



AAC Publications

Historical Correction: The First Ascent of Høngbjerg (a.k.a. Mt. Mighty)

Greenland, East Greenland, North Liverpool Land

In AAJ 2016 we reported Jim Gregson's second known ascent of Mt. Mighty and an addendum where he described finding the remnants of a cairn at the highest rocks, some 40m from the summit. Within these fallen stones he discovered a small bottle containing a faded, illegible message. It turns out that this message dates to July-August 1971, when Tony Higgins and Mike Townsend (U.K.), as part of the Greenland Geological Survey, were mapping North Liverpool Land. The two had a camp to the southeast of the mountain and climbed snow slopes to join the east ridge, which they followed to the summit. They christened the peak Høngbjerg after a particularly pungent Danish cheese. While Higgins does not remember leaving the bottle, he is sure they placed a message in a cairn on the summit.

Mt. Mighty, showing the 2012 Australian route, which we now know to be the second known ascent of the peak. Photo by Gemma Woldendorp

The second ascent of this peak was made in 2012 by Natasha Sebire and Gemma Woldendorp, via the northwest face and southwest ridge. (Unaware of a previous ascent, this pair named the peak Mt. Mighty.) The third ascent was completed in 2015 by Jim Gregson's party, via the northeast face.

The 1971 party also made the probable first ascent of the 750m peak north of Høngbjerg, at 71°24'42.55"N, 21°57'20.61"W (Google Earth). This required a short rock climb. Various other points were reached by scrambling routes, including a traverse along the western peninsula of what is now a trident-shaped island off the northeast tip of North Liverpool Land, and also along most of the central peninsula of this island that runs out to Kap Gladstone. (This was named in 1822 by William Scoresby after the Liverpool MP John Gladstone.) Back in 1971, the island was joined to the rest of North Liverpool Land by a seaborne glacier, but a little more than 10 years ago the glacier disappeared, a clear product of climate change. The trident-shaped island has been named Unartoq Qeqertaq, Greenlandic for Warming Island.

– Lindsay Griffin, with information from Mike Townsend and Jim Gregson

Images



Reynolds Island, off the northeastern tip of North Liverpool Land, seen in the summer of 1971 with its surrounding sea ice from the larger Murray Island immediately to the north. Reynolds, with its obvious deep depression between east and west high points, is adjacent to the relatively new, trident-shaped island Uunartoq Qeqertaq. Behind lie Kap Godfred Hansen and peninsulas further south.



Looking north in 1971 along the western peninsula of the trident-shaped landmass on the northeastern tip of North Liverpool Land. Since its separation from the mainland by the melting of a connecting seaborne glacier, the new island has been dubbed Uunartoq Qeqertaq (Warming Island).



Mt. Mighty, showing the 2012 Australian route that turned out to be the second known ascent of the peak.



Satellite pictures of the island now called Uunartoq Qeqertaq (Warming Island) in 1985, 2002, and 2005, showing the disappearance of the glacier that formerly connected the island to the mainland.

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