



## AAC Publications

---

### **Umiguqjuaq Wall, Marooned at Midnight**

Canada, Nunavut, Baffin Island, Clyde Inlet

**The two of us had been dreaming of an expedition to Baffin Island's big walls ever since we started climbing together in 2013.** We'd ogled photos, trip reports, and the guidebook for the past three years, always kicking the can down the road on taking the trip. This year, with the help of Live Your Dream grants from the American Alpine Club for both of us, we finally made it happen.

With hopes of going to the Sam Ford Fjord by boat and climbing the Chinese Wall, we arrived in Clyde River in early August. Our outfitter, Levi Palitug, informed us that the sea ice had not broken up enough to allow travel to the Sam Ford region. After studying some maps, Levi agreed to take us into Clyde Inlet. Levi had never taken climbers to this area, there is no info on it in the guidebook, nor could we find references in the AAJ, so we believe we may have been the first climbers to visit Clyde Inlet. We inspected several good-looking walls before getting dropped off at the base of Umiguqjuaq Wall at midnight. The wall (69°59'21"N, 69°49'56"W) is located on the peninsula where the Cormack Arm splits to the west while Clyde Inlet continues to the south. The Inuit name for the formation roughly translates to "pubic mound," as the wall bears some resemblance.

We spent a day studying the cliff for potential lines. Seeing very few crack systems on the face, we chose a line on the southwest buttress that would link several small to medium-sized corners.

Blessed with good weather, we averaged about two pitches per day. As we moved up the wall, the climbing continually unfolded along a natural line. Most pitches involved much transitioning between aid and free. After eight days of climbing, we reached a large, talus-covered ledge at the base of the 500' summit block. Exploring this ledge, we found that we could walk to the northwest side of the formation and scramble to the summit. Not wanting to take this path of least resistance, we decided to continue climbing up the south face the next morning. With an early start, we abandoned our haul bags, free climbed to the summit, and returned to the ledge.

The next day, we descended from the talus ledge to our base camp via the large gully to the west of the wall. This descent involved 16 hours of long rappels and dragging haul bags down the steep, talus-filled gully.

We named our route Marooned at Midnight (700m, VI 5.11a A3), as this best described how we felt upon being dropped on the isolated shoreline in the middle of the night. With conditions too rough for boat travel, we spent three days awaiting Levi's return. During this time, we practiced our marksmanship with the .303 that Levi had provided for polar bear defense. Fortunately, we never needed to use the flares, bear-bangers, or the rifle to drive away bears.

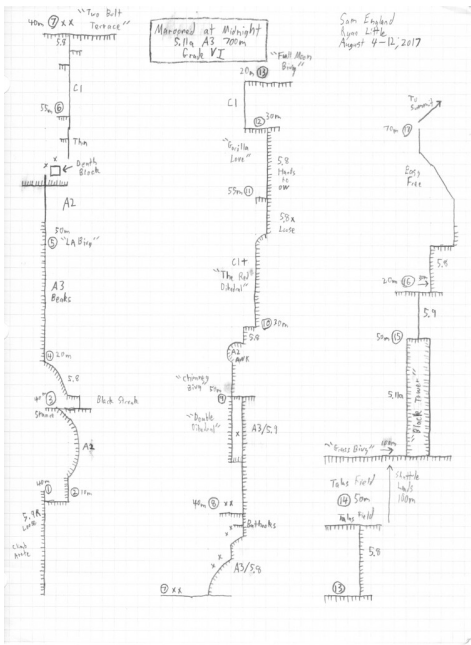
The Mitten formation boasts several unclimbed freestanding towers. Sam England and Ryan Little climbed 10 pitches on the rightmost tower during their 2017 expedition. Photo by Sam England

When Levi picked us up, he told us he planned to spend the next two days hunting in Clyde Inlet. After exploring other possible climbing objectives aboard Levi's boat, he dropped us at the base of a formation he called "The Mitten," with hopes of making a push-style free ascent of "The Thumb" spire. We climbed 10 pitches through very featured terrain up to 5.10a, making it about 75 percent of the way to the summit. We retreated when we could no longer find a manageable free climbing line. After

riding out a snowstorm in our base camp, we began the journey home.

– Sam England and Ryan Little, USA

## Images



Topo for Marooned at Midnight, the first route on the Umiguqjuaq Wall, Clyde Inlet, Baffin Island.



Ryan Little at the Full Moon Bivy on top of Pitch 13 on the Umiguqjuaq Wall.



Trying to warm up with some coffee in the morning shade after the first night on the Umiguqjuaq Wall.



Ryan Little leads the amazing Red Dihedral of Pitch 11 of Marooned at Midnight in perfect weather.



The line of Marooned at Midnight (700m, VI 5.11a A3) on the southwest face of the Umiguqjuaq Wall, as viewed from the boat during the team's departure. The climbers descended the large gully on the

left of the photo.



A major unclimbed face within Clyde Inlet gives Levi Palituq's hunting camp its "million-dollar view" ( $70^{\circ}08'08''\text{N}$ ,  $69^{\circ}50'54''\text{W}$ ).



The Mitten formation boasts several unclimbed freestanding towers, the rightmost of which was unsuccessfully attempted by Sam England and Ryan Little during their 2017 expedition ( $70^{\circ}05'36''\text{N}$ ,  $70^{\circ}03'52''\text{W}$ ).



A lone iceberg passes by two major unclimbed walls along the southern coast of Clyde Inlet (69°58'24"N, 69°43'43"W).



This deceptively overhung wall marks the southeastern end of the major walls within Clyde Inlet (69°57'40"N, 69°56'53"W).



A virgin 1,200m formation looms over an ocean-mapping expedition at the entrance to Cormack Arm (70°02'26"N, 70°01'04"W).

## Article Details

Author	Sam England and Ryan Little
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions