



SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB

*To Encourage Adventurous Endeavour and Interest in
the Science, Culture and Protection of the Arctic*



NEWSLETTER February 2023

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SPRING MEET

Attadale 6-13 May 2023

Contact Kathleen Cartwright if interested in attending:
arcturus@btinternet.com

ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday 18th November 2023

Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William: See page 2

President: Noel Williams Vice President: Anthony Walker

Secretary: Jinty Smart Treasurer: Mandy Peden

Membership Secretary: Jane Craxton Gathering Secretary: Bethany Carol

Other Committee Members: Mike Bauermeister, Louise Hollinrake, Fraser Melville, Jennifer Newall

New members are welcome: the Club is for people of all ages and nationalities who have an interest in the Arctic, particularly if they have already been, or are planning to travel there. See the website for an application form.

Contacts:

Club Secretary: jintysmart@btopenworld.com

www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk

Newsletter editor: We are always on the lookout for articles: please send them to james@fenton.scot



THE 2022 ANNUAL GATHERING AND SUPPER CARRBRIDGE HOTEL, 5TH NOVEMBER 2022

The 2022 Gathering and Supper was held in the Carrbridge Hotel on the 5th November and was, once again, a successful event although with slightly reduced numbers. Some 30 members arrived in time for dinner on the Friday evening which was a very cosy affair as we crowded round the small tables in the lounge. On the Saturday morning the Club's Committee met for their annual meeting ahead of the AGM in the late afternoon and the trustees of the Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund met in the late morning but in the absence of the chair, Kathleen Cartwright.

The responsibilities of the secretary have been split recently and the actual role is more of an overseeing the Club's activities and supporting the President. A few years ago the production of the newsletter was taken over, very successfully, by Chris Gilmore and, since the recent AGM, by James Fenton. Also at the AGM, two other responsibilities of the secretary were taken by others: the organisation of the Gathering by Bethany Carol, and membership matters by Jane Craxton.

The AGM saw the president, secretary and treasurer all standing down and at the close of the meeting both the secretary and treasurer roles were vacant! However, the role of treasurer was filled later in the evening by Mandy Peden and at the first Zoom-based committee meeting in early January, Jinty Smart, who had come onto the committee at the AGM volunteered to take on the role of secretary. Being the daughter of a founder member, this is a most appropriate development. The current committee is:

President: Noel Williams (from AGM 2022)
nevisnoel@gmail.com

Vice-President: Anthony Walker (from AGM 2022)
nevachalet@btinternet.com

Secretary: Jinty Smart (from 5 Jan. 2023; vacant from AGM till then) jintysmart@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Mandy Peden (from AGM 2022)
mandy@askival-oban.co.uk

Membership Secretary: Jane Craxton (new post from AGM 2022) j.craxton@btinternet.com

Gathering Secretary: Bethany Carol (new post from AGM 2022) bethanycarol@gmail.co

Newsletter editor: James Fenton (from AGM 2022)
james@fenton.scot

Members: Mike Bauermeister (from AGM 2022)
mtbauermeister@gmail.com

Louise Hollinrake (from AGM 2022)
louisehollinrake@gmail.com

Fraser Melville (from AGM 2020)
frasermelville123@hotmail.co.uk

Jennifer Newall (from AGM 2020)
jennifer@sustainlifestyles.org

The President, Stella Spratley, presided over her final Gathering in this role and welcomed just over 60 members to the afternoon's presentations which started with those who had recently been awarded grants from the Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund and who were not on the Club's expedition. There then followed presentations from members of the Club's 50th Anniversary Expedition to Ammassalik Island in July and August this year. The list of presenters and topics was:

Mark Agnew – Rowing the North-West Passage in 2023 (postponed) and his current preparations

Flordespina Dodds and Alyssa Stoller (with Tom Grove and Joseph Lee) – Humpback whales, Westfjords, Iceland about scarring from fishing gear entanglement

Hamish Rodger – Field research in Svalbard, winter activities in Isfjorden and Templefjorden

Liam Tracy – Solo ski expedition across Finnmark, the testing of man and equipment

Kris Law – Ice Warrior Project expedition to Northern Pole of Inaccessibility (video report)

Stella Spratley then introduced the talks about the 50th Anniversary Expedition, starting with:

Noel Williams' group of climbers on 'The Ridge' and, later, on peaks on the mainland

Bethany Carol and Hannah Mortlock – The trio from St Andrews University Mountaineering Club (Tom Litchfield *in absentia*) on the area noted on one map as the 'Splendid cirque of peaks'

Angus Mackenzie – The Neil Mackenzie Trust, from whom the trio also received a grant

Jinty Smart on her family's adventures of walking a significant way round the island

Pat Duchart, Sheila Russell and Iain Allison, The Tasiilaq-based quartet – on their walks in hills and valleys around Tasiilaq and a boat trip around the island (Fiona McGregor was the 4th)

Stella Spratley, Susie Ranford and Ruth Vingerhagen (a short video) about their 8-day adventure walking across the island with 4 children from 6 to 9 years old. A success!



As the programme overran a bit we went straight into the AGM, and the draft Minutes are copied below. Members then dispersed to prepare for dinner at 7pm. Before Stella introduced the speakers for the Anniversary Expedition afternoon tea was served and we were treated to quite a spread – not just a cup of tea and a biscuit, but mini sausage rolls, and cakes; designed to put any programme out of kilter.

The Club has already booked accommodation for next year's Gathering & Supper. It will be held at the Ben Nevis Hotel on Saturday 18th November 2023. For your early bird bookings, the details are below:

Ben Nevis Hotel & Leisure Club

North Road, Fort William PH33 6TG

Tel: 01397 702 331

Enquiries and Reservations:

salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com

Iain Allison



Draft Minutes (not yet approved) of the

**SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022**

Held on Saturday 5th November 2022 at 5.50 pm with Stella Spratley, President, in the chair and 50 members present.

Apologies for absence were received from: *Anne and Chris Bartle, Kathleen and Neville Cartwright, James Fenton, Jim and Sandra Gregson, Brigitte and Hans-Peter Grossmann, Kate & Mike Lea, Tom Litchfield, Craig Mathieson, David Matthews, Fraser Melville, Barbara & Pete Nelson, Jenny Newall, Chris Ravey, Hazel & Luke Robertson, Louise Scott, Christine Seddon, Kirsty Stewart, John Thorogood, Matthew Waterston, Angela and Heiko Wolle.*

The president began by welcoming members to this AGM and was pleased to see so many.

1. Minutes of the AGM of 20th November 2021
which had previously been circulated, were approved.

2. Matters arising
There were no matters arising not already on this year's agenda.

3. The President's Annual Report
In her brief report, the President mentioned the Attadale Meet which went ahead with eleven members but in June rather than May, and the Solstice meet, generously hosted once again by Myrtle Simpson. The President thanked Kathleen Cartwright for continuing to oversee the Spring Meet. The dates next year for these are 6-13 May and 24/25 June. The

50th Anniversary Expedition to Tasiilaq was a great success with 26 participants from 6 years old to the high 70's. Her report is appended to these Minutes.

4. Membership Report

The secretary reported that the membership was fairly stable from year to year in the 170's and currently is 177. A report is included below.

Chris Calver stated that he had transferred £800 to the Expedition Fund being the sum of donations received with the annual subscription and at the Gathering. He suggested that the new committee should consider raising the fee for the Gathering as this year it will not cover all expenses. He was pleased to see that many payments were being made by 'Faster Payment/BACS'.

5. Treasurer's Report [see below]

6. Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund (SAEF)

In the absence of the chair of the trustees, Sue Fenton as secretary and treasurer reported that the fund stood at just short of £14,000. Eight grants had been awarded in February of whom 5 have given presentations this afternoon, 4 in person and one with a video report. The SAEF accounts are included below..

7. Election of new Committee members

The President, Stella Spratley, has come to the end of her three-year term and the committee have nominated Noel Williams, currently a Vice President, as President till the AGM in 2025. The committee has decided that we should have a single Vice President. As Noel moves to President and Susie Ranford demits the other VP post, the committee nominated Anthony Walker as the new Vice President.

There have been no nominations for the post of Secretary as Iain Allison stands down having taken on the role in 2010 with a brief respite when Ashley Buchan took over. The committee has decided to split some of the secretary's functions. Newsletter editor was taken over by Chris Gilmore three years ago and he comes to the end of his term. Susie Ranford, at the earlier committee meeting, said she would assume the role if there were no other nominations from the floor – there were none! Membership matters will be dealt with separately and Jane Craxton was nominated as Membership Secretary. The committee also suggested that the Gatherings should be organised by a separate person leaving the secretary with an over-seeing role. There were no volunteers for Gathering Secretary.

Chris Calver stands down as Treasurer after 10 years in post and we currently have no nominations for a successor.

Three ordinary committee members stand down at

this AGM; David Broadhead, Fraser Melville and David Stone. Whereas we are having difficulty in recruiting members for the posts mentioned above, we do have three nominations for the committee: Mike Bauermeister, Louise Hollinrake and Jinty Smart. All these mentioned above were duly approved for the respective posts.

Stella Spratley thanked Chris Gilmore for producing very well-received newsletters and the Anniversary Journal and also all the committee members, who are standing down, for their service to the Club over the years. Myrtle Simpson, from the floor, proposed a vote of thanks to the President and a hearty round of applause ensued.

8. Spring Meet

The President thanked Kathleen Cartwright for continuing to organise these Spring Meets. The President noted that the three cottages at Attadale have been booked for the week of 6-13 May 2023 and anyone interested in attending should contact Kathleen.

9. Summer Solstice Meet

The Summer Solstice Meet occurred once again in late June and the President thanked Myrtle Simpson for hosting the weekend for the usual canoeing activities, barbecue and marshmallows toasted round the log fire. Some members returning from the Attadale meeting were able to call in on their way south. Myrtle is again looking forward to hosting the Solstice Meet in 2023 at Farleiter on 24/25 June. This weekend offers opportunities for walking, canoeing and swimming as well as excellent gastronomy.

10. Annual Gathering and Supper 2023

The Ben Nevis Hotel has been booked for 2023. The Gathering will be on Saturday 18th November.

11. Any other business

The secretary sought the advice of the membership in alternating the venue between the Ben Nevis Hotel and the Carrbridge Hotel. Only one, strong, opinion was voiced to have every Gathering in the Carrbridge Hotel.

The AGM closed at 6.15.

Iain Allison, 7 November 2023

Note following the meeting:

Volunteers came forward to assume the role of Treasurer, Mandy Peden, and Gathering Secretary, Bethany Carol. They will be co-opted until the AGM 2023.

President's Report

It's been our first normal year post-Covid. The Attadale meet and the Solstice meet both took place in their usual locations. Many thanks to Kathleen and Myrtle as ever. And then the minor miracle, after two postponements, we finally went to Greenland to mark the Club's 50th anniversary. Thanks to all the people who stuck with it and came. enjoyed the time I spent with all of you. And particular thanks to Iain for his support in all things organisational.

Thanks are also owed to all the committee for their efforts this year, but two people need special mention. Chris has been treasurer for ten years and Iain has been secretary forever. The whole Club owe them a massive thank you. Replacements are also needed for them both, though all committee positions are now time limited, so no one else will face a ten year stretch.

Here's to the next 50 years.

Stella Spratley, President

31 October 2022



SAC Membership Report

Membership at 31 August 2022

Number of members: 177

Number of new members: 7

Number who resigned: 0

Number of deceased members: 3

New members

Steven Andrews

Alison Cook

Anna Fleming

Avery Holmes

Tom Litchfield

Hannah Mortlock and

Lotta Ruha

Deceased members

Elspeth Hamilton, May 2022

Averil Stewart, May 2022

Gavin Stewart, August 2022

Resigned members

None

Iain Allison, Secretary 7 October 2022



TREASURER'S REPORT

September 1st 2021 – August 31st 2022

Balance at bank 1/9/21:	£4,209.12
Balance at bank 31/8/22:	£5,056.29
Increase in balance for year:	£847.17

At Aug 31 2022

Total money available:	£5,056.29
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Income

Subscription payments	660.00
Gathering fees and supper for 3 non residents	474.00
Cash at gathering (for SAEF)	429.00
Donations by Bacs or Cheques	371.00
Donation M Simpson	1,000.00
Attadale 2021	363.00
Attadale 2022	3,320.00
Total	6,617.00

Expenditure

Office/Committee/ Unsigned cheque	*15.00
Gathering Hotel Room hire for speakers	339.00
Gathering Hotel Ballroom plus Teas and Coffees	270.00
Gathering in addition to cash to pay hotel	223.50
Website	143.86
SAEF transfer (Attadale '21 plus donations)	600.00
Attadale 2021 Food	174.92
Attadale 2022 Outgoing (inc 255.55 to SAEF)	1,748.00
M Simpson Donation SAEF	1,000.00
Attadale 2022 Surplus	255.55
Total	5,769.83

Increase in balance is £6,617.00 - £5,769.83 = **£847.17****

Notes:

- 1) The Website 2021/22 registration was paid in November 2021.
- 2) * Office expenses of £81.70 were paid in September 2022 and will appear in the 2022/23 figures. The unsigned cheque was replaced by cash at the Gathering.
- 3) Attadale 2021 took place in September 2021. £472.08 was transferred to the SAEF together with some donations making £600 in total. Attadale 2022 took place in June 2022 and the £255.55 surplus is included in the figures.
- 4) A cheque for £134.45 for food for Attadale 2022 has been issued this sum will be in the 2022/23 balances.
- 5) A transfer for £800 (consisting of £371 donations plus £429 cash at the 2021 Gathering) has been issued to the SAEF.
- 6) **Taking into account the above expenditure there is a slight reduction in SAC funds of about £40.
- 7) It may be necessary to increase the Gathering fee in 2023 depending on the Fort William room and food costs.

