

AN EXTREME ICELANDIC VOYAGE - TO PROVE A POINT!

And certainly no 'Walk in the Park'

By Colin Squire

Notwithstanding the warm hospitality and intriguing delicacies that I had enjoyed and relished only one-and-a-half years ago when I first visited Iceland on a trip that took me to the ultra-modern Rafnar ship-building facility in Reykjavik in order to test the first of the new Rafnar RIBs, another invite came as quite a surprise. That first visit was to experience for myself the unique performance of the 'OK Hull' technology, (as I related in this magazine) but the invitation to join a keen and eager Viking crew and to traverse the wild north-Atlantic ocean aboard an 11m RIB that was to travel from Reykjavik to Gothenburg prompted a distinct pause in my diary planning for last April.

With a great deal on my plate, during what is always a busy month for me, I found it difficult to refuse what was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, to sail with a team of ocean hardened men across part of an often storm tossed and freezing North Atlantic ocean that in my wildest dreams I could never have imagined I would be offered a chance to add to my 'done that' list, and in such an extreme way. But as the departure date approached it became obvious to me that I could not make it due to pressing engagements elsewhere in Europe. All I could manage in the end was to just wave an occasional passing and symbolic salute, from a distance, as I followed the journey online with blog-spot tracker. I had to concede, this time around, to allow these

hardened Nordic seaman the privilege of undertaking this testing and extreme voyage without me, and to bid them 'bon voyage' to sail on their own and to prove the sea-friendliness of the patented Rafnar hull.

Following a common recognition last year that they were onto something quite revolutionary when it came to hull design, sea-keeping ability, and general vessel performance, and ever eager to prove a challenging point, the Rafnar team had decided this year to undertake something more than just the normal Icelandic 'walk in the local park', as they normally would, around the ice-flows and glaciers near Reykjavik in their frozen and tempestuous North Atlantic waters, and rather this time to embark upon something a tad more continental in their voyaging.

No 'long' (or slow) Viking boat this time for the Icelanders, but rather a 42-knot self-built, 'rigid-inflatable-boat' of unique and patented hull-design and making, and embarking upon somewhat more of a self-equipped and better prepared adventure than the last time intrepid mariners had achieved a similar interesting voyage many centuries before.

About 1200 years ago discontented and restless Viking inhabitants of Norway and Sweden had decided to venture westward to a 'new world', so as to express their

emancipation and discontent with conditions in their mother countries. One Hrafnar-Flóki Vilgerðarson and his family, a bit like Noah, and carrying three ravens aboard for navigation purposes, to be set free upon sensing dry-land, (a winged compass if you like), stopped first at the Shetland Islands after leaving Norway, and then ventured onward to the Faroe Islands and beyond, eventually coming ashore in Iceland with his family and a remaining raven that had flown ashore upon sensing land over the horizon.

Hrafnar-Flóki Vilgerðarson and his descendants are regarded as the founders of the Icelandic nation.

The Rafnar Shipyard team, armed this time with only their Rafnar logo (a reflected Raven - 'Hrafnar' - upon a shimmering sea), but no feathered variety for navigation-guidance this time, and in an 11 metre Rafnar Cabin RIB, the 'Embla' - having developed and refined some interesting hull-shapes and more comfortable forms of hull-and-keel design since the time of Hrafnar-Flóki Vilgerðarson - decided to journey back across the North Atlantic some 1,274 miles so as to attend a special gathering of high-speed-boat enthusiast industry delegates in the great port city of Gothenburg in Sweden.

With obvious restricted fuel capacity aboard the 11 metre 'Embla', the Icelanders were obliged to stop off for bunkering and beer-provisioning en-route, much like their ancestors had done before them, but this time the rugged and perfected form of their craft allowed them to carry out the tedious and time-consuming voyage in a much shorter time.

The six Viking mariners from the Rafnar team first sailed their inflatable craft along the rugged south-

coast of Iceland some 146 nautical miles to the local Icelandic Vestman Islands at an average speed of 28.6 knots. Having replenished with fuel they sailed onward to the east-coast port of Höfn, continuing thereafter over 274 miles of open North Atlantic ocean to the Faroe Islands at an average speed of 27.6 knots, unassisted by support vessels and relying only upon their true faith in hull integrity and two Evinrude 250 outboards, creating a combined 500 horse-power.

