



AAC Publications

North Liverpool Land: Ascents and ski descents

Greenland, East Greenland

On April 24 a group of experienced alpinists—Geoff Bonney, Peter Chadwick, my wife Sandy Gregson, Michael Smith, and I (all U.K.), along with Alexandre Buisse (France) and Tony Hoare (Canada), gathered in Reykjavik, ready to fly the next day to Constable Pynt in East Greenland. Using the logistics of Tangent Expeditions, we would then travel ca 80km north by snowmobile to the North Liverpool Land Icecap.

My first visit to this area (AAJ 2009) opened my eyes to some spectacular terrain. In 2012, after contacting me, two Australian women also climbed and made ski ascents in the area (AAJ 2013). They made a lovely film, "Resounding Silence," which showed some of their parapente descents. Their film rekindled my desire to return to this part of Greenland and attempt some of the many peaks still awaiting first ascents.

During the cold and uncomfortable snowmobile journey we sighted a polar bear and two well-grown cubs, a salutary reminder of why we carried firearms, flares, and pepper spray. After a drop-off a few kilometers from our intended base camp, an abrupt bout of heavy pulk hauling across the small icecap took us to a level glacier shelf at ca 525m (71°21.656'N, 22°07.378'W), where we camped. We then split into three teams to explore the area.

Alex and Tony, both pro photographers, had some sponsor obligations to fulfill, with Alex bravely skiing with a bionic knee-brace, having ruptured a ligament in an avalanche above Courmayeur just a few weeks earlier. They skied up and down Mt. Thistle (1,040m, 71°19.000'N, 22°03.00'W) via the northeast glacier and made the first ascent of Mt. Hulya I (830m, 71°21.372'N, 21°56.564'W) by the Marmotte (northwest) Ridge at PD+. They also climbed 3 P.M. Attack Nunatak (528m, 71°22.038'N, 22°03.295'W) and made a ski descent. It should have been called Noon Nunatak, but the pair was late leaving camp. (The Australian women had incorrectly referred to this as Cone Nunatak, but the true Cone Nunatak, one of my own first ascents from 2007, lies about six kilometers west.) Alex and Tony also climbed to Snow White Col (788m, 71°21.126'N, 22°00.003'W) by its 200m north face (60°); this was the start of an attempt on the traverse of the Seven Dwarfs, abandoned due to poor rock.

Michael and Peter were first-timers in Greenland and mostly interested in seeing as much of the region as possible, rather than making technical climbs. They whizzed about on Nordic skis, making a number of ascents on Old Men's Peak, traverses to the south of base camp, and ascents of Bird Bone Point and Bird Bone Peak above base camp. They later hauled northward to establish a new camp, from which they accessed a number of tops, some of them first ascents. They also reached the ridge linking Kagoo Peak, Diamond Peak, and Icecream Peak (climbed in 2012), returning to base camp as bad weather moved in.

Geoff, Sandy, and I, who have climbed many times together in Greenland, made a first ascent of the fine northwest spur of Kuldefjeld (Cold Mountain, 980m, 71°21.219'N, 21°59.522'W), a 450m PD+/AD- that we named Charlotte Road. We descended the northeast face. This peak lies between Mt. Mighty and the Seven Dwarfs.

Geoff, aged 75, took a rain check while Sandy and I skied east to attempt a traverse on the Neild Bugt Glacier, starting with Hvithorn (White Horn). After climbing the west arête we were surprised to find ourselves on top of an exposed, isolated summit, cut off from Hvithorn by an almost vertical gap a

rope length deep. We named this summit Varmtind (Warm Peak, 750m, 71°23.036'N, 21°56.156'W).

With Geoff on the move again, a day was spent on skis, leaving base to go first north then onto Carlsberg Dome (845m, 71°22.929'N, 22°04.851'W) and then along the ridge east to repeat Kagoo Peak, first climbed in 2012.

From all summits reached we saw a wealth of striking unclimbed and unnamed peaks, but as freezing fog enveloped the area for three days our activity was limited to one nearby summit and repeats of 3 P.M. Attack Nunatak. Then a knifing cold north wind blasted camp with driving, drifting spindrift, leaving further climbs for another expedition—a tempting idea.

I found temperatures to be colder than in 2007, with much greater snow cover from the past winter or recent storms, along with greater avalanche risk. Many slides and debris fans were seen. The granites and gneisses of the area are compact, but have a fair share of loose material. The most imposing wall lies on the big rock tower—Tower of Silence—at the west end of the Seven Dwarfs. It remains unclimbed.

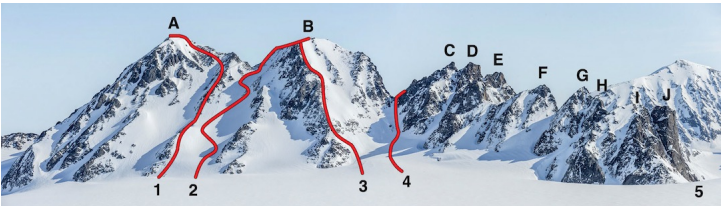
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Jim Gregson, Alpine Club, U.K.

Images



Tony Hoare considers his options on a loose traverse, during an attempt to make the first crossing of the Seven Dwarfs.



North side of the Mt. Mighty–Seven Dwarfs Group. (A) Mt. Mighty. (B) Kuldefjeld. The Seven Dwarfs: (C) Grumpy, (D) Sneezzy, (E) Bashful, (F) Happy, (G) Dopey, (H) Doc, (I) Sleepy. (J) Tower of Silence. (1) Australian Route. (2) Northeast face descent. (3) Charlotte Road. (4) Attempt via Snow White Col. (5) Australian 2012 attempt.



Unclimbed coastal peaks in the northeast section of North Liverpool Land.



North side of Mt. Hulya I showing (M) Marmotte Ridge.



Geoff Bonney and Sandy Gregson close to the summit of Kuldefjeld.



Sandy Gregson on the ski descent of Kagoo Peak, North Liverpool Land.

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