

MAUD'S LONG VOYAGE

AFTER A CENTURY, A FAMOUS ARCTIC EXPLORATION SHIP HAS RETURNED TO NORWAY

BY JON LARSON

It goes without saying that polar explorers are a strange lot and one of the most unusual was Roald Amundsen. He was a key figure in what is now known as the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration." He began his career as a polar explorer in the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897/1899. From 1903 to 1906, he led the first expedition to successfully traverse the Northwest Passage in the sloop *Gjoa*. In June 1910, he departed in the ship *Fram* and reached Antarctica in January 1911 where he established a series of supply depots before setting out for the South Pole in October 1911. The party of five became the first men to successfully reach the South Pole on 14 December 1911.

This success, and the associated fund-raising, led to a planned 1918 expedition to

the North Pole by traversing the Northeast Passage. And that quest begins our story revolving around a rather remarkable little ship.

Amundsen had extensively planned and raised funds for this second expedition to the Arctic and an intended voyage through the Northeast Passage. The influx of funding enabled him to build a new ship, which was constructed in Asker, a suburb of Oslo, Norway. The ship was named *Maud* for Queen Maud of Norway. Constructed from heavy oak timbers, *Maud* was a sailing ship but also fitted with a 240-hp semi-diesel Bolinder engine. *Maud* measured 119.75-ft with a beam of 40.35-ft and a hold depth of 16-ft. Weighing in at 292



In most surviving photographs, Arctic explorer Roald Amundsen is serious and unsmiling.

tons, *Maud* was strictly aimed at conquering the ice of the polar regions. Historians do not exactly agree on the

launch date of *Maud*, with both June 1916 and June 1917 being quoted.

In 1918, with the newly-built *Maud*, Amundsen was ready to start on a new expedition, which was to drift over the Arctic Ocean and, perhaps, the North Pole.

With him were



The launching of the *Maud*.



Bent, battered but still heroic — the *Maud* returns home after nearly 100 years.