8) More faster payments and standing orders are now in place. 'Faster Payments' usually imply using cards at bank branches or over the internet.

9) The SAC has sufficient funds to cover its normal activities during the remainder of 2022 and for 2023.

10) As a final note:

Balance at Bank at 13/09/2022: £ 5141.29

Chris Calver, SAC Treasurer 17/10/2022



THE SCOTTISH ARCTIC EXPEDITION FUND & AMAZON SMILE

The Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund (SAEF) has raised a considerable amount of money over the past few years, through SAC members choosing Amazon Smile to purchase goods, and selecting SAEF from the drop down charities menu. There have been times when our Smile income has exceeded our interest payments! Sadly, this scheme is coming to an end on 20 February 2023.

So if you have any purchases to make through Amazon Smile, the Fund would love you to make them by 20 February. Thank you!

Sue Fenton



ANNOUNCEMENT!

A writing competition is to be held for all members of the Scottish Arctic Club on the theme of "The Arctic and Me."

Entries may be either prose or poetry, illustrated or not, with a maximum of 3,000 words. The piece must not have been published elsewhere and should be submitted to:

scottisharcticexpeditionfund@gmail.com

by 30 September 2023

The winner will be announced at the Gathering in Fort William in November 2023.

Good luck!

Sue Fenton



SCOTTISH ARCTIC EXPEDITION FUND (SAEF)
SC046857
ANNUAL REPORT & AGM 2021-22

SAEF trustees met at 1130 on Saturday 5 November 2022, at the Carrbridge Hotel, Carrbridge.

Present: Sue Fenton (*Secretary/Treasurer*), Iain Allison, Stella Spratley, Douglas Anderson, Andrea Anderson, Pat Duchart, Bryan Alexander, Louise Hollinrake.

Apologies: Luke Robertson, Kathleen Cartwright (*Convenor*), Mairi Webster.

Bryan Alexander took the chair in Kathleen Cartwright's absence.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

Proposed and seconded by acclaim.

Matters arising

Polar Academy: SAEF/SAC did not provide a reception to the exchange girls from Greenland. By chance, Sue Fenton happened upon their arrival at Glasgow airport. Sue reported that she had, today, heard from the expedition leader of Zeki Basan's expedition to SW Greenland, after several prompts.

Hans Egede book: To be discussed later in this meeting.

SAC embroidered patches: These were commissioned by an anonymous donor and sent to each of this year's award recipients; the surplus are to be offered to club members at £5 each.

Mountain Equipment: The collaboration had proved to be most successful and well received. Mairi Webster has volunteered to follow up this partnership up for 2023. Sue would chase up advertising photographs.

Action: Mairi Webster, Sue Fenton

Convenor's Report

It is a great relief that, after two years with many cancellations of the expeditions planned by the young people who received a grant from the SAEF, we have enjoyed a return to near normal this summer. Nearly all of the awardees from 2020, 2021 and 2022 have now completed their expeditions and many of them will be reporting on them at the Supper in Carrbridge. Some of the expedition reports have been published in the Scottish Arctic Club (SAC) Newsletters including an excellent one from Liam Tracey. There were a few changes to plans and/or cancellations e.g. Ellis O'Connor's residency in Upernavik was cancelled so she went to Svalbard instead and Lucy Hart was unable to take part in the SAC expedition because of illness (grant returned). We are still awaiting word from Zeki Basan.

The partnership that Mairi Webster established with Mountain Equipment has proved very successful. Also we now have SAC embroidered patches.

Update on Hans Egede book: Earlier this year a value of £1,000+ was put on the book by Chris Bartle. However, following discussions with the donor, he has made it clear that he would still very much like the book to go to a member of the Scottish Arctic Club, and a young person in particular, although he is understanding of the fact that since he donated the book to the Club we can do what we wish with it. In recent emails and discussions, he has suggested that maybe there could be a competition for the book that would favour it going to a young person who is a member of the Club. He suggests an "essay or story of general interest relating to an Arctic experience". Sue and I met recently and briefly discussed the idea and came up with some thoughts:

- a) We could restrict entry to members of the Club who meet the criteria of the SAC awards/ are recipients of awards thereby ensuring that it goes to a young person.
- b) Judges could be Myrtle (she has written many books) and the donor plus maybe another.
- c) We would have to be more specific regarding the title/scope of the essay.
- d) We would have to set a time frame

These are just very preliminary ideas and need much more discussion and involvement. It does mean that there would be no income to the Club but it would show support for young people.

SAEF criteria: Sue and I earlier in the year also discussed information on the website and SAEF criteria. Our suggestions were as follows. Regarding applications:

- a) For 'Low Arctic' expeditions e.g. Iceland or Scandinavia, these should only be considered if they are independent, off the beaten track, camping-type expeditions and possibly in winter or spring – so would be biased against accommodation in Field Centres, etc. Liam Tracey's expedition would meet these criteria.
- b) We should not consider highly commercial expeditions.
- c) Applicants for "expeditions" in Svalbard connected to SAMS/ UNIS should be considered since they tend to be over and above their set programme.

Treasurer's Report

The annual accounts are below. The treasurer reported that a pleasing number of donations to SAEF had been made over the year, and a transfer from SAC for donations at the 2021 Gathering had recently been made. Grateful thanks to the SAC Attadale meet, once again, for the donation.

An SAC member had pointed out that donations made at the Gathering (raffles, guess the whisky etc) were also eligible for gift aid as 'collections.'

Election of trustees

Iain Allison is stepping down as secretary of the SAC and so is no longer *ex-officio* on the SAEF trustees. A big thank you for all his hard work in setting up the charity and driving the selection of grantees over the years. A new SAC secretary, and treasurer, have yet to be appointed, and would be opted in *ex-officio*. Stella Spratley continues on the trustees as *ex-officio* past president and Noel Williams will now join as SAC president. Douglas Anderson retires from the trustees in his *ex-officio* role as past SAC president. It was decided to ask at the SAC AGM for members interested in being a trustee.

Expedition reports

Presentations were made at the 2022 Gathering by Mark Agnew (rowing the North West Passage); Liam Tracey (solo ski-touring across Finnmark); Flordespina Dodds (Whale Wise – drone surveys of humpback whales in West Fjords, Iceland); Hamish Rodger (UNIS/SAMS in Svalbard) and Kris Law (*in absentia*) about the Ice Warrior expedition to the Northern Pole of Inaccessibility. Grant-holders were also well represented in the SAC 50th (delayed) Anniversary joint presentation – Bethany Carol and Hannah Mortlock and our young stars of the raffle, Eric and Nina Ranford with Simon and Astrid Vingerhagen watching on Zoom from Norway.

Criteria for expeditions

It was decided not to fund trips to the Low Arctic in summer, staying at field centres *etc.* There would also be a presumption against commercially-organised expeditions, with some discussion following about expeditions organised by charities with paid employees. Students from SAMS travelling to UNIS in Svalbard should not be excluded, however, whilst recognising that some categories of trip are more deserving of support than others. The SAC website is to be changed to reflect these decisions. *Action: Sue Fenton*

Fundraising

Once again, there was discussion about the 18th century Hans Egede first edition about Greenland, donated to the club. Chris Bartle of Glacier Books had valued it at c. £1,000. Following discussion and a vote, it was decided to hold a literary competition within the club, *The Arctic and Me*, with the book as the prize, for **ALL** club members. An original piece of prose or poetry, (with illustrations if desired) and not exceeding 3,000 words, to be submitted to the SAEF secretary by 30 September and the winner to be announced at the 2023 Gathering. Douglas Anderson agreed to be a judge; Myrtle Simpson is to be asked to judge (postscript, she has agreed), and Kathleen would be tasked with asking the donor if he would be willing to judge the competition, too.

Action: Kathleen Cartwright

The competition would be announced at the SAC AGM and in the newsletter, social media, *etc.*

Action: Sue Fenton

Pat Duchart provided some John Donne postcards belonging to the late Averil and Gavin Stewart, which will be sold on behalf of the SAEF.

A reminder about using Amazon Smile in aid of SAEF funds should be put into the next SAC newsletter/social media.

Action: Sue Fenton

Date of next meetings

Assessment of expeditions 2023: it is proposed to reconvene by Zoom in mid-February 2023 to finalise the allocation/distribution of grants. Applications are received by 31 January.

Date of Next AGM: 18th November 2023, Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William.

Meeting closed at 1233

Sue Fenton, Secretary/Treasurer



SAEF Annual Accounts

1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

Balance at bank 01/09/2021 = £15,174.27

Balance at bank 31/08/2022 = £13,966.29

INCOME

Surplus from SAC Attadale weekend 2022	£255.55
Interest on account 2021/22	£60.11
Donations from SAC members	£2,945.00
Amazon Smile Europe Care	£18.56
HMRC Charities Gift Aid	£228.80
2020 Grant returned (Lucy Hart)	£500.00

Total £4,008.02

EXPENDITURE

Expedition Grants awarded:

Hannah Mortlock	£500
Hamish Rodger	£700
Liam Tracy	£1,016
Thomas Litchfield	£500
Yvonne Findlay	£400
Kristofer Law	£1,250
Flordespina Dodds (Whale Wise)	£600
Niamh Doherty	£250

Total £5,216

BALANCE - £1,207.98



ARCTIC PAINTINGS

John Hutchinson visited the island of Senja in Arctic Norway in 2022 and shown here are two of his paintings.

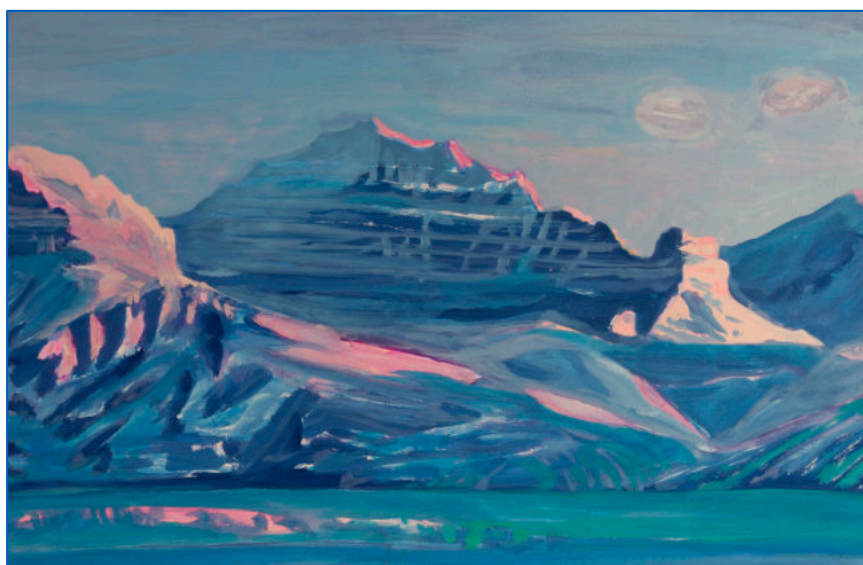
Below: Senja.

Right: The Bright Lights of Skaland



Ny Alesund Bay

Oil, Pigment, Gloss. 122x80x2cm. Georgia Rose Murray, 2022



Turquoise & Pink, Ice & Light, Jean Corbel Station

Oil, Pigment, Gloss. 111x75x3cm. Georgia Rose Murray, 2022

Georgia Murray writes:

In February 2020 I flew north, over dazzling sea ice, giant mountains and glistening glaciers, to Ny Alesund, the most northern research community on Earth, at 79 °N. The Norwegian Artists Association had selected me to inhabit the Artists' Cabin in Ny Alesund, during the annual period of the Sunrise.

I was painting inside the Blandal Station, looking out of the large panoramic windows, when suddenly saw the snow erupt into a dazzling carpet of gold – I rushed outside and felt the magnificent sun for three minutes, as it moved in an arc between two mountains.

I had to be especially quick when painting the colours in the sky and landscape during this season – the light was changing very fast and the wind was sometimes minus 40°C. I was very happy to return home with frostbite, knowing I had been able to paint in response to such a magical Arctic season.

