

determined either to find hunters' cabins in which to spend the night or to camp on an island, which we presumed would be safe from bears. It had been a frightening experience.

Rounding the last headland, we found a group of less exposed islands and spent 10 days exploring this area. We spent four days on Raffles Island (Agpalik, high point 550m). A reconnaissance showed promising lines on a series of buttresses and a stunning ridge that appeared to encircle the island. We climbed a line on the largest buttress but stopped one pitch below the point where the angled eased, rappelling into a snow gully to the left. Although the granite looked good at first, it turned out to be very loose and the climbing generally poor. We called our incomplete line Obscured by Clouds (250m, six pitches, British XS 5a).

We then attempted the stunning ridge. We climbed the first buttress in two long pitches, and then completed half the ridge (with several rappels) until stopped by steep, loose rock. The route up the first buttress we called A Ridge Too Far, and due to the poor protection and rock quality again gave it a British XS grade (100m, 4c). While the climbing had been poor, the views were superb.

We also spent time farther north on Rathbone Island (Ingmikertikajik), where a big mountaineering day took us to the highest point (435m). This may be the first ascent of the mountain, which required scrambling in the upper section. Surprisingly, we had more encounters with bears. So much for our theory: both bears must have swam 10km to reach us.

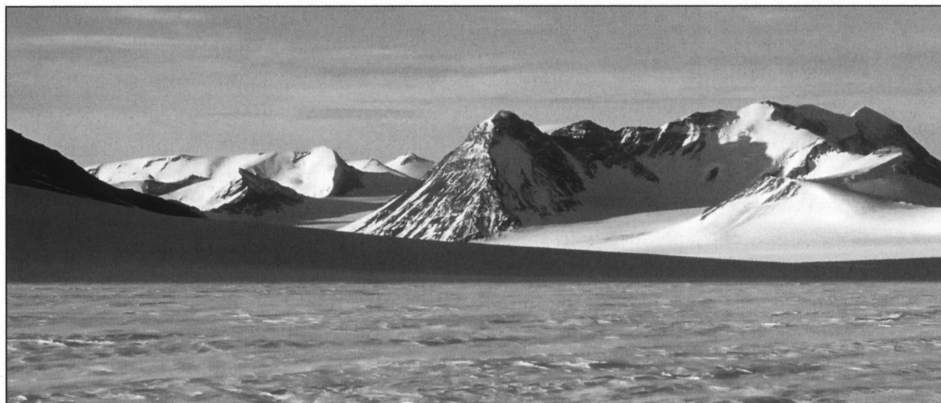
Our farthest point north was Cape Hoeg (Kap Hoegh or Ukaleqarteq), after which we returned to Ittoqortoormiut. The weather was changing, and we paddled the exposed coastline from Raffles to Scorsbysund entrance in a single push. This took two days and proved a good decision, as we then had five days of bad weather, with 160km winds and snow. Locals had never seen similar weather at this time of year. It was touch and go on the helicopter ride to Constable Pynt. We spent 18 days in the boats and carried only an EPIRB. We did not take a satellite phone, as we felt this would detract from the experience. We thank the Sports Council for Wales for financial support.

OLLY SANDERS, U.K.

*Paul Stern Land, five first ascents.* In May and June Geoff Bonney, my wife Sandy Gregson, and I visited Paul Stern Land. We have all made numerous trips to Greenland and consider ourselves true veterans of the Arctic, with combined ages of 191 years. We think we are the first climbers



Geoff Bonney and Sandy Gregson on the summit of Garnet Dome with Ararat (left) and Peak Emyr behind. Jim Gregson



Unclimbed peaks in the southern part of Paul Stern Land. *Jim Gregson*

to make ascents in Paul Stern Land. [Editor's note: Germans who reached this area before them recorded one minor summit in a different location.] Delayed by poor weather in Iceland, we eventually landed at a snowed-up Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Pynt) on May 23, to find two groups waiting to fly southwest into the Watkins Bjerger. Next morning a Twin Otter ski-plane took us to the edge of the icecap at N 70°24', W 30°10', where two Germans were waiting for a pick-up after a long ski traverse. Unfortunately, this location left us a long way from the mountains of Paul Stern Land, and we spent three days relaying equipment and moving our camp by pulk to a still-less-than-ideal base camp at N 70°29.540', W 30°05.454', and an altitude of 1,800m. This spot, perfect for aircraft landing, lay directly in the track of strong, cold, catabatic wind off the icecap, and we spent considerable time shoveling snow off the tents, until we had created a working system of protective "dunes" and wind deflectors to prevent being repeatedly buried in drift.

From this Camp Venturi we made the following first ascents: Garnet Dome (2,180m, N 70°31.991', W 29°58.193'), on the same night Peak Emyr (2,465m, N 70°31.024', W 29°56.471'), Ararat (2,625m, N 70°30.899', W 29°53.139', the highest peak in the area), Windscoop Beacon (2,085m, N 70°28.505', W 30°11.971'), and Nunatak Georg (2,060m, N 70°24.671', W 30°08.600'). Fierce winds robbed us of the opportunity to reach more summits; I had my face frost-nipped during the return from Ararat. Many good objectives await another visit.

On June 7 the Twin Otter returned to collect us. It also brought my friend Nigel Edwards and five British clients. Over two weeks this group moved camp farther north into an area of fine nunatak peaks, where they made 12 first ascents in better weather than we'd experienced. We flew out to Nerlerit Inaat but were forced to stay there three and a half days, waiting for a flight to Iceland. Climate change is affecting the High Arctic; aircraft operators are stipulating expeditions should plan to arrive earlier in the season and be prepared for higher-altitude drop-off and pick-up points. Recent years have witnessed aircraft being stranded for several days in deep soft snow. On several occasions expensive helicopter assistance has proved necessary, and in one case a Twin Otter had to be sling-lifted out by long-range Chinook. Contingencies such as these, plus rise in fuel prices, are likely to produce a serious hike in the cost of accessing the High Arctic.

*JIM GREGSON, Alpine Club*