

## Greenland

### EAST COAST

*Watkins Bjerge and Gunnbjorns Fjeld areas, first ascent claims.* As a frequent visitor to Greenland (10 expeditions) perhaps I can offer some corrections and additional information that might clarify claims of ascents in the region of Gunnbjorns Fjeld.

In 1999 I was a member of Scott Umpleby's expedition to the Watkins Bjerge (AAJ 2000, pp. 241-243). Among our first ascents was Pk. 3,249m or Midnight Peak. Subsequent groups seem to have mistakenly identified the position of this peak, and as a consequence some later claims are erroneous. This is borne out by checks I made with original reports available here in the U.K. In 2000 the Watkins Mountains International Female Expedition, led by Christine Watkins, visited the area. This group made the first ascent of Ladies' Peak (2,992m), which lies midway between Terra Nova (3,020m) and Midnight Peak, both first climbed by the 1999 Umpleby expedition. The women then appear to have misidentified Midnight Peak, climbing it but wrongly claiming a first ascent and naming it Pyramid Peak. They then climbed its neighbor, Pk. 3,256m, in the belief that they were repeating Midnight Peak. In fact their ascent of Pt 3,256m was a first ascent. (A photograph of it appears in the 2000 *Alpine Journal*, where 3,256m is visible on the left as "One O'clock Peak." We did not climb it. On the right can be seen the snowy top of Sphinx, a first ascent that the women did make, overtopped by the rocky summit of Big Top, first climbed by Jim Lowther's group in 1988.)

In 2004 the Rucksack Club expedition led by Jim Hall (AAJ 2005, p. 235) also seems to have mistaken the identity of some peaks in the area. Their "Afternoon Peak" (3,020m) seems to me to be Terra Nova, and Pk. 3,249m to be Midnight Peak. Perhaps the 2004 expedition repeated Ladies' Peak? The map accompanying Hall's report suggests this. In addition, Minaret lies southeast of Wyvis and not southwest.

In 1999 I corresponded with Todd Burleson and Hans Christian Florian about their groups' ascents in the Watkins Bjerge. Florian and his Austrian group (Reinthal) made the first ascent of Pk. 3,535m (close to Gunnbjorns) in 1998. Therefore the ascent reported by Nigel Vardy (AAJ 2005, p. 234) was not the first. The "other" peak (3,265m), also claimed by Vardy, is marked on the map; it just doesn't have a spot height. In 1998 Florian and the Austrians also made the first ascent of Pk. Oestereich, the fourth "top" along the ridge east of Pk. 3,535m. It is an obvious pointed summit, well-seen on p. 106 of the fine Florian-Reinthal book, *The Unknown Mountains of East Greenland*. In 1998 Todd Burleson's guided American groups made first ascents of U-Turn (Pk. 3,307m), northeast of Gunnbjorns, plus another peak across the glacier just northwest of Pk. 2,919m and Pk. 3,175m. The latter peak and its neighbor to the south, together with Pic Cappuccino (Pk. 3,266m), were also climbed by Florian's group in 1998.