HISTORY NOW

JOHN RAE: SNOWSHOES AND STATUES

Jane Craxton

In the National Museum of Scotland there are some remarkable objects which belonged to the explorer, John Rae, but it is all too easy to walk right past them. His snowshoes take pride of place in a small display on nineteenth century Scots in Canada which is part of the fifth-floor gallery describing Scotland's contribution to



Snowshoes made by John Rae as displayed in the National Museum of Scotland

Industry and Empire. Rae was unusual in his willingness to learn from the indigenous peoples and to copy their equipment for survival in the Canadian Arctic. Working for the Hudson Bay Company in the 1830s he spent time based at Moose factory on James Bay, Ontario. There, he had a workbench on which he was able to make items such as these snowshoes using local materials and techniques. He became famous for his ability to travel lightly and swiftly in the snow.

Born in Orkney, John Rae (1813-1893) trained in medicine at the University of Edinburgh and then, in 1833, set sail as an employee of the Hudson Bay Company for the Canadian Arctic where, as a doctor and explorer, he would spend most of his working life.

Yet, despite his remarkable achievements as a surveyor of the Hudson Bay coastline and his discovery of the North West passage, Rae's contemporary reputation never recovered from the antagonistic response to his report in 1854 on the fate of the Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition. The Admiralty and Franklin's influential widow, Lady Jane, could not forgive his citation of evidence of cannibalism amongst the survivors of Franklin's doomed attempt to find the northern sea route.

However, thanks to modern scholarship and the very active interest in Orkney, Rae is now regarded as one of the greatest polar explorers. A big effort is being made to recognise and maintain the places associated with him in Orkney including: an ambitious scheme to restore his birthplace, the Hall of Clestrain, a display in Stromness Museum and a new statue, by Orcadian artist Ian Scott, erected in Stromness in 2013.

In addition, a memorial stone was unveiled in Westminster Abbey in 2014 and a blue plaque installed at 4 Lower Addison Gardens, London where he spent the last years of his life and where he died in 1893. The definitive biography, *Fatal Passage* by Ken McGoogan (Bantam 2002), catches the spirit and resilience of the man in this summary:

"Between 1846 and 1854, he led four major Arctic expeditions, travelling more than 23,000 miles. The chief hunter of every one, Rae surveyed 1,751 miles of unexplored territory, including 1,538 miles of northern coast line. A cost-efficient marvel of stamina, resilience and resourcefulness, he trekked, 6504 miles in the Arctic alone, mostly on snowshoes, and travelled another 6,634 miles in canoes and small boats."

Statue of John Rae sculpted by Ian Scott, sited on the pierhead at Stromness, Orkney



SAC BADGES

The Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund (saef) has been donated some Scottish Arctic Club embroidered patches, by an anonymous benefactor. Each recipient of an SAEF grant will receive one.

Additionally, club members can request one from

scottisharcticexpeditionfund@gmail.com

stating their preferred mailing address. A donation of £5 to SAEF is suggested. BACS: Sort Code 82-67-04, Account No. 20109358

Alternatively, cheques can be sent made out to the **Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund**. Please include an SAE and post to:

*Sue Fenton, Secretary/treasurer SAEF
Polldoran, Clachan Seil, Oban, Argyll PA34 4TJ*



REPORTS FROM SAEF GRANT-AIDED EXPEDITIONS

THE CHILDREN'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY EXPEDITION

Susie Ranford

Our aim with the 50th anniversary expedition was to be inclusive of "people of all ages and abilities from pre-school children to the founding members of the Club... The older members of the Club have a wealth of knowledge to pass on to younger ones and the annual meeting gives limited opportunity for such interaction, whereas being together in the Arctic environment putting experience into practice would be an ideal way."

Expedition logistics were complicated with different interest and ability groups. Some of us met in February 2020 in Milngavie for mutual inspiration and reassurance. Then came Covid. In an uncertain and difficult period, one of the silver linings for Dougal and I was the postponement of the anniversary expedition, which enabled Eric and Nina to grow older and more capable. We had a very different, and much more rewarding expedition with them aged 6 and 8, than we would have had at 4 and 6.

Extraordinarily, another family, the Vingerhagens, had also signed up for the expedition and stuck with it through postponement after postponement. Ruth and I knew each other slightly from a BSES expedition to Disko Island in 2007 but had not met since. Luckily, the relatively unusual desire to take one's family camping in Greenland turned out to just be the start of our similarities. The Kulusuk flight was delayed by fog and the children quickly started playing together. First impressions seemed favourable all round.

We finally reached Kulusuk and stepped out into sunshine, but with a chill in the air. A short walk and boat trip through the icebergs took us to the Tasiilaq campsite where we pitched our tents in the few flat spots among the rocks. The first couple of days were occupied with buying supplies, walks around the town, a big group dinner and, most importantly, exploring the

rocky shore at the campsite where all sorts of interesting rocks, sea glass and bones were collected and brought back to the tents.

While the children would have happily played at the campsite all holiday, the adults were itching to get away. The climbers were the first group to leave. The following day it was our turn. We bundled into a small boat for the journey round to Pupik in the north-east of the island. Humpback whales surfaced, lazily ignoring the boat, much to the chagrin of Iain (my Dad) and Sheila who had seen none on a whale watching trip the evening before.



The Ice Camp at Pupik

The Ice Camp at Pupik is a collection of small, colourful huts on a rocky outcrop. We had decided to stay there for a few nights to spend time with Iain, Sheila, Pat and Fiona. The Vingerhagens had brought a fishing rod and the children and Gjermund spent hours fishing off the rocks by the huts. Eric was overjoyed to catch his first fish – a sculpin. With Iain and Sheila we walked up onto the hills next to Pupik. The view over Sermilik fjord with its icebergs was stunning. My dad showed us muscovite and biotite (two types of mica), Sheila identified all the plants we encountered and the 'passing on knowledge to the younger generation' concept became reality!

Then on the morning of the 28th we woke up to rain. Nerves were tense as we packed our rucksacks, discussed whether we could dispense with taking the gun (we took it) and reluctantly put on waterproofs, shouldered bags, said our goodbyes to Pat and Fiona, and set off with my dad and Sheila up the misty valley. Despite the dreich weather, it felt good to set off on our journey after so many years of thinking about it and wondering whether it was a sensible thing to do with the children. They seemed perfectly at home, romping over the rough ground and stopping at every opportunity to throw stones into lochans.

We walked up the side of a wide river valley, past a shockingly pink patch of dwarf fireweed, heading for a spot where a 'red triangle' was marked on the map signifying a campsite. So far, we had not seen anywhere that wasn't either too rocky or too muddy. Then we saw it. A perfectly flat area, large enough for our three tents, elevated above the braided river and completely dry. The children were doing cartwheels before we'd taken off our rucksacks.

Leaving the children playing with Stella in the campsite, the rest of us walked up to a rocky viewpoint with my dad and Sheila. We said our goodbyes and waved them off on their walk back to Pupik. Now we were on our own. Or at least, nine humans and countless mosquitos! We'd been led to expect blue skies, sunshine and no insects. So far, wrong on all three counts! But at least it had stopped raining. While Ruth and I put the children to bed Dougal and Gjermund walked up a nearby peak.

leaving the glacier involved a bit of guesswork as the ground we crossed had been covered by ice when our map was made. Our next 'red triangle' marked an extraordinary camp spot on a high ledge with views across to the coastal mountains and Greenland ice cap. We were learning to trust the map – most of the ground was completely unsuitable for camping!



Nina's pictures of our campsite on the ledge

The sun woke us on our ledge and children romped downhill to the valley floor where we walked barefoot across moss and shallow sun-

warmed streams. Then along a string of glacial blue lochans. What a place. But the next red triangle was miles away, we weren't moving fast, we needed to press on. Or did we? Stella and I looked at each other. Clearly the same thought had struck us both. We don't want to get back to Tasiilaq too quickly. Once thought, it had to be said. 'Why don't we stay here for the night?' Shortly afterwards, five of us were in the water – briefly!

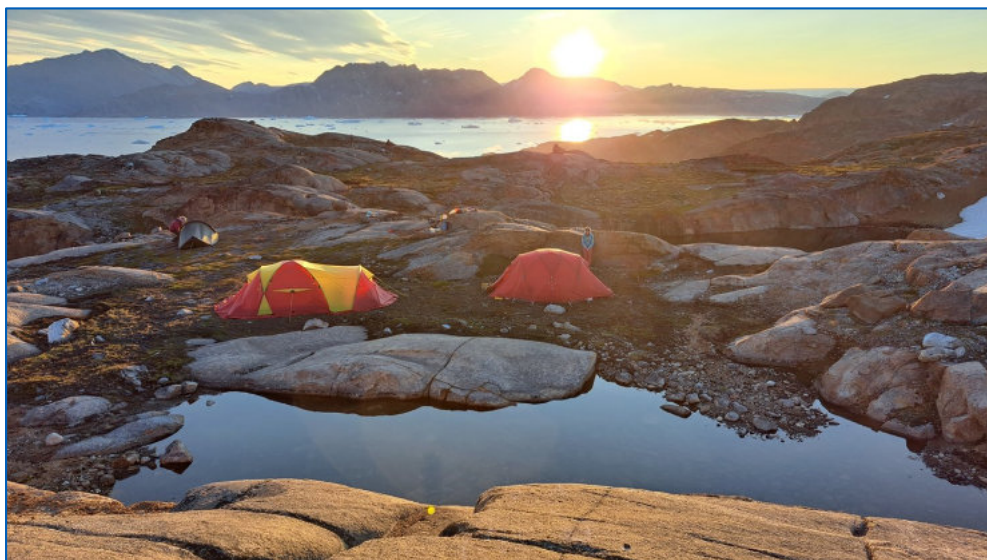
The adults were all a bit nervous about the next stage of the walk. Lars had told us explicitly NOT to cache our food at the research station as the route from the north was precipitous and hard to find. Instead, he'd suggested a cove further south. Our boatman on the journey to Pupik had completely ignored this instruction and taken us to the research station. A recce helped us



Nina and Eric's first glacier. The hairband was lost somewhere between here and Tasiilaq

The following day involved a river crossing, bouldery slopes and the children's first glacier. Route finding after

find a traversing line through cliffs on one side of a large ravine which led us to Sermilik Fjord. We could see the research station huts in the distance, on the far side of steep scree and cliffs dropping straight into the water.



The unexpectedly perfect campsite found after the river crossing: lochans to swim in, boulders to trundle and THAT view across Sermilik Fjord to the coastal mountains and ice cap

The girls had been in all but the coldest. The rest of us stripped off and swam in the warmest of the lochans. It was still pretty cold in my opinion!

Leaving the campsite was hard. It was such a beautiful spot and leaving signalled that we were

One by one we negotiated an awkward step onto the scree and for the first time set foot upon a faint path.

We loaded up our rucksacks at the research station and set off to our next challenge – a river crossing. A crossing point was marked on the map and was easily identified by stakes on either side of the river. We discovered a wooden crate with a wire rope and waders inside. The river was milky blue and fast flowing. It looked deep too. Gjermund braved the water, wading out into the flow which was quickly up to his knees. He waded for a surprisingly long time, seemingly impervious to the bitter cold, but it was clear that this was not a place to get the children across.

Dougal and I walked downriver and found a spot out on the beach where the river split into multiple, shallow channels. Nina and Eric walked across the first channel before screaming with the cold. Dougal donned the waders and carried them across one by one. Simon and Astrid borrowed Eric and Nina's crocs and walked all the way hand in hand with Gjermund. So brave!

We were all tired and it was a major disappointment to round a corner and discover that our planned destination was a muddy pool surrounded by more mud. Gjermund dropped his sack and headed off to scout for a better spot. He found a gem. Our best campsite so far. Lochans, snow patches, boulders to trundle and superb views on all sides – up to the glacier and across Sermilik Fjord to the coastal mountains and ice cap. The boys, big and small, had a lot of fun trundling improbably large boulders off small cliffs into the lochans.

The following day we split up, with half the party staying at camp and the other climbing to the top of peak 916. From the top we could see all the way up Sermilik Fjord as well as across the glacier to the shark fin peak of Mittivakkat. Descending was much easier as we ran and slid down snow patches – the Scots not quite as proficient as the Norwegians! Back at camp Stella had swum in all the lochans, including the 'infinity pool' which was fed by a snowbank and was particularly icy.

on our way home, leaving behind Sermilik Fjord and its breath-taking icebergs. We were also reaching more well trodden ground. A path led us up past an impressive waterfall to two wooden emergency cabins. The children were tired and Stella kept spirits high with an apparently endless succession of songs. As usual the ground didn't look terribly promising, but the recce team of Gjermund and Dougal found us another brilliant campsite. This time with an island.

As we packed up camp we saw our first fellow walkers – two people passing on the opposite side of the lake. We climbed over the col and descended into a completely different landscape. Jumbled rocks gave way to smooth ground, much more vegetation, and a completely flat, sandy lake shore. And no flies!