With raging easterlies battering the Faroe Island shores upon their arrival, the six Icelanders were pleased to enjoy the Faroe hospitality that was eagerly offered to them, rest up and tell Nordic stories as they sampled local rotten fish, Minkie whale, and other Faroe Island delicacies before they set off once again, after four days of revelry, for the North Atlantic British outpost of the Shetland Islands some 196 nautical miles away. Due to heavy easterly swells following the recent gale, the 'Embla' was only able to achieve an average speed of 21 knots during the leg to Lerwick port on Shetland. A shared sense of déjà vu inspired Commander Siggí and the crew that their ancestors may have touched these Shetland shores before them.

The open water from the Shetland Islands to the historic port of Stavanger in southern Norway was the last challenge facing the Viking team in their drive towards the 'old' continent, a distance of 233 nautical miles that the 'Embla' managed to cover at 31 knots average speed, reaching the mainland at Stavanger, where they received an appropriately warm and roistering 'home-coming' welcome.

The last legs of the voyage from Stavanger to Kristiansand along the Norwegian coast, and then crossing the Skagerrak gulf to Gothenburg in Sweden,

were indeed intended to have been a true 'walk in the park', having just traversed the wild North Atlantic at ferocious speeds, but this outcome was not to be, as the Nordic gods seemingly decided to set a solid submerged object adrift in the confused waters off Cape Lindesnes, at the southern tip of Norway, so as to foil the Icelanders' intrepid intentions.

One outboard-motor less and looking distinctly incomplete after an abrupt impact with a dead and bloated bovine beast or an ancient tree-trunk, the 'Embla' limped forlornly to the quaint local port of Mandal in the southern Norwegian archipelago for repairs and respite.

Undeterred by this setback, the Icelandic voyagers rapidly rebuilt their craft in a mere 24 hours after swiftly flying-in a replacement Evinrude outboard engine in the dead of a sleepless night, and were thus able to continue onward toward Gothenburg, Sweden the following day at great speed so as to arrive on time at the High Speed Boat Operators Forum.

The weather-hardened Rafnar crew aboard the 11 metre 'Embla', having conducted their unique 'Extreme Voyage' experiment over a distance of 1,307 nautical miles, unassisted by support boats and at an overall average speed of 26.3 knots through varied North Atlantic weather conditions, were pleased and proud to bring the Icelandic 'Embla' to the European and Scandinavian continent 'on her own bottom' and to receive a well-deserved welcome from fellow Nordic sailors and mariners.

As three Ravens had once assisted to bring Hrafnar-Flóki Vilgerðarson and his family from the continent to the 'new world' of Iceland, so one Rafnar craft

had voyaged on its unique new hull-and-keel design across the same tempestuous sea, some 1200 years later, although this time in much improved comfort, on a hull conceived and invented by Icelandic designer and developer Óssur Kristinsson.

I could not make the voyage, but having befriended Óssur during that first trip to Iceland, and having listened to the story of how he had conceived the idea of this new 'OK Hull' design, how he had spent many years and millions of Icelandic Krona in pursuit of proving his new hull, I can only admire him, and to send one of his RIBs (and six men) off to undertake such an extreme journey, just to prove a point - and the point was indeed proved (see graph on 'The Journey' page) - I can only hope to see the Rafnar 'OK hull' becoming a byword for comfort at sea, on yacht tenders and chase boats, and in the not too distant future.



RAFNAR

AN EXTREME VOYAGE WITH 'EMBLA'

On the high-seas from Iceland to Sweden in an 11metre Rafnar Leiftur 1100 RIB.... 1,261 nautical miles

This extreme and adventurous voyage in April 2016 was to demonstrate the ability of the Rafnar vessels and their revolutionary new hull technology to keep the crew and passengers comfortable at sea during long periods out on the water at high speed, and to display clearly the unique qualities of Rafnar's innovative hull design.



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info@rafnar.is
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In addition to this adventurous in-house proving voyage, Rafnar is working on a project in co-operation with the University of Iceland to study and compare the Whole Body Vibration phenomenon aboard high-speed craft.

This side-project incorporates parallel sea-trials, pitting Rafnar craft-performance and sea-comfort against conventional-design hulls and comparable planing boats of similar size. The first sea trial tests began in January 2016 and results are astounding.



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THE CONSTRUCTION



THE ICELANDIC SEARCH & RESCUE VERSION



THE JOURNEY



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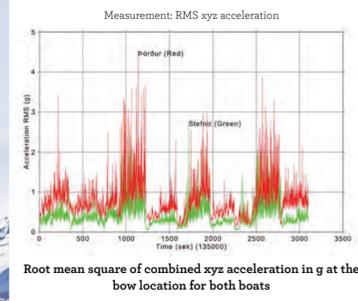
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Comparative study between a Rafnar boat (Stefnir), and a similar sized traditional 'deep-V' planing hull (Thordur)



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