



AAC Publications

The Horn, Cosmic Rave and Choss, The Universe, and Everything; Ummannaq, Islands in the Sky; Ivnarssuaq Great Wall, The Incredible Orange

Greenland, West Greenland, Ummannaq region

From June into August, the Oxford West Greenland Expedition combined a major sailing voyage with adventurous climbing in the Ummannaq area, putting up five big new routes and a number of minor routes, including first ascents of two previously unclimbed faces. Peter Hill, Angela Lilienthal, Clive Woodman, and I sailed from Montreal to Greenland in five weeks, and met Ian Faulkner and Jacob Cook in Aasiaat.

The team achieved a double success on its first objective, the Horn, a striking coastal headland on the northeast spur of Upernivik Island. First, Peter and I climbed Choss, The Universe, and Everything (1,200m, E2/XS 5c) in a 42-hour single-push round trip. We climbed the right-hand lower face and discovered secret (and occasionally loose!) ways around the main difficulties of the upper headwall. After 24 hours of climbing we bagged part of the summit ridge before descending the route.

A few days later, Ian and Jacob made the first ascent of the main headwall with Cosmic Rave (1,000m, E6 6b), an uncompromisingly direct line that followed a previous attempt by Matt Burdekin and George Ullrich (AAJ 2011). Ian and Jacob fixed to 300m, placing one bolt, before pushing to the top and descending via Choss, The Universe, and Everything.

The team then endured a storm in base camp, as our yacht, Cosmic Dancer, struggled with engine problems. The storm caused massive rockfall, which chopped every one of our fixed ropes, and sent rocks bounding past the tents into the sea.

In Ummannaq, we managed to buy a couple of ropes from a departing Irish expedition. Unfortunately, they stank of semi-digested fish, after being thoroughly soaked in fulmar vomit during one of their climbs. After a rest we set about the second ascent of Ummannaq Northwest via a new route. [The summit was reached in 2010 by Burdekin and Ulrich.] Ian and I climbed the lower tier before rain forced us to retreat down a scree gully. Two days later, Jacob, Peter, and I returned up the scree gully to extend the line to the summit. Islands in the Sky (810m, E4 6a) was named for a stunning cloud inversion.

We next investigated an area around Ikerasak, southeast of Ummannaq. There, Ian and I spotted a line on Ivnarssuaq Great Wall, a plumb-vertical face rising straight out of the sea opposite Ikerasak on the Nugssuaq peninsula. The Incredible Orange (800m, E3 5c) provided extremely steep and sustained climbing. We opted for a pure alpine approach, bivouacking twice on the route. The wall turned out to be a huge pillar, connected to the mainland by a rickety natural bridge.

Meanwhile, Jacob and Peter had a terrible time on Umanatsiaq Mountain, above Ikerasak, due to loose rock. Their first attempt saw Jacob accompanying a foothold as it parted ways with the cliff on pitch two, injuring his ankle. A few days later they completed Flake or Death (200m, XS 5b), with the rock quality varying from loose to extremely loose.

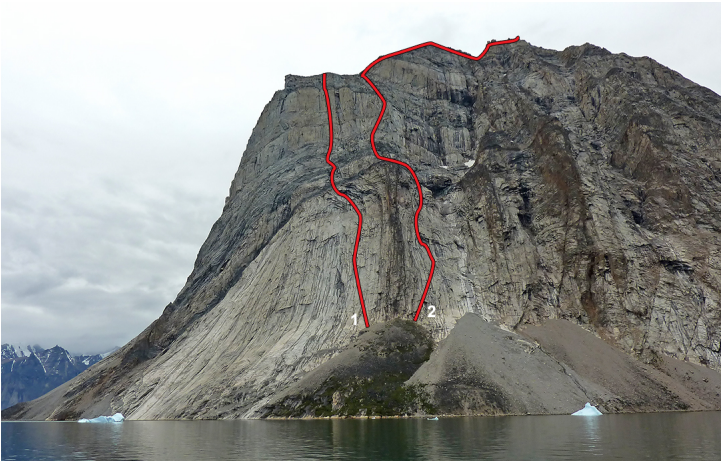
Just before returning to Aasiaat and laying up the boat for the winter, Peter, Jacob, and Ian established That Sinking Feeling (300m, E5 5c) up a striking knifeblade feature on the Nugssuaq

peninsula, east of Ivnarssuaq. The route offered good climbing but little protection. It was also connected to the mainland via an exciting bridge.

The expedition was a huge success, thanks in large part to generous financial support from the Irvine Fund, BMC, MEF, Gino Watkins Memorial Fund, Alpine Club, Arctic Club, and the Andrew Croft Memorial Fund.

Tom Codrington, U.K.

Images



The Horn on Upernavik Island. (1) Cosmic Rave. (2) Choss, The Universe, and Everything.



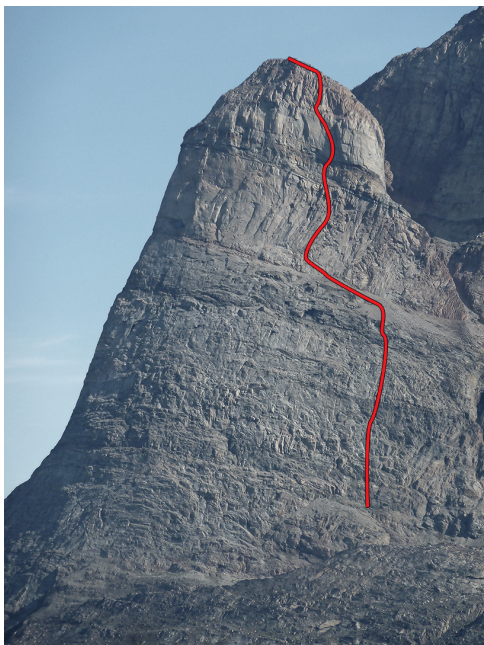
Ian Faulkner about 1,100m up Cosmic Rave on the Horn.



The Incredible Orange on Ivnarssuaq Great Wall. The climbers walked off via the plateau to the left.



Tom Codrington on Islands in the Sky, Ummannaq Northwest summit.



Ummannaq Northwest summit and the line of Islands in the Sky. Descent was via the gully to the right.

Article Details

Author	Tom Codrington
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	180
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions