In the early evening of the 19th day of September, year of our Lord two thousand and four, we passed through the fast flowing narrow sound of Heleysundet. This tight passage separates the main island of Spitsbergen from its smaller neighbour Barentsøya. According to the pattern established over the last several days, we continued scouring the coastline for our ever-elusive quarry.

Suddenly, on rounding the southern point of Bakanbukta, the cry went out … maps were checked, the compass consulted and a small expeditionary group was hastily assembled and subsequently dispatched in the support craft.

Our small vessel headed towards the glacial edge of Sonklarbreen still unsure that our days of searching could have been so finely rewarded. Our goal had been to find a new island that had been revealed by the retreating glaciers and to claim it for our own. The island towards which we now sped exceeded all expectations. Roughly an hundred paces long, fifty wide, and fully thirty feet high. The terrain was largely muddy moraine holding many varieties of rock within its frozen clutches. We came across the nests of eider ducks, and several purple sandpipers were seen quickly departing.

Our new island was surrounded by a beach on all sides, and could be circumnavigated on foot in roughly ten minutes. The geography of its interior was marvelously varied, with towering mountains (some higher than twenty feet). There were valleys and even a small frozen lake (a member of our group unkindly likened this to a pond, but little notice was taken of his comments).

We surveyed the island taking longitude and latitude readings for all features and extremities. A cairn was built and in the age old style, a claim note was placed inside a tin-can and this in turn was inserted into the cairn. The note stated, in both English and Norwegian, notice of our claim on the newly revealed land. Upon our return to the mainland, our new island will be charted and I will submit it for inclusion in all subsequent maps. The land will be named and registered. The name has not yet been finalised, but I feel the most obvious, Alex Hartley Land, may cause some ill feelings amongst my fellow crew members.

Nothing has yet been ruled out; annexation, independence, tax haven, wild life sanctuary, short let holiday homes or time shares. Postcards will be printed and a major architectural competition will be launched. Engineers will be consulted as to how best to keep all the mud together and prevent any shrinkage of our island.

On the morning of the twentieth we traversed the glacial edge in the Noorderlicht coming within an arm's distance of the towering blue face. Then, after breakfast, we turned our backs on our newly discovered territory and set sail for points south. It was with a heavy heart and a tear in my eye that I watched it disappear. This land so newly revealed, land which had lain below the crushing weight of the ice for thousands of years, land on which no human had ever stood. This new land, so freshly released, was indeed our land, and part of me was left behind there.

Images: Alex Hartley, Nymark (Undiscovered Island)

BERGVESENET

MOTTATT

ANMELDELSE AV FUNNSTED PÅ SVALBARD

WITNESS DOCUMENT

I _____

Of _____

Was part of a landing party that left the schooner N
September 2004 at 17.25, and did land on an island
revealed by the retreating Sonklarbreen glacier in Ol
of Spitsbergen.

I witnessed Alex Hartley writing and placing a claim n
and an upturned tin can and then inserting the can int
by him at the centre of this uncharted island. The clai
Norwegian and English. The cairn was
and 020 Degrees 30