global warming."

Having seen firsthand signs of environmental change and destruction in some of the most pristine areas of the world, Inger is as passionate about addressing climate change as she is about marine conservation. She firmly believes that human beings' habit of taking disproportionately more than they give to the environment has had a disturbing impact on animals and plants around the globe.

"There's definitely physical evidence of climate change, so to deny it is foolish," she says. "We need to be more open to re-engineering the environment ... it's about being proactive in thinking about the impact of our actions for the future, rather than just being reactive."







## FINDING WHAT'S LOST

If the above adventures haven't quite got you green with envy, try Inger's plans to discover the undiscovered on for size. The foundations are already being laid for yet another expedition in 2013, this time to Guge in far-west Tibet. Hidden away in what is one of the hardest places to reach on Earth is a lost civilisation about which very little is known. The extended planning period towards the venture is necessary in order to attain all of the relevant permits to travel in to this seldom-visited area.

"The logistics of organising this trip are going to require a lot of time and planning," she explains. "We need to be mindful of not being seen to be supporting the pro-Tibetan movement ... there's a lot of sensitivity around what we're doing." Inger hopes that the three-year lead-up will also attract a keen group of photographers who don't mind missing out on some of the luxuries we often take for granted. She has been pleasantly surprised by the interest.

"We're looking for people who are happy to go without a shower for three or four days and take on a subsistence lifestyle, without the hotels and restaurants of a typical holiday," she says.

Though Inger admits that her hectic lifestyle has come at the sacrifice of other things, she maintains that she would not have it any other way.

"There's never been a dull moment and I have no regrets," she insists. "While I've got the energy and I'm young enough, I want to make the most of everything.

"Sometimes, it's like I'm living my life as part of a wildlife documentary series. I have had some experiences which I now look back on and I know they truly punctuated my life."

**For more details on Inger's upcoming adventures, check out the website at [www.heardisland.com.au](http://www.heardisland.com.au), or drool over evidence of her past escapades at [www.ingervandyke.com](http://www.ingervandyke.com)**

