



AAC Publications

Jacobsen Fjord, Peak 1,092m

Greenland, East Greenland, Lemon Mountains

As a youth I hitchhiked around a lot, but the best lift I ever got was the one going to Greenland last summer. Paddy Barry was planning a sailing and climbing trip from Iceland to East Greenland and back. There was one free space. Several years ago I had tried to organize a trip to Greenland, but the high cost and organizational difficulty made it prohibitive. This was a boat I wasn't going to miss.

Ice prevented us from accessing the Mikis and Kangerdlugssuaq fjords, and as we were debating what to do a French schooner passed and the crew told us by radio they had managed to find anchorage in nearby Jacobsen Fjord. We spent five days there, making day excursions to trek up nearby peaks on the fringes of the Lemon Mountains. Our attention soon was drawn to a chain of peaks above the west side of the upper fjord, and on August 2, Harry Connolly, Frank Nugent, Paddy O'Brien—all old Irish Mountaineering Club hands—and I set out in clear weather.

After a rising traverse up a glacier below steep rock walls, we found ourselves below a 250m, northeast-facing, snow-filled gully with an ice cap above and left. After debating the risk of serac fall, we went for it. It was sweet—dead straight and around 50° (Scottish II), at the most. After a short steep section we arrived on the crest of the main chain and continued in a southeasterly direction to a snow and rock plateau at the base of a snow dome. Onward we went, ascending the dome's narrowing spine, with steep runouts either side. Soon we were at the top (1,092m, 68°10'8"N, 31°9'32"W). The cloud lifted and we enjoyed excellent views of summits and valleys for miles in all directions. Although chuffed, we weren't hanging around—there's only so long a man can stand on a knife-edge ridge.

Delicately we retraced our steps. We initially thought there might be an easier descent to the northwest of the gully, but inspection showed only ice cliffs. So, down the gully we went, belaying three pitches before reaching easier ground at half height. The boys on the boat had been watching our movements, and the dingy was waiting at the shore. It had been a round-trip of nearly 13km, taking seven and a half hours. The considerable sea ice, blockading access to most of Greenland's east coast during the summer of 2015, prevented us from accessing more fjords along the route up to Scoresbysund, and in the end we pointed the boat south and headed for Iceland.

Very little appears to have been done in Jacobsen Fjord, although cairns on the nearest hilltops reflect hill walking by various sailing parties. When Arved Fuchs (Germany) landed a small group of climbers here in 2014 and accessed the glacier at the fjord head, he felt he was probably the first to do so since Lawrence "Bill" Wager's expedition in 1936. Fuchs' climbers made the long inland journey to Gunnbjørnsfjeld. Nearby fjords, such as Mikis to the west, have seen sailor/climbers make attempts on peaks (e.g., AAJ 2005).

Gerry Galligan, Ireland

Images



Scrambling on a typical blocky, unstable granite ridge above Jacobsen Fjord.



Harry Connolly, Frank Nugent, and Paddy O'Brien move up the snow couloir en route to the first ascent of Peak 1,092m.



Looking northwest across the lower Frederiksborg Glacier to unknown mountains rising to ca 2,000m. It is very likely that these peaks are untouched.



Approaching a summit to the northwest of Peak 1,092m. Behind, to the southeast, lies Jacobsen Fjord and peaks rising to ca 1,200m. It is very likely these summits have not been visited.



Peak 1,092m seen from the waters of Jacobsen Fjord, with the route of ascent. The rock in this region is mainly basalt, and north of the fjord it is rubbish. On this peak it was less eroded—best described as “not great, but not the worst.”



Quests Tinde (1,200m) seen from a smaller peak to the west-southwest. Quest was the name of the boat that brought Lawrence Wager to the area in 1936.

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