We met three more people as we walked along the



shore, stopping frequently for snacks, paddling and skimming stones. After quite a long time we made it to the end of the lake

Eric and Nina's pictures of swimming in the lochans next to our campsite



and saw someone waving. It was Grandad! It turned out that he and Sheila been waving at us for hours and wondering how we could possibly string the walk out for such a long time! After sharing a pack of biscuits

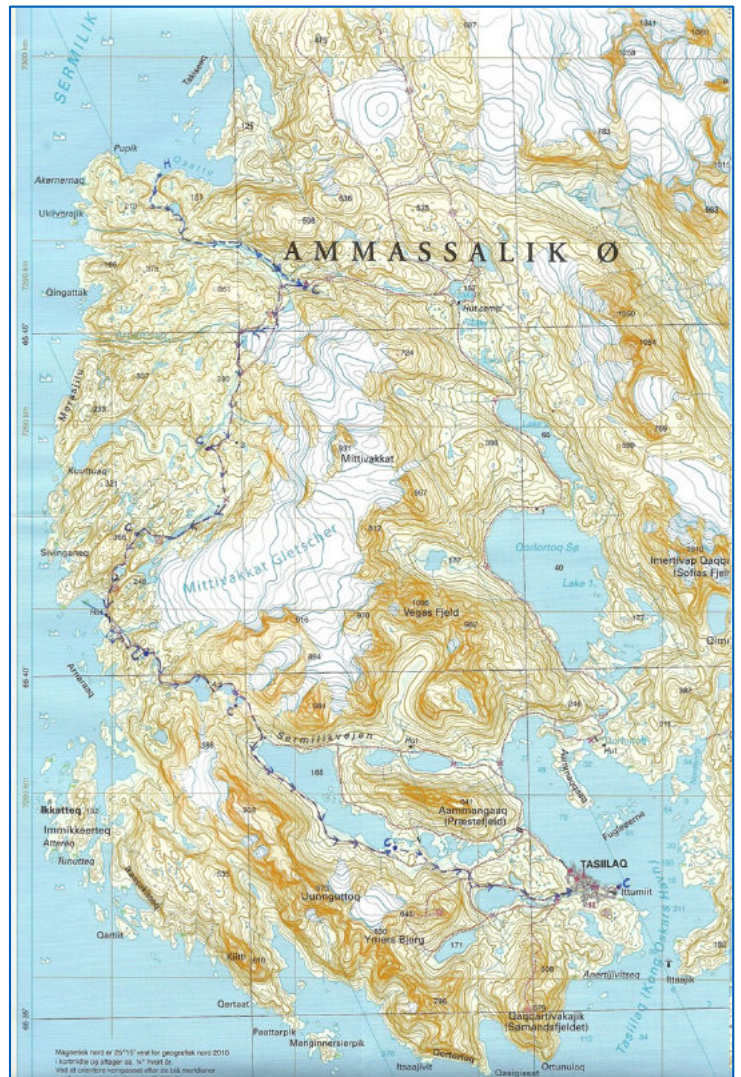
they left us to walk back to Tasiilaq and we set up our tents for the last time near the dam. After dinner Ruth, Stella and Dougal set off to climb a hill overlooking Tasiilaq.

As we headed into Tasiilaq we met Pat and Fiona! They carried on up to the head of the lake while we continued down into the Valley of the Flowers, which

lived up to its name with a carpet of bluebells. Then into town where we had to abruptly recall our road sense as we were almost run over by a police car. Back in civilisation!

For both the Vingerhagens and ourselves, not to mention Stella, signing up for a fortnight with an unknown family was a big risk. As we've learnt at home in Scotland it isn't easy to find compatible families for outdoor adventures. Even when the parents are good friends it only takes small differences in capability and personalities for two families to move at different paces making the whole experience compromised and marred with stress. It is impossible for me to put into words just how well the nine of us got on and how sharing this adventure with Ruth, Gjermund, Simon, Astrid and Stella elevated the holiday into one which we will really struggle to beat!

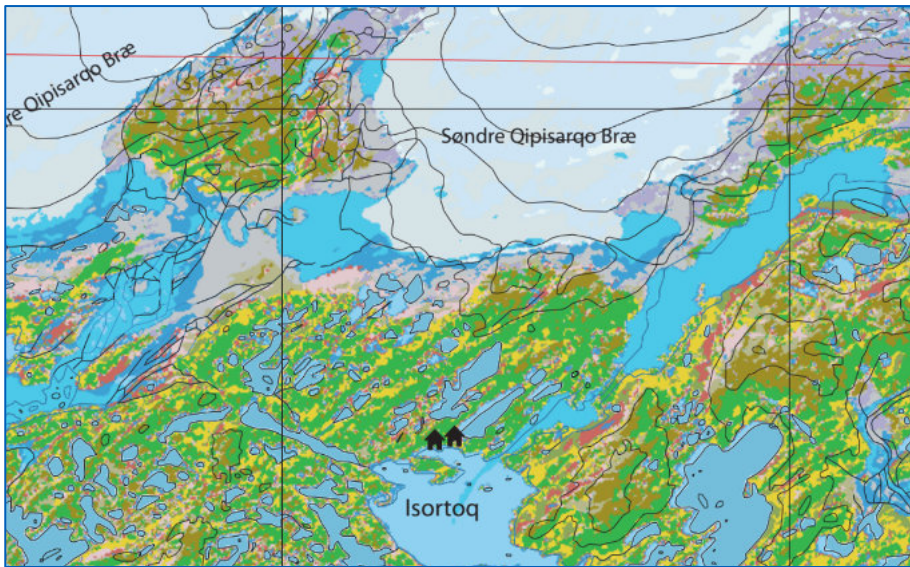
The 50th anniversary expedition turned out to be everything that I had hoped for. We brought radically different age groups together (6 to 76!) to share experiences in a manner which I believe is very rare and truly special. Thank you to the Scottish Arctic Club for providing the motivation for this trip. We would never have decided to take such young children to Greenland without the 50th anniversary! Thank you to the Expedition Fund and to Mountain Equipment for making it a bit more affordable. Most of all thank you to all members of the expedition, particularly my dad, Sheila, Pat and Fiona as well as Stella, Ruth, Gjermund, Simon and Astrid. We've made friends for life, renewed our Arctic addiction and probably passed it on to the next generation. We feel that we also did a good job of putting John and Mandy Peden's parenting advice into practice – 'not scary, not boring'!



Our route from Pupik to Tasilaq

Simon, Astrid, Eric and Nina





GREENLAND REINDEER AND GLACIERS EXPEDITION

Zeki Basan

In August 2022, I travelled to Isortoq Reindeer station in south west Greenland. The station is very remote, it's 1 hour by boat from the nearest village and 3 hours from the nearest large town. Just getting to and from the station is an adventure, I flew into Narsarsuaq from Iceland and then caught a ferry to a hunting camp near the station, and was then picked up by speed boat. We passed through narrow channels between islands and saw icebergs up close. Being so far from towns and services, life at the station has to be self-sufficient as possible. Life there has changed hugely in the past decade and I was interested in documenting the traditional skills still in use. The other purpose of the expedition was to scout routes on the outlet glaciers near the station to help support the future development of tourism at Isortoq.

Isortoq Reindeer station was established in the 1990's by Ole Kristiansen and Stefan Magnusson. The reindeer at Isortoq Reindeer Station descended from Norwegian reindeer that were introduced to Greenland back in 1953. The station used to have over 3,000 reindeer and a reindeer round up and slaughter would happen each year. This involved many people and the meat was then sold within Greenland and exported to Canada, Iceland and the EU. The money from selling the reindeer meat was the main income of the station. In the last decade, climate change has affected the station drastically. In previous winters, the temperature would remain below zero and snow would build up on the ground. Reindeer have specially adapted hooves that allow them to dig through the snow and get to the lichen beneath. However, in the last decade, the temperature has started to spike back above zero during winter which melts the snow, and then it refreezes into hard ice that the reindeer cannot dig through. This led to many reindeer starving, killing over 70% of the herd.

The station is no longer able to survive on selling reindeer meat and has had to diversify – it now has trophy hunters that come and hunt a small number of the remaining reindeer. Other tourism projects including hiking, glacier tours and traditional skills courses are being developed through the Wild Greenland initiative, led by Ginny Howells, who was part of this expedition, and in partnership with Stefan and his family.

We spent time documenting the traditional ways of preparing and preserving food. Klaus, who is from

a nearby village, used to be the foreman at the station when it was fully operational. He came back to the station this summer to help butcher the meat from the trophy hunters. As well as making great reindeer soup, and teaching us words in Greenlandic, he also showed us how he dries reindeer meat. We went hunting with Klaus, and shot a wild sheep – and were able to bring some of Scotland to Greenland and make haggis for everyone at the station. We also spent some time scraping, preparing and tanning the sheep hide.

Fish is the other main food in Greenland, cod and char are both abundant. We used hoop nets and caught arctic char in pools near the station. We then spent time filleting the char, brining them in a mixture of sugar and salt, and smoking them. We tried two methods of smoking, cold smoking, which has been used at the station for many years, and hot smoking. We built a small hot smoker to try it out and the hot smoked char



was a great hit with everyone at the station! Life at the station means living off the land as much as possible and building anything and everything you need. The hills around the station have a variety of plants that grow in the short summer season and we spent time looking for and gathering herbs and edible plants. We also spent time with Stefan, hearing his stories about setting up the station and living here for the past 30 years, and seeing some of the crafts he's passionate about like knife carving that he learned from the Sami in Norway.

The other purpose of the expedition was to explore the glacier outlets close to the reindeer station and see if we could scout new routes to traverse them. The glaciers have retreated, leaving areas of quicksand and glacial clay, making access quite tricky. We were able to

find a route onto South Qipisaqo glacier and explore the crevasses and ice formations. We were able to traverse part of the glacier, getting to the opposite side of the valley, and found a waterfall and pool, fed by glacial meltwater. Apart from the glacier routes, we were also able to explore and record potential hiking routes in the area surrounding the station, and shared photos and gps data with the team at the station.

The information collected and the new routes that were scouted will help Isortoq Reindeer station develop its tourism operation and help sustain their life in the arctic. I was only able to complete this expedition due to funding from the Scottish Arctic Club and I would like to thank everyone involved for giving me this opportunity.



Fishing for Arctic char with the hoop net



Hot smoked char



Reindeer carcass transport



Making haggis



ARTIST'S EXPEDITION TO THE HIGH ARCTIC

Ellis O'Connor

I was delighted to receive funding from the Scottish Arctic Club to go towards my expedition to the Archipelago of Svalbard in the High Arctic in October 2022. I was selected among a group of twenty artists worldwide to be part of the Arctic Circle Residency. This residency is very unique, it is a sailing programme which selects artists and scientists from around the world whose work engages with climate change and the environment to be part of an incredible 3-week adventure of sailing aboard a tall ship in Svalbard.

I set off for Svalbard on the 16th of October where we spent 3 weeks sailing from the South of Spitsbergen all the way to the North. I'm still struggling to process this experience and even give words to a journey so profound and life changing. Maybe those words will never come, maybe the fact that there are no words to describe this expedition is only telling of how significant and unique this experience was.



My proposal to go to the High Arctic on this Art and Sailing residency was based around being able to immerse myself in an environment that is both challenging but also incredibly under threat. I wanted to see and hear first-hand the effects of climate change in a place that is changing constantly and to revisit some of the places I'd been 6 years prior to this trip. I think being an Artist, it is imperative to have a meaning behind the work. Within my practise I create large scale paintings of my emotional response to a place and convey the significance and importance of a landscape through visual art. It is impossible for me to show the effects of climate change in a painting but if I can reinforce the power of a place through an artform then it can connect viewers to a landscape that is so unknown to them and open up a dialogue about the experience in itself.

I spent the time engaging with the other artists on the expedition and getting to visit some of the most awe inspiring and extreme places I've ever been on our three-week journey. I worked on small paintings on board, a challenge as some days the temperature got down to minus 20°C so it meant my paint was freezing as soon as I put it on the paper. It was a way for me to respond directly to the environment around me and build up plenty of inspiration and source material which will feed into my practise and inspire larger paintings for the years to come.

I have been moved, so heartbroken, so full of joy from this trip. Contrasting emotions all in one breath. Emotions that are difficult to put into words or formulate into sentences since I can't simply answer 'oh yes the trip was amazing'; it was much more than it. It was beautiful yet terrifying, I felt so full of joy but at the exact same time I was flooded with grief and a sadness that towered above me, I was completely present but also caught myself in moments trying to remember the



This trip has shaken me to my core, I feel so privileged being able to go to Svalbard and spend time with an inspiring and engaging group of people on a voyage that made me remember how to be fully alive and engage with it all in the now.

I think that's why I've found it hard writing about my experience since coming back as time moves on, life moves on, experiences happen and the noise of the world and the daily aspect of simply living gets in the way of the freshness and presence of the trip, no space for processing, what

aliveness, a melancholy for the place while I was still very much within. I think it's more complex and I've struggled to articulate because of this very reason, it's a complex place with a beauty that astounds yet it's changing rapidly.

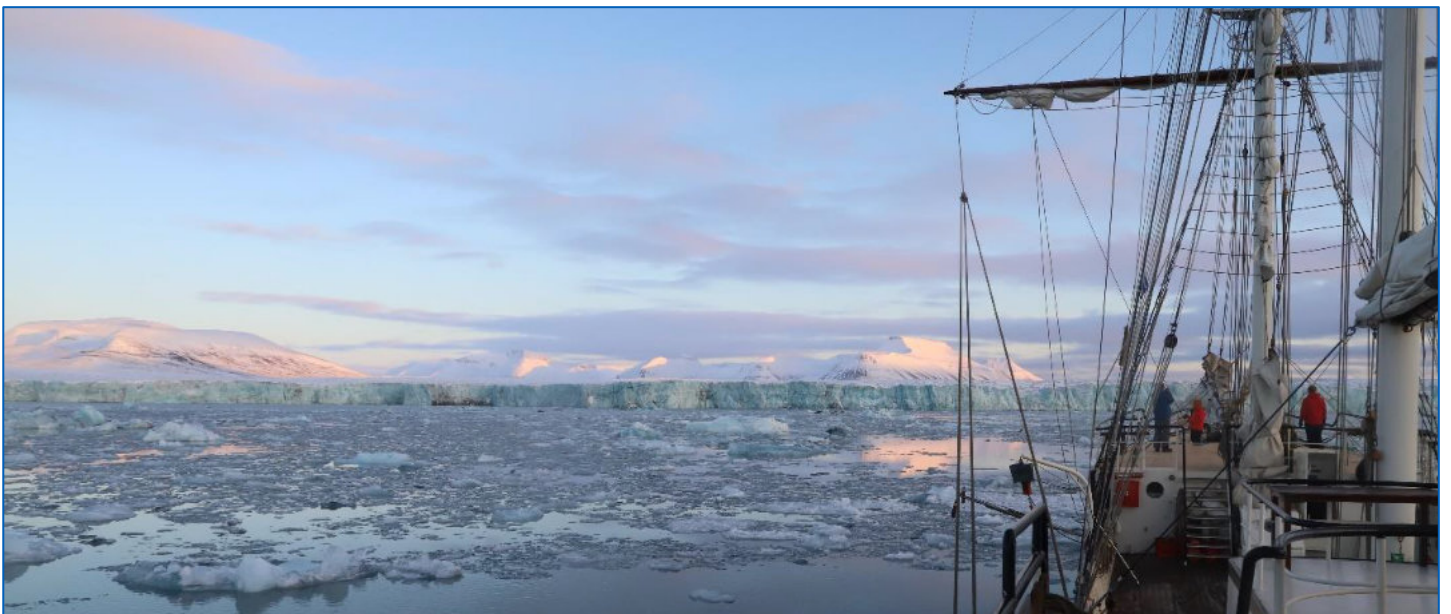
The very glaciers and ice bergs that we travelled through and traversed across were also in the state of diminishing greatly, the beauty of the sculptural floes we could almost touch were in a graveyard, a shedding and warming from the glacier itself that was receding right in front of our very eyes. Leaving places, a sadness hung above us realising that we would be the only people to ever see the glacier exactly how it was, a day or even a hour from then it would diminish further, a deep intense truth that was permeating my mind the whole time.

would that even look like anyway? I'm carrying it with me, I know it happened even though I haven't made the space to think about it during the day it comes to me in my dreams. Dreams of biting winds, community, seas full of turmoil and whales that rise from the depth and the writing and these thoughts will only continue to come and make me feel so grateful for even being able to experience it all in the first place.

Thank you again to the Scottish Arctic Club for making this happen and to the Arctic Circle Organisation selecting me to go on this life changing residency.

I'm going to release a small selection of my work made in Svalbard through my website:

www.ellisoconnor.com



OTHER EXPEDITION REPORTS

A TRIP TO MESTERSVIG, AUGUST 2022

John Thorogood

Andy Hillier and I had hoped to visit Mestersvig in early August for about three weeks. We had been to Greenland in 1978 and again in 2018, and Andy been back to the Stauning Alps in the 1980s; he has travelled and kayaked extensively in Scandinavia and Iceland. We had intended to travel in my Zodiac inflatable boat from Mestersvig, round into Alpe Fjord and Forsblads Fjord for boating, visiting trappers' huts and gentle walking. Alas, it was not to be – through a combination of work commitments and some not inconsiderable bureaucratic hurdles with firearms, insurance and associated permits. In the end, after some delays due to grotty weather, we managed a brief six-day trip to check out the equipment and make a brief excursion up to Kap Pedersens hut, into Alpe Fjord and a night on Traill Island.



Digital cockpit in a 1958 vintage aircraft, complete with autopilot and satellite telephone. Mid-way between Egilsstadir (BIEG) and Constable Pynt. Altitude: 10,000 ft, ground speed 143 mph. Approach plate for Constable Pynt on the display

The Hassle of Planning

Thinking that it was going to be quite a straightforward repetition of previous visits to Mestersvig, the last in 2018, we hit a brick wall at the outset because the Greenland Government expeditions website, through which all expedition applications were supposed to be processed was completely dysfunctional. After a series of emails, the Expedition department, which had been extremely busy with other major expeditions, proved enormously helpful in dealing with questions and providing valuable guidance.

The radio permit was no problem and was quickly granted. We planned to take a sat-phone, a Garmin InReach tracker and a hand-held marine VHF radio. The firearms permit was a different matter. Anticipating that it would be a formality, as on two previous occasions, to take my .308 calibre rifle, it was a shock to have it refused. The Greenlandic Police were insistent that the



Route from Insch to Mestersvig via Edilsstadir in NE Iceland and Constable Pynt in NE Greenland

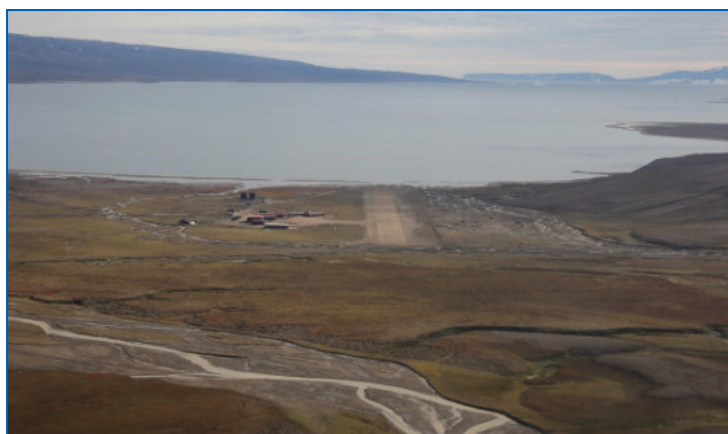
minimum calibre "30-06" was required. Although having the identical bullet diameter and weight, having 15%

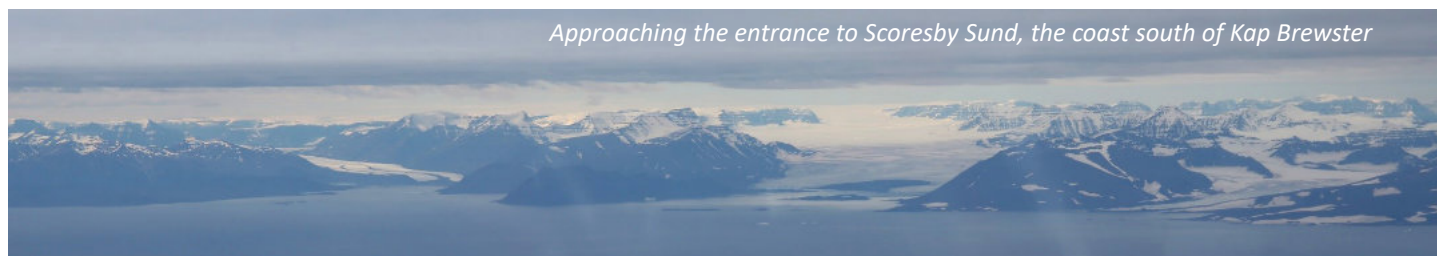
less energy was deemed inadequate. There were no suitable rifles available in Constable Pynt, they were all out with other expeditions. The Greenlandic Police were happy to accept a .366" calibre rifle and Police Scotland approved a Firearms Certificate variation within two weeks: rifle procured, zeroed at 10m and relevant permit duly issued. We also took some thunder flashes as deterrents, in addition to flares.

Search and Rescue insurance turned out to be another major hurdle. The Greenlandic Government will accept expedition members over the age of 65 so long as they have their fitness signed off by a doctor. However, the local Greenlandic agency, Kalaallit Forsikring, absolutely refuses to insure anybody over the age of 65 with no exceptions. As a result, we had to self-insure to the tune of DKK 1,580,000 by means of a personal guarantee, which certainly focuses the mind when doing risk assessments out in the field. Getting a form of words agreed between my bank and the Expedition Office took some weeks, which further eroded the time we'd have in Greenland. Eventually the formalities were completed and the permit for the National Park was issued.

Equipment

Although planning to stay in trappers' huts where available, we took standard camping kit, two weeks'





supply of food and an MSR paraffin stove. Survival suits and waders were already in the Mestersvig container along with the Zodiac, 30 HP outboard, 5 hp emergency motor, fuel containers, tools, oils and two-stroke oil. We purchased a 200 litre drum of petrol at Mestersvig for the princely sum of £3.60 per litre. In view of all the electronics, including a laptop computer on which the inventory was stored (with paper copy as back-up) and which we used for flight planning, we also took an 800W petrol camping generator.

The Journey

We originally intended to leave home on 10th August but a low pressure system loitered around northeast Iceland with cloud from sea level to 20,000 feet and a freezing level around 4,500 to 5,000 ft. I didn't fancy flying



Andy with the boat and kit for a week away. 30hp outboard with 5hp as reserve. 88L fuel, generator and personal kit. GEUS hut in the background. Blue barrel on trolley to left is for running and winterising the outboards

through that murk for 2½ hours. The weather eventually cleared, but the Constable Pynt (Nerlerit Inaat) airfield is closed at weekends, only open 9am to 4pm weekdays.

Andy and I loaded up the aeroplane on Monday 15th August, filed flight plans from Insch airstrip to Egilsstadir (BIEG) in NE Iceland and onwards to Constable Pynt (BGCO). We departed just after 7am BST with stunning views of the Faeroe Islands complete with 4G phone signal, and then coasting in over the mountains in clear weather to land at Egilsstadir 5 hours later. We managed to refuel in 45 minutes and tracked out over northern Iceland and across the Denmark Strait. We picked up the mountains and glaciers of the rugged coast south of Kap Brewster from about 100

miles out, passing Ittoqqortoormiit to land at Constable Pynt after 3hrs 20 min, 3:15 local time. Again, a very quick refuelling and we escaped just before their closing time for the 1 hour flight up to Mestersvig. The whole journey took 10½ hours.

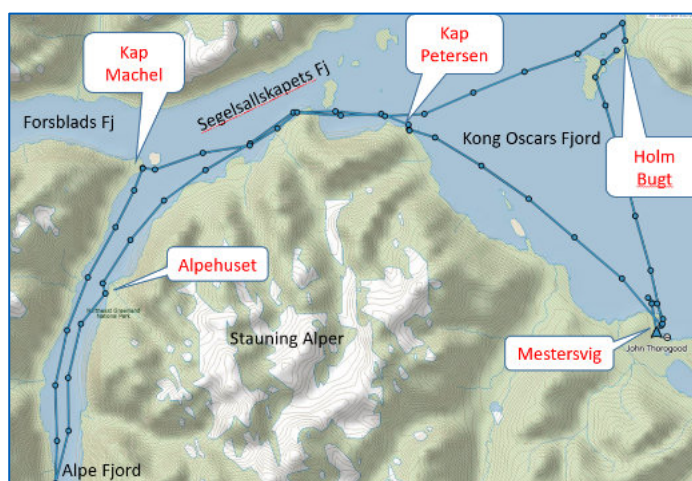
Stock-taking and preparations

With our equipment from the aircraft, we made our way to the GEUS hut, adjacent to the CASP base and our container. We had our permits checked and were updated by the Danish Military personnel on the mining exploration activities at both Blyklippen and Malmbjerg. We spent a day organising kit from the container, test running the outboard motors and double checking the inventory. To minimise the risk of problems with aged fuel, some mixtures dating back to 2020, we mixed the various containers into a single uniform blend with the addition of fresh fuel. This precaution proved successful because we encountered no fuel-related problems.

The following day (18th August), we managed to cram all our kit into and on top of the army jeep and were driven down to the beach at Nyhavn. It was the usual struggle to assemble the Zodiac: eventually done, outboards installed and kit loaded. We transmitted a message, as required by our Permit, to the Rescue Coordination Centre, Police, Danish Military and Mestersvig that the expedition had commenced. After a false start, which involved sorting out a carburettor problem in the 30 hp outboard, we set off up Kong Oscars Fjord for Kap Pedersen.

The old camp at Nyhavn was a hive of activity, with a mining exploration team based there with a small helicopter shuttling drills, fuel, food and other kit up to a team of drillers re-evaluating the lead-zinc deposit at

Map of the route, 102 nautical miles



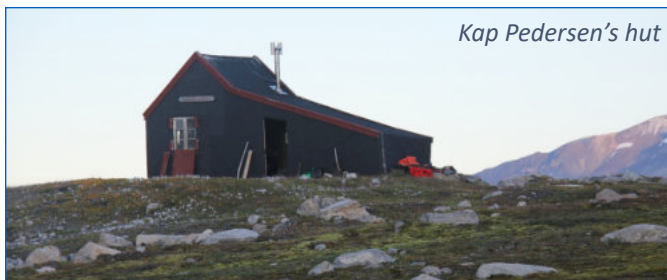


windowsill and peered in at us. With rifle at the ready, the decision was simple: if he broke the window, I'd pull the trigger. Andy, armed only with a thunder flash decided it wouldn't be a smart idea to let it off inside the hut. Fortunately, our friend was simply curious and, after a few moments, got down, sniffed the air. Clearly aware that something was different, but unable to work out what it was, he ambled across the tundra heading south for the

Blyklippen and returning with underslung loads of cores and machinery for repair. The team had been there since early summer and were finding the fresh water supply to be problematic. Their story was that, driven by Net Zero, the mining industry was working flat out exploring for minerals. Indeed, such is the small world that the mining geologist knew those involved in some mineral exploration back home in Aberdeenshire.

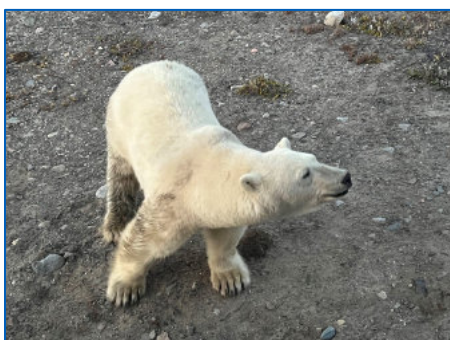
Kap Pedersen and beyond

Lightly loaded, the Zodiac will plane at 15 knots on calm water. We made it to Kap Pedersen in about an hour, the



familiar views to the northern Stauning Alps and the glaciers to our port. Having secured the boat and taken what we needed, we settled in, caught up on diaries, had our evening meal, admitted the view of the low sun up the fjord in the North and turned in for the night. We'd stored all our kit in the vestibule and latched the outer door.

We were woken just before 3am. Andy heard it first, scratching and sniffing outside the hut. Looking up we could see a polar bear peering in through the window on the east side of the hut, and then again on the south side where we were treated to the sight of a



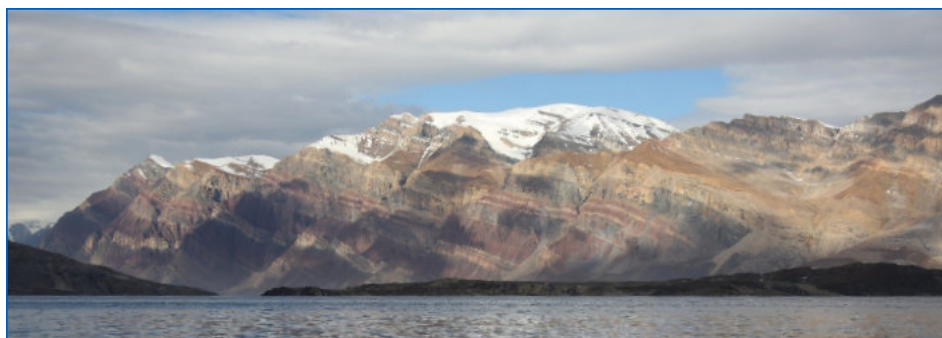
large black mouth and teeth chewing the wood of the window frame. He came round to the large north-facing window, about 4 ft square, put his paws on the

Skjoldungebrae, pausing a couple of hundred metres away to be photographed scratching his backside.

Back to sleep after a brew and then up again around 8am to send the daily status message to the Mestersvig base to coincide with their daily call-in with other parties out in the field. We packed up and set off up Segelsallskapet fjord and into Alpe fjord. The water was calm, we made good progress. Stopping for lunch at the ruined Alpehuset, we continued in eerily misty, calm conditions almost up to the floating tongues of Gullygletscher and the Sefstroms, which marked the limit of our range with the fuel we had. From where we were, and comparing with old photographs, the glacier snouts seemed much the same as they were during a previous visit in 2000. Turning north, we stopped to check out the hut at Kap Machel at the entrance to Forsblads fjord, hoping to be able to spend the night. However, the hut was a derelict ruin most likely having been trashed by a bear. We photographed it and subsequently sent the pictures on to Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen for him to update his records. It was disappointing because we'd hoped to explore Forsblads fjord the following day.

A quick change of plan. We headed east for the hut in Holm Bugt on Traill Ø. Setting off, initially in calm water, we encountered a stiff headwind and some white caps in Segelsallskapet fjord. To our amazement, we found a cruise ship moored in the fjord with lots of





Looking west across Karlenes Ø towards Berzelius Bjerg

orange figures ashore, exploring the area and a group examining an interesting-looking outcrop. Just as suddenly as it came on, rounding the narrows by Karlenes Ø the water turned mirror calm. Making 15 knots, we crossed the glassy water of Kong Oscars fjord to be surprised as we came abeam Haslum Ø when, from a completely clear sky, in a matter of 10-15 minutes, the wind got up to Force 4, complete with whitecaps directly in our faces. We proceeded slowly and carefully through the choppy water into Holm Bugt where things gradually calmed down as we approached the beach. Just as quickly as the squall had risen, the wind died right down shortly after we landed.

We stayed in Holm Bugt overnight, quite nervously checking out suspicious white boulders to ensure they weren't snoozing bears. The weather was clear and the views west and north towards Ella Ø, Lyell Land and back across to the Stauning Alper was breath-taking. Apart from a skua accompanying the boat and the occasional raven, we saw a family of Eider duck paddling just off the rocks. The following morning, after the 8am message to Mestersvig, we packed up, loaded the boat, headed off cautiously through the narrows of the Haslum Ø archipelago and back to Nyhavn.

Having set off with 88 litres of two-stroke fuel, we returned with 15 litres, having travelled 102 nautical miles: an average fuel consumption of 0.76 nm/litre. Being lightly loaded, the boat planed comfortably at 15 knots on calm water. On arrival, we sent a message

to the authorities that the expedition had officially ended.

Wrapping things up

After packing up the boat and sorting the kit ready to take back to the base, we visited the mining team in the camp for tea and biscuits. They told us about the history of the old Blyklippen mine,

which was worked for a few years during the late-1950s, and much else of what was going on in the area. They spoke about a camp known as Chinatown, located in the northwest corner of Carlsberg Fjord which had been the base for a large Chinese team in 2014, but which they abandoned. They very kindly allowed us the use of their quad to go round to the base to ask the military, when convenient, to come with the vehicle to collect our kit. We were back at the GEUS hut that evening with a pile of kit to sort out and an evening meal of soup, haggis, green beans and rice.

We spent the following day cleaning the boat and rolling the skin into a bundle having dusted it with talcum powder, cleaning and winterising the engines and updating the inventory of kit and fuel stocks. All the small pieces of equipment: survival suits, stores, spare parts and tools were packed into blue plastic barrels and, together with the boat, motors, generator, fuel containers were packed into the container. The base crew came past with their vehicle and we took all our personal kit and loaded it into the aircraft ready for a prompt start in the morning. Internet access in the mess hall allowed us to file the flight plans for the three legs back home and check the weather.

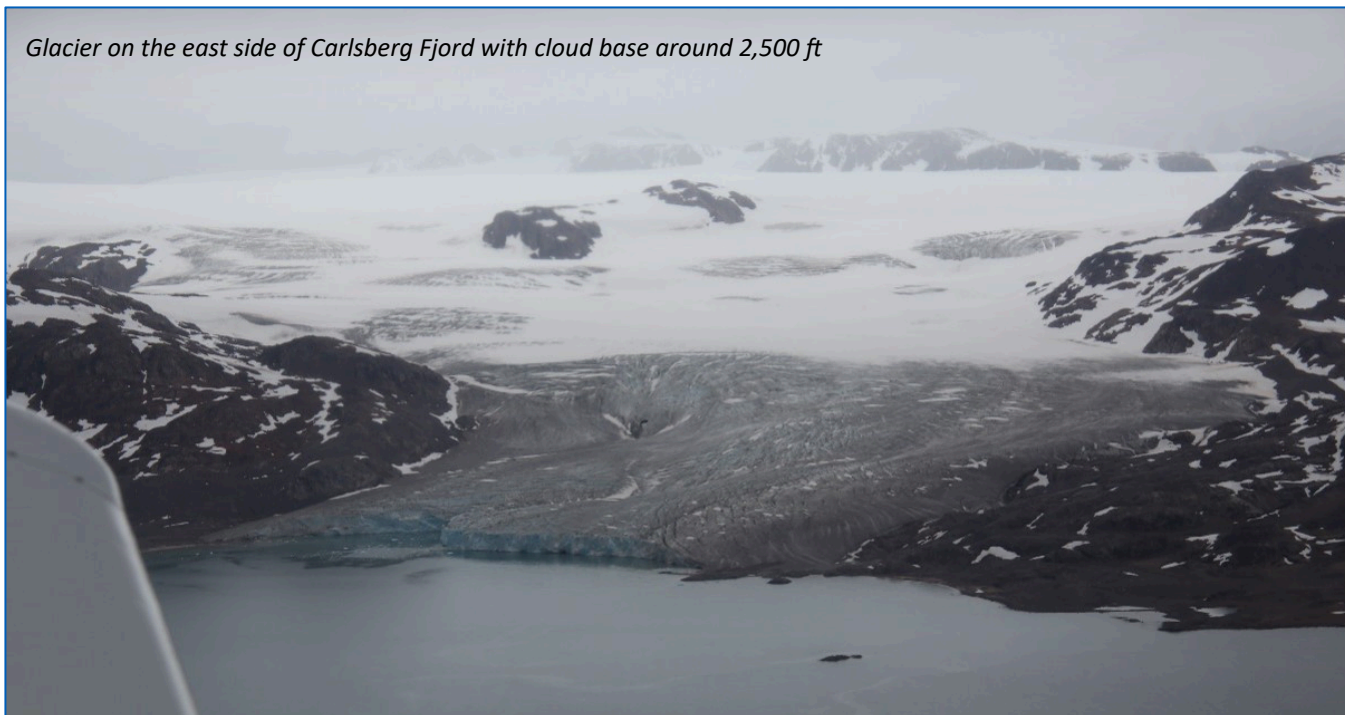
Going Home

We were up early on Monday 22nd August for a brew and breakfast, packing away our overnight kit and down to the aircraft. Donning life jackets and survival suits we were away just after 8am to be at Constable Pynt for 9am. The mountain tops at the bottom of Kong Oscars



Sefstroms and Gully Glacier confluence in Alpe Fjord

Glacier on the east side of Carlsberg Fjord with cloud base around 2,500 ft



fjord were cloaked in cloud with scattered sleet showers, but we were able to do a low pass for photographs over Chinatown before heading south over the low pass across to Hurry Inlet. Refuelling was completed in 35 minutes and we were airborne again just before 10 am, keeping low to avoid the cloud over the hills of Liverpool Land. Passing Ittoqqortoormiit, we climbed to 4,500 feet in cloud, keeping just below the freezing level, and headed southeast towards Egilsstadir. We were able to edge higher as the flight progressed, reaching a satisfactory 10,000 feet in between layers of cloud by the half way mark. It was cloudy over northeast Iceland and we made the approach in cloud using the satellite navigation-based procedure, landing after a flight of 3 hours. The refuelling took 25 minutes and we

were on our way towards the Faeroe Islands. By this stage the cloud had broken up and we had our lunch in the sunshine at 10,000 feet. The flight back to Inch was a little under 5 hours with each of the Faeroe Islands being covered with its own little cloud cap. Once in UK airspace we were given a straight line track back home, coasting in over Dounreay and starting a gradual descent over the Moray Firth. It was a fine late summer evening, with scattered cloud over the Moray coast. Gloomily, the controller told us that the weather in Aberdeen was deteriorating, a typical Aberdeenshire evening with a southerly wind: cloud at 500 ft and 5 km visibility. But the murk had not spread inland, Inch was bathed in evening sunlight as we landed at 7 pm, 10 hours after departing from Mestersvíg.



John equipped for his constitutional



Andy, perhaps slightly less convincingly equipped

SAILING THE WEST COAST: NOTE FROM JOHN PEDEN

I have been contacted by Morag Slessor, daughter of our illustrious past member Malcolm Slessor. Morag and her partner Steve own the 99-year old classic Brixham trawler *Provident*, and are operating it out of Oban for skippered/catered cruises. Morag is herself also a skier and mountaineer and, inspired by the 1997 SMC

Centennial Yacht Meet, is very keen to offer a cruise out of Mallaig specifically aimed at people wanting to access the island and coastal mountains. The dates are from 3rd to 9th July 2023.

See here for details:

<https://www.providentsailing.co.uk/walkthehighlands>



JAN MAYEN AND SVALBARD NOSTALGIA

Malcolm Ogilvie

Voyage to Jan Mayen

In May 2022, I embarked, together with one of my grown-up daughters, on the Poseidon Expeditions ship *Sea Spirit*. I've not been a passenger on a cruise ship before, but several things attracted me to this particular trip. The *Sea Spirit* is quite small (max. 120 passengers), we would embark at Leith Docks, Edinburgh, which was convenient for both of us. She was travelling to Svalbard, doing so *via* the Faeroes and Jan Mayen, two destinations on my bucket list, particularly the latter, and, ending the eleven-day trip, there would be four days on the west coast of the main island, Spitsbergen; this I had visited many times over the past 50+ years, both studying the geese breeding there and as a guide on small cruise ships. And, finally, it would give my daughter her first taste of the Arctic. Previous trips had taken us to the Galapagos and the Serengeti, so we obviously get on pretty well together. I should add that my wife, who in the past has been on many trips with me, including to Svalbard, has given up on travelling, and especially on ships!

Our cruise was first booked for May 2020, and then again for May 2021, both cancelled, of course, and then for May 2022. Even then the ship was operating under Covid rules, a negative PCR test before being allowed on board, and mandatory masks and sanitisers, which was a bit of a bore, as we had so recently been able to abandon those here in Scotland. Initial assembly was in an Edinburgh hotel, then by coach to Leith Docks, tickets and baggage checked, and on board to a warm welcome from the 10 guides. We soon learnt that there were only 70 of us passengers which meant a bit more space for everyone, but on the downside, the bridge was closed to us. It was a happy ship, with restaurant, cabin and deck crew always giving a smiling greeting, the food was excellent and plentiful, and the team of leaders, all of them, did a wonderful job. As a past tour leader on small ships myself, this was all much appreciated.

Our itinerary started with a day on Orkney, followed by an unscheduled landing on North Ronaldsay where, fortuitously, I was able to meet up with a friend whom I hadn't seen for several years; and then on to Fair Isle, an island I first visited as a keen birdwatcher schoolboy in 1957 and a number of times since. Again, there was a friend to meet and the Fair Isle knitwear to admire.

The next stop was at Tórshavn, capital of the Faeroes, where flags and a welcome sign greeted us on the pier. A coach took us to the local museum, which was well laid out and very informative, though slightly glossing over the whale hunting which still takes place. Then, on to a small village where one of the first



Beerenburg, Jan Mayen

churches still stood, plus some traditional turf-roofed houses – in one of which our excellent guide lived. As we returned to Tórshavn, the guide took pride in pointing out a road which led, via a tunnel, to two nearby islands, and with the only underwater roundabout in the world! It was only a brief taste of this remote archipelago which cries out for a much longer visit.

A whole day at sea was enlivened by a number of talks from our guides, including on Arctic maps and Arctic flora, and, as we crossed the Arctic Circle, by the appearance of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, whose health had of course to be toasted! The journey also brought sightings of fin, minke and killer whales.

The next morning, we were in sight of Jan Mayen, a volcanic island c.35 × 10 km, about 600 km from both Iceland and Svalbard. It is dominated at the north end by the 2,277-metre high active volcano Beerenburg (last



eruption 1985). The island once had a whaling station, but the only humans living there now are Norwegian meteorologists. Rather like Bear Island, midway between Norway and Svalbard, Jan Mayen sees the sun on rather few days a year (though I have been lucky enough to see Bear Island in full sunshine), so I wasn't expecting we would see much of the island. But we did! Beerenburg was visible right to its snowy peak, with glaciers descending to the sea. We landed on a beach on the west coast, which was largely comprised of black clinker from the last eruption and, as is the case with so many Arctic beaches, liberally sprinkled with large logs, drifted here from sawmills on Siberian rivers. Two Norwegians arrived to greet us and there was time for the more energetic to undertake a walk along the track which crossed the island to the weather station. Having first seen the description and illustration of Jan Mayen in Lord Dufferin's 1856 book, *Letters From High Latitudes*, I was more than satisfied by at least being able to visit this remote spot. I also knew of it as the place where the intrepid mountaineer and explorer HW Tilman lost his beloved Bristol pilot cutter *Mischief*, back in 1968.

Onwards to Svalbard

Another full day at sea and more talks, including about Wally Herbert; our tour leader was married to his daughter and showed us many interesting photographs and tales about this tough explorer and later artist. I was lucky enough to meet him many years ago when he was visiting Peter Scott at Slimbridge where I was working at the time.

The next day was sunny and calm as we approached and then entered Hornsund, where I spent three weeks in June/July 1973 with colleagues from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust catching and ringing barnacle geese. We appropriately landed in Gåshamma (Goose Bay) for our first walk in Svalbard. There was still

plenty of snow on the ground and a nice sighting of a still-white Arctic fox was quickly followed, after we were safely back on board, by what was to be our only sighting of a polar bear standing and looking at us as we stood on deck looking at it.

The ship then took us north to Bellsund and a landing at the fine seabird mountain of Ingeborgfjellet. It has extensive grassy slopes down to the sea, well fertilised by the droppings brought in by the many thousands of little auks, kittiwake, fulmar and Brunnich's guillemots nesting on the cliffs above it. My first visit here was in June 1964, when two of us set out to search the coast between Bellsund and Hornsund for breeding barnacle geese, which had the year before been found breeding in Hornsund. No-one had looked for them further north up the coast, and we arranged for the MV *Lyngen*, which in those days provided a weekly passage from Tromsø to Longyearbyen, to drop us off south of Bellsund. However, pack ice prevented this and instead we were taken to the Isfjord Radio Station at the mouth of that fjord, c.50 km north of where we wanted to be, and with the 15-km-wide barrier of Bellsund to cross. However, we were told that there were two Norwegian fur trappers living in a hut at Ingeborgfjellet, so we carried our tent, personal gear and as much food as we could manage down the coast to Bellsund, where we met the two trappers who kindly ferried us across Bellsund in their quite small open boat (after one aborted attempt because of too much ice), and we were duly able to survey our target area finding several hundred barnacle geese.

In early July 1977 and 1981, I was back on the coast between Isfjord and Bellsund with colleagues from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust plus scientists from Groningen University, who were studying the breeding geese from their arrival in May right through to their departure in early September. We were able to catch



and ring several hundred geese each year, adding greatly to our knowledge of this Solway-wintering population. We also visited Ingeborgfjellet to wonder at the clouds of little auks and other seabirds. And we managed to coincide with the exodus of the young Brunnich's guillemots which, well before they can actually fly, launch themselves off the nesting ledges, encouraged and accompanied by their parents, gliding on half-grown wings down to the sea amid much loud calling from both chicks and adults – and soon setting off on a journey which will take them an area around southern Greenland for the winter.

The only disappointment on this trip was the absence of Arctic flowers. We were some weeks earlier than my previous visits, with considerable patches of snow on the ground, and the only flowering plant I saw anywhere was purple saxifrage just coming into bud. However, although the slopes under the seabird cliffs lacked the flowers, there were several quite tame reindeer to look at and to photograph.

Our next stop was the arctic research town of Ny-Ålesund, my fifth time, where I could renew acquaintance with the monument to Roald Amundsen, the post office and the museum. Then, on north to the glorious Magdalena Fjord. Again I'd been there before but never in full sunshine with the stunning black and white peaks glistening against a cloudless blue sky. As well as a walk on the snow on the south side of the fjord, we also had our first sighting of a walrus which came to look at the intruders.

The next day we turned back south in quite foggy conditions to reach Poolepynten on the east coast of Prins Karls Forland, a walrus haul-out, and a new locality for me – at last! There were 40–50 walrus on the shingle spit here, grunting (plus probably both farting and belching), interacting, and generally ignoring us. We were, as at other walrus haul-outs I've been to, allowed to approach slowly to about 30–40 metres, close enough to smell them when the slight breeze came in our direction. The distance we were allowed to be to the walrus on the land didn't apply to those in the sea, with some coming right into the shallows of the beach we were walking along, interacting, playing, perhaps



fighting, and giving us wonderful views of these splendid sea mammals. That afternoon, we had our last landing before returning to Longyearbyen, at Alkhornet, a striking mountain at the mouth of Isfjord where, as at Ingeborgfjellet, tens of thousands of seabirds nest, though, again, the slopes beneath still had plenty of snow on them and lacked the wild flowers which will come later.

After a morning in Longyearbyen, visiting the excellent museum, we then flew back to Oslo. Two years ago, we could have flown direct to Edinburgh but this year we were offered an overnight in either Oslo or Heathrow. In the split second it took to choose the former, I also decided that we should stop there for two nights and take the opportunity to pay our respects to the *Fram*, the *Gjøa*, and the *Kon Tiki*. Since I was last there in 2007, the Fram Museum has been revamped to make it even better. Don't ever miss an opportunity to see these three wonderful ships.

My daughter and I finally flew back to Edinburgh where she had left her car, and she drove us back to Islay. Having voyaged that far, it was perhaps to be expected that the Islay ferry had broken down that day and we had to find beds for the night in Tarbert, before being able to get home the next morning. Despite occasionally transport problems, life on an island is very rewarding. Being able to visit some wonderful islands on our cruise was right up there as a very, very rewarding holiday.

Alkhornet



NW PASSAGE GALLERY

James Fenton

Last August/September Sue and I did a month-long trip with Hurtigruten through the North West Passage: from Nome in Alaska eastward to Greenland, and on to Nova Scotia. A lot of sea time, a lot of sea fog and a landscape which starts off as flat tundra and then becomes progressively more rugged as you travel east. 5,000 miles in total.



*We encountered little sea ice
– a sign of global warming*



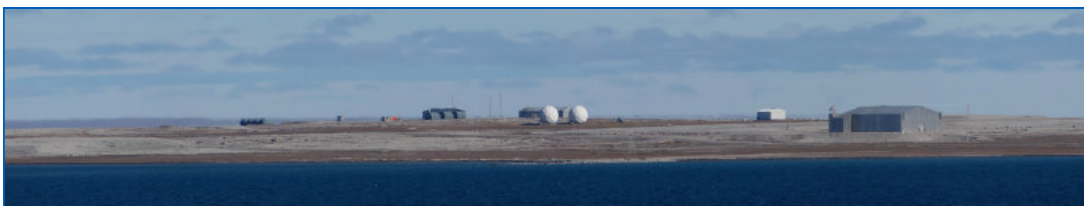
Ulukhaktok: the modern Arctic



*Melting of permafrost on
Herschel Island*



*Canada's new High Arctic
Research Institute in
Cambridge Bay*



*The early warning DEW line
at Lady Franklin Point
(Coronation Gulf). This is
being revived in the light of
the Russian situation. It also
shows the flat nature of the
landscape*



*Gjoa Havn: where Amundsen
spent two winters during the
first transit of the NW
Passage*



The bird cliffs of Prince Leopold Island



Beechey Island, where the Franklin Expedition wintered, with the graves of three crew members



Radstock Bay, Devon Island. A wildlife haven with 11 polar bears, large numbers of beluga whales, harp seals, fulmars, Brunnichs guillemots and kittiwakes



Above and below: Croker Bay, Devon Island. Devon Island is mostly barren fellfield



WEST GREENLAND 1982

Sarah Longrigg

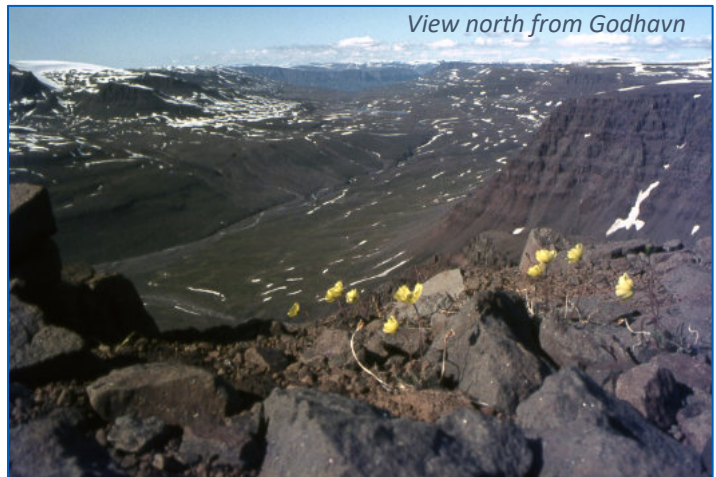
Søndre Strømfjord and Godhavn

Warm July sunshine and blue skies greeted us as we left the plane at Søndre Strømfjord airport. It was hard to believe that I was north of the Arctic Circle, about a third of the way up Greenland's west coast. Perhaps it was partly the contrast with the view I had had from the plane. The last hour of the 4-hour flight from Copenhagen had taken us over the Greenland icecap, a vast white plateau of nothingness which had thrilled me by its sheer inaccessibility.

