

Greenland

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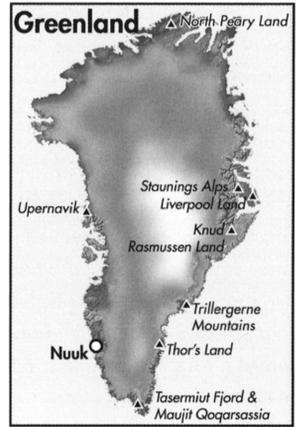
WEST COAST

Upernavik region, new rock routes. Operating from a yacht skippered by 75-year old Bob Shepton, the four-man American-Belgian team of Ben Ditto, brothers Nicolas and Olivier Favresse, and Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll climbed four new routes huge sea cliffs in or near Sortehul fjord. Their tour de force was the first ascent of the Impossible Wall, where the 850m line of Devil's Brew (5.12+ or E7 6c), climbed in 10 days, is most likely the hardest major rock climb achieved in West Greenland. The team then moved to the Cape Farewell region for five more new routes. For details see Shepton's feature article in this Journal.

Upernavik region, various routes on Qaersorsuaq and Umanaq islands. This was my fourth trip to Greenland. The previous three had been to the East Coast, so I had a good feel for what the land had to offer. The plan was the same as other visits: load the boats with as much food and climbing kit as we could feasibly carry, and have an adventure on sea and in the mountains. This time I persuaded Nigel Robinson and Sin Sinfield to accompany me. Neither had been to Greenland before, but they



Northwest face of Sanderson's Hope on the west coast of Qaersorsuaq, a famous navigational headland named in 1587. The first big-wall route on a large sea cliff above the Arctic Circle on the west coast of Greenland was climbed here in 2000, when a three-man UK-Italian team, which sailed to the base on board Bob Shepton's yacht, put up Arctic First Bcrn (800m, British E3 5c A3+). The following year Canadians added a second route Down North (800m, 5.10+ A1). *Olly Sanders Collection*



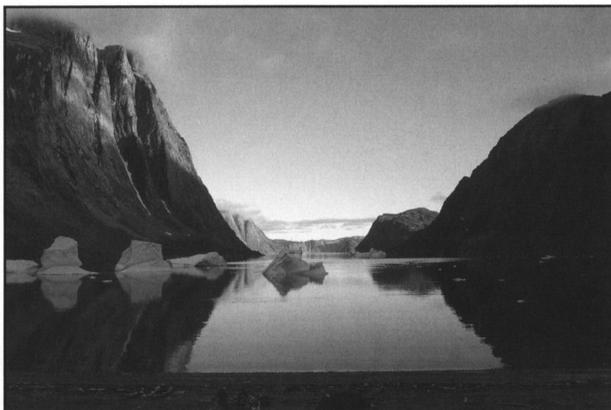
were experienced paddlers and climbers who could look after themselves in both environments. We shipped the kayaks and food two months prior to our arrival in Upernavik with the idea of circumnavigating two large islands, Qaersorsuaq and Nutarmiut. This would require paddling almost 300km. The trip lasted 21 days, of which five were spent rock climbing.

Any group visiting Greenland has to accept the possibility of becoming a Polar Bear dish, and it is advisable to carry a rifle to ward off, rather than kill, a bear. Our chosen area

had minimal chance of bear encounters. Style was important to us: we wanted to maintain the wilderness experience and the essence of self-sufficiency, but in dire emergency felt it prudent to be able to summon help. We therefore decided to take a VHF radio and EPIRB. We kayaked for five or six hours a day in mostly calm, sunny conditions, forced off the water on only one occasion by stormy weather. The west coast of Qaersorsuaq gave exceptional paddling under 900m cliffs broken by waterfalls, and nothing further west until reaching Baffin Island.

Early in our journey we came across two yachts. The smaller, *Dodo's Delight*, belonged to Bob Shepton, who had earlier in the year provided me with a little information on potential climbing in this region. On board were an American-Belgian team, which had already completed a number of long, free big walls. We spent a brilliant night in the company and generosity of strangers, all together on the second yacht, *Saxon Blue*. We knew that finding new routes to climb would prove interesting, but never envisaged that the hardest aspect would be to find crags small enough for our limited resources. We spent three days at the head of the Sarqarssuaq Fjord on the south side of Qaersorsuaq, where the American-Belgian team had recommended we look at a large pillar on the east bank. It was stunning, but obviously a little too ambitious for us and our available kit. Instead, we climbed a number of single pitch lines at around British HVS, and then on the third day a good six-pitch mountain route at E1, with two fine pitches of 5b: Ford Fiesta (200m). Our next climbing was four days later on the small island of Umanaq (290m) at the northeast extremity of our circular tour, overlooking a magnificent carving glacier. Plagued by mosquitoes, we climbed a three-pitch route on poor rock and named it Jigger my Timbers (HVS 5a). According to the map, our campsite here should have been under the ice, showing just how much the ice cap has retreated.

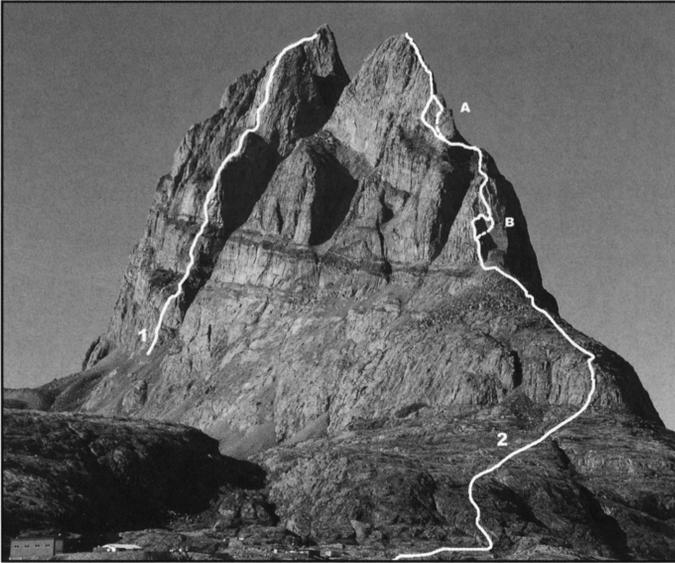
Later, on our way back to Upernavik, we stopped off on the eastern side of Qaersorsuaq, above the Sortehul, and climbed two excellent routes: Get the Shooters George (three pitches, 4a, 4c,



Looking south from the head of the Sarqarssuaq Fjord. Large pillar above east bank thought to be unclimbed. *Olly Sanders Collection*



The islands east of Upernavik, showing the circumnavigation paddled by the British trio. White spots indicate the three climbing sites. *Olly Sanders Collection*



Ummannaq Mountain from the southwest. (1) Black Velvet Band to central (highest) summit. (2) Solid line shows the Chauché-Mackay Route; dashed line, where it differs at points (A) and (B), the Doyle-Leinss Route. Both end on the south summit. Sean MacKay

5a, HVS) and Smear or Disappear (four pitches, 4b, 5b, 5b, 4b, E2). Both were ca 160m.

We returned to Upernavik having successfully completed our circumnavigation, stayed friends, met no bears, and saw endless potential for big-wall and alpine rock routes. We would like to thank Greenland Tourism for complementary flights, and the Welsh Sports Council and Gino Watkins Memorial Fund for grants.

OLLY SANDERS, UK

Ummannaq region, Pt. 2,280m; Ummannaq south, southeast face. In 2009 the 15m sailing vessel Gambo spent July and August supporting glaciological and oceanographic research on two major outlet glaciers of the Greenland ice sheet. When the skill set of the crew was not in demand for science objectives, it was put to use establishing new routes in the stunning Ummannaq region.

Our most significant mountaineering achievement was the first ascent of the unclimbed 2,280m peak on the south side of Rink's (a.k.a. Kangigdleq) Fjord. This mountain, located at 71°31'51.57" N, 52°19'23.19" W, 1.8 km northeast of Timumanikavsua, appears to be the highest in West Greenland. Gambo's owner, Alun Hubbard, had discovered that due to mapping inaccuracies, previous successful ascents of the "highest mountain" had reached a large (but 35m lower) peak named Snepyramiden, about nine kilometers south-southwest of Pt 2,280m.

On August 10, Jason Box, Nolwenn Chauché, Sam Doyle, Silvan Leinss, and I were deposited by Gambo on the northern flanks of the mountain, planning on a two- or three-day ascent. Previous aerial reconnaissance by Box had shown the east side as having steep glaciers that appeared to provide a nearly continuous route to the ridge, safer than alternative options. From a base camp at ca 800m, we climbed 1,200m up the 40–50° Mighty Mouse Glacier in around 30 technical pitches, the last 400m the most challenging due to reduced visibility and moderate snowfall over variable surfaces.

Once on the summit ridge the weather improved. Apart from an initial, short, steep, knife-edge rock arête, the crest was surprisingly level, and after 1.2km of travel and 200m of elevation we reached the top. It was 2:30 a.m. on the 12th, and we were rewarded with a panoramic view of the Rink Glacier and surrounding relief, illuminated by an almost full moon.

To avoid time-consuming belaying on the upper glacier, we opted to descend a steep and loose rock gully, which required multiple, time-consuming rappels. Finally the gully intersected with the original ascent glacier, and we eventually reached base camp at midday, 27 hours after starting our summit push.