By contrast, Søndre Strømfjord (now known as Kangerlussuaq) was a small isolated hive of activity. A U.S. Air Force base since 1944, it serves civilians only as a transit airport for onward flights to other parts of Greenland and one must arrive with the clear intention of continuing one's journey to a further destination or risk being sent back to Copenhagen. However, the intention is not always so easily put into practice. We were informed that a helicopter would leave within the next few hours for Godhavn, a village on the south coast of Disko Island, (both now known as Qeqertarsuaq, so I will keep to the old names). Twenty-four hours later we were still at Søndre Strømfjord, having watched with a certain amount of apprehension as the helicopter out on the runway was being tested with sandbags to make sure that it would fly.

The delay necessitated an overnight stay at the airport hotel, and this gave me an opportunity to become acquainted with the other members of our group. The expedition was organised by a Danish company, Dansk Vandrelaug, and our party consisted of twenty people representing eight nationalities. I was the first British person they had had on an expedition to Disko Bay. We had two leaders, both Danish, and it had been arranged that in each of the three places we would be visiting, there would be enough hut accommodation for everyone, and also enough tents so that everyone could go on camping expeditions if they so desired.

On the way to Godhavn we stopped at the village of Aasiaat, where there was a delay while a smell of



burning plastic in the helicopter was investigated. Our flight then continued across Disko Bay and I caught my first glimpse of some of the magnificent icebergs.

From the heliport at Godhavn we had to walk about a mile through the village to the hut where we would be staying. The wooden houses were painted in bright colours and everywhere there were dogs and sledges. The dogs are used only in the winter, but they are treated as working animals, not pets, and must now be chained up by law because of the danger of children being attacked. The sound of their barking at feeding time, which frequently seemed to be in the early hours of the morning, is one that I shall never forget.

During the next few days most of us stayed in the hut and explored the country nearby, including a walk along the coast where I saw many large whales in the sea. The coastal scenery is most spectacular as, unusually for Greenland, it is volcanic and there are strange rock formations. Two groups went off on camping expeditions, but I felt that I would prefer to take the opportunity to climb some mountains as the camping would be restricted to valleys.

We climbed a mountain of about 3,000 feet, from the top of which there was a marvellous view over the village. The houses were scarcely visible, but the icebergs still looked enormous, giving a much better impression of how big they really were. One looked like a huge ship about six times as big as any house. I looked at the map and noticed that if we walked a little further we would be able to see a small glacier. But I had not anticipated the magnificent view we now had looking inland to Disko Fjord which cuts through the middle of the island. I found delicate yellow poppies growing even at the summit of the mountain, and everywhere there were tiny alpine flowers, all taking advantage of the few precious weeks of summer.

We were chartering a helicopter from Godhavn to Ilulissat on the mainland, but two days before our expected departure we received a message that the helicopter would be coming a day early. Our two leaders



had to set out again after a heavy day's walking to hunt for those who had gone camping. They were out all night, but fortunately everyone returned just in time.



Onwards to Ilulissat

The flight to Ilulissat was very spectacular. We flew over absolutely enormous icebergs which became more and more frequent until finally, as the helicopter prepared to land at Ilulissat, it turned and flew low over the mouth of the Ice Fjord. The Ice Fjord should be classed as one of the greatest natural wonders of the natural wonders of the world. It is fed by a glacier which calves more icebergs than any other in the Northern Hemisphere. They drift slowly down the fjord, which is about 30 miles long, but at its mouth the sea is too shallow for the largest icebergs and they cannot move until pressure from others behind forces them out into Disko Bay. As a result, the whole fjord becomes completely full of icebergs, some towering several hundred feet over the surface of the water. In the helicopter we seemed to be almost touching the tops of the largest of them.

Ilulissat is a large town by Greenland standards, having a population of about 4,000. Greenland is mixed racially and the proportion of Danes to Greenlanders (Inuit) is much higher in towns than in the smaller settlements. Danes tend to hold most of the higher positions, though the situation is rapidly changing. Alcoholism is a serious problem among the Greenlanders, often resulting in violence, and we were advised to camp by the graveyard as they would be too superstitious to approach, even when drunk.



Prawn processing at Ilulissat

Some of us then went for an evening walk to the Ice Fjord about a mile away, and it was a beautiful sight in the warm glow of the evening light. This was the only place in which we would be staying where there were no mountains to the north, so I stayed up to see the midnight sun.

Ilulissat is a centre for Greenland prawns which is one of the most important industries. The next morning we had arranged to see round the prawn processing factory. It was interesting to see how a machine coped with shelling the prawns and they were then sorted through by hand before being frozen and packed. I also went round the museum and hunted for souvenirs in the two shops, which had all sorts of treasures hidden away if one was prepared to search for them. Tupilaks – small carvings in whale tooth and reindeer horn – particularly attracted me. I was amazed by the amount of traffic in the town, since it only takes twenty minutes to walk from one side to the other and there are no roads outside the town. As if it were some justification for this, I was told that in winter it was possible to drive across the frozen sea to Godhavn!



Kayak at Saqqaaq

Saqqaaq and Qullissat

On the following Tuesday morning we had a very early start as we had to catch a boat which left at 7 am for Saqqaaq. Unlike the helicopters, this was expected to leave on time and waited for no one. Saqqaaq is about 60 miles north of Ilulissat and the journey took seven hours. We had to take all our food supplies with us, as Saqqaaq is a very small settlement with a population of about 200 and the local shop could not be expected to support twenty extra people without running short of supplies. The main occupation at Saqqaaq is sealing and I often saw the men down on the beach hacking up fresh seals. Besides eating the meat, they also hang the skins up to dry on special frames and use them for certain items of clothing. Although we saw several of the traditional kayaks in good condition, we never saw them in use and the Greenlanders are proud of their skills at handling their fast new motorboats.

We asked the leaders if it would be possible to arrange a trip to Qullissat, a deserted town about 25



Drying seal skin at Saqqaq

miles away on Disko Island, so they went to try and hire boats. At one o'clock in the afternoon three speed-boats shot into the cove next to our hut, and off we went, six to a boat, on what proved to be the most exciting boat trip I have ever had. At high speed we shot in and out between enormous icebergs and crashed

through the smaller pieces of ice scattered all over the sea. After a journey lasting more than an hour, we arrived at Qullissat. This town had been a coal mining centre, but was closed down and evacuated in 1972. We had great fun exploring the abandoned houses and finding various small objects that had been left behind by the inhabitants. Then we raced back through the icebergs to Saqqaq. We all felt that this trip had been the highlight of the holiday. It was like a trip to fairyland.

The remaining days at Saqqaq were used for local walks. We visited a 'mud volcano' – a crater formed by mud which had been squeezed out through a hole in the permafrost – and also a small nearby glacier. On the Sunday there was a special confirmation service in the church and the villagers turned out in their brightly coloured national costumes made with beadwork and embroidery as well as sealskin.

We stayed at Saqqaq for a week, and then the boat from Ilulissat appeared between the icebergs. After we left, the weather deteriorated rapidly and soon there was nothing to see except mist. Suddenly I felt the boat slow down so I went up on deck to find out what was happening. Everywhere the sea was thick with little icebergs and the boat was having great difficulty in finding a way through. At last I could see Ilulissat, but two icebergs were blocking the harbour mouth. The boat gently bumped into them so that they drifted apart until there was room for it to enter.



Saqqaq iceberg

Sunday best, Saqqaq

We had three nights at Ilulissat, so a two-day camping expedition was arranged, going inland beside the Ice Fjord as far as possible. Fortunately the weather improved and was soon sunny again. As we walked, we gathered edible toadstools which we ate with our evening meal. We camped by a lake and nearby I noticed a hill with a big cairn on top. I thought the cairn must be there for a reason so we decided to climb up to it. From the summit I could see out to the sea, inland to the glacier and the inland ice beyond it, and also across the Ice Fjord, overlooking some giant icebergs which must have been several hundred feet high.

Return to Søndre Strømfjord

Our return trip by helicopter from Ilulissat to Søndre Strømfjord went relatively smoothly and, as we still had two more days, a trip was planned to walk to the inland ice. After a twelve-mile walk, we pitched our tents by a lake, went for a rather brief swim and then walked the three remaining miles to a glacier which we could approach very closely. The edge of the glacier rose like a wall about 100 feet high and we stopped where a big river was flowing out from it through an ice cave about 15 feet high. All the time pieces of ice were breaking away from the roof of the cave and crashing to the river below with great splashes. Sometimes an extra large piece fell down and we all cheered and clapped. Suddenly a lot of big pieces began to fall in quick succession and then, in a great slow motion and with a tremendous roar, the whole 100-foot high arch collapsed. The spray from it rose up and drenched us all in a tremendous icy blast.

The next day we walked back to the airport, packed up all our belongings and then had to go through the painful process of returning to "civilisation", which is mostly best forgotten except that never in all my life have I appreciated a hot shower so much!



Inland ice at Søndre Strømfjord



FRANZ JOSEF LAND: AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE PAST

Funde Loesch

In 1992 my wife Edda and myself were lucky to visit Franz Josef Land on board the *Professor Molchanov*, a former Soviet research vessel, because hardly any other Western party had been allowed to access the area up until then – and looking at today's situation it is very doubtful that anyone will be able to get there in the near and distant future. Franz Josef Land is one of the most fascinating areas in the Arctic from a scenery, wildlife and historic point of view. One of the landings was on Bell Island in order to visit the so called 'Leigh Smith' hut.

Benjamin Leigh Smith was a rich British private Arctic explorer who did a lot of meritorious work in the Arctic and particularly in the Franz Josef Archipelago in the 1880s. During one expedition he lost his ship but managed to bring the whole crew back several hundred miles over the pack ice to Novaya Zemlya. Leigh Smith is a highly interesting person about, or by whom, not much reading is available: the man was so rich so he didn't have to write books about his undertakings unlike most of the other Arctic explorers (who often extended their narratives to two volumes because this provided more financial return). Leigh Smith received a lot of praise, though, for his work in the Arctic from the RGS and other 'professional' explorers like Adolf Nordenskjöld or William Speirs Bruce.

Now back to the Leigh Smith hut we visited on Bell Island. It was a wooden frame construction in a marvellous condition after more than 100 years of existence, probably with little maintenance done, if any, during that time. The hut's inside was somewhat blocked by a frozen-in door frame but accessible for very slim persons (which I luckily was at the time). The hut was totally empty but showed some enigmatic devices on its walls, wooden pegs and

hooks which were separated by large numbers from 1 to 31; somewhat cryptic at first glance but obviously relating to some calendar system. No signs were visible that this hut had actually been used for dwelling. In addition, the walls were covered with carved or written signatures by visitors (mostly Russian during the last hundred years).

There was one carved name, though, which somehow attracted our attention. It said "W. S. Bruce, Edinburgh, May 5-6-7 1897" and after a while it clicked in my mind that I had read the name before, in connection with a Scottish expedition to the Antarctic. It was a very special almost emotional moment to see pop-up, all of a sudden, out of a multitude of graffiti, an autograph probably hand-carved by a famous explorer. It was not like standing on a historic spot on which a famous person had stepped, but more as if I was addressed personally from the past. This sensation triggered the wish to find out back home more about this Scottish scientist's stay on Franz Josef Land. And yes, a first look at Jackson's *A thousand days in the Arctic* confirmed he had been there, 14 years after Leigh Smith, as a young botanist and member of the Jackson Harmsworth expedition (into which Nansen ran on his way home later the same year, after having wintered in the archipelago). And Bruce had been in the hut 5-7-May 1897 as member of a relief party looking for Jackson and his second in command Armitage – actually finding them in the hut. Due to bad weather the whole party stayed in the hut for 3 days, which may explain why Bruce carved his inscription. Before returning, they left provisions and a note for Nansen in case he and/or members of his expedition might come along there.

The hut had always been planned by Leigh Smith to be a storehouse rather than a dwelling, which may account for the 1 to 31 numbering system on one wall, probably intended to separate storage of daily rations. It had never been in much use because the expedition vessel *Eira* was frozen-in, being driven out from there just after the construction was finished, the vessel eventually crushed in the pack ice.

The discovery of the autograph was for me unforgettable event: I am grateful for it because it was a catalyst for further and rewarding digging into the exploration history of this highly spectacular